

Who is Afraid of the T-word? Labeling Terror in the Media Coverage of Political Violence Before and After 9/11

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Several studies conducted after 9/11 found that American journalists have largely embraced the government's official frame of the "War on Terror." Drawing from the claim of an ideological bond, this study investigates how American news media covered politically violent organizations that are not linked to Al Qaeda or the events of 9/11. More specifically, the article examines whether the media's inconsistent use of the word "terror" changed as a consequence of 9/11 by comparing the coverage of these organizations before and after 9/11. A quantitative content analysis of American media indicates that overall the coverage of political violence did not change after 9/11. Moreover, journalists remained vigilant about using the word "terror" when covering politically violent organization.

The 11 September 2001 (9/11) events and the subsequent declaration of the "War on Terror" represent a crucial turning point in U.S. foreign policy. Some scholars argue that these attacks also illustrate a shift in media-policy relations that signifies the American news media's tendency toward patriotic coverage.¹ Several empirical works, written mostly after 9/11, detect an ideological bond between policymakers and reporters, noting that journalists embraced the official "War on Terror" frame for their interpretation of reality.² Even though these works provide compelling evidence, they focus on media coverage after the attacks of 9/11; in most cases the media coverage they analyze is directly related to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The present study explores similar questions regarding the effect of policymakers' frames on media content. At the same time, it broadens the scope of study across time and space. The current analysis compares the coverage of politically violent organizations not directly linked to Al Qaeda before and after 9/11. Previous research has shown that before the attacks, the news media were very cautious and inconsistent in their use of terrorist narratives when covering political violence.³ This study therefore investigates whether 9/11 had an effect on the coverage of such occurrences given the emergence of a broader public discourse on terrorism. Moreover, the study also examines whether news organizations with

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conservative positions with regards to issues of national security differed in their coverage of political violence from more liberal news organizations.

News Frames—Definition and Influential Factors

The study of media frames emphasizes the ability of news organizations to describe reality in a way that highlights a certain interpretation while de-emphasizing a different one. According to Entman, framing is “selecting and highlighting some facets of events or issues, and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/or solution.”⁴

The current study on the coverage of political violence is directly related to the notion of framing since “researchers identify frames by investigating specific words and pictures that consistently appear in a narrative and convey thematically constant meanings across media and time.”⁵ This study focuses on the inclusion and exclusion of the word “terror” and on the use of alternative terms such as rebels, militants, or separatists to describe political violence. Words such as “terror” have cultural significance, and are therefore more “noticeable, understandable, memorable, and emotionally charged.”⁶ Consequently, the absence of the word is as important as its presence, since media frames reinforce and emphasize some ideas while ignoring others.⁷

Media frames are the product of multiple factors. This article, however, relies on Shoemaker and Reese’s hierarchical model.⁸ The model identifies five sources of influence, three of which are germane to the current discussion: journalistic professional routines, news organizations’ goals and policies, and external forces.⁹

For the purpose of the study the first two factors are regarded as the news media’s gatekeeping practices. Gatekeeping practices are the rules, norms, and editorial policies that guide the newsroom.¹⁰ Publishers, editors, and journalists operate as information gatekeepers; they define the relative newsworthiness of a given issue and determine issue frames. In other words, the press functions as an independent political actor by controlling and structuring the political discourse.¹¹

Conversely, issue frames can also be promoted by external forces such as political officials, interests groups, and large businesses who serve as main sources for a large amount of political news.¹² Journalists’ efforts to provide their audiences with in-depth, objective coverage are constrained by their dependency on these and other external sources.¹³ From this perspective, the output of the news media could be understood as a reflection of the power structure that exists behind the political and economic scenes.¹⁴ This tendency is particularly important during crises such as natural disasters and wars, when the news media are particularly dependent on official sources.¹⁵

Media frames are the product of an interaction between these two sources of influence—gatekeeping practices and extra-media influences. This study therefore suggests that after 9/11 the news media adopted the official position toward terrorism that in turn changed the broader coverage of political violence.

Terrorism and the News Media

Terrorist groups and the news media share a symbiotic relationship that furthers both the media and terrorists’ interests and goals. Terrorist acts provide countless news stories for the media. At the same time, terrorists exploit the media for both tactical and strategic purposes to mobilize support and gain public recognition.¹⁶ Within the broad range of issues related to the media–terrorism interaction, this article is mostly concerned with the

news media's use of the word "terror." Previous research has shown that the news media tend to employ the t-word only for some occurrences of political violence while avoiding it when describing apparently similar incidents with similar consequences.¹⁷ News media often apply different frames to describe the nature of violent groups using words such as rebels, militants, combatants, guerrilla, revolutionaries, and so forth.¹⁸

From a historical standpoint, the terrorist/terrorism media frame to describe political violence first appeared in the beginning of the 1970s; it became well established in the United States and Britain by the early 1980s.¹⁹ Epstein's research on political violence in Latin America was one of the first empirical studies examining the way the media utilize the terror label.²⁰ His analysis of three major U.S. newspapers showed that the media are biased in their classification of political violence, with acts committed by left-wing extremists labeled as acts of terror more often than acts committed by other organizations. Another study published in the early 1980s investigated editors and journalists' positions toward applying the "terror" label.²¹ The authors found that in the eyes of editors there are nine violent actions that fit the terrorism paradigm such as hijacking, bombing, and assassination. However, these results may not be an accurate reflection of current editorial standards since terrorists continue to develop and adopt new strategies that may alter media frames. Suicide bombing is one example. Finally, Martin offered a broader perspective by studying both foreign and American newspapers and their coverage of international terrorism. His analysis demonstrated inconsistencies across newspapers in the use of the "terror" label, noting that "each country has its own national nemeses to whom it refers as terrorists."²²

According to Nacos, the lack of consistency in the use of the t-word stems from disagreement about the definition of terror, but there are other plausible explanations such as the national origin of the victims.²³ One study demonstrated that when the victims are American citizens, the American press is more willing to use the t-word.²⁴ Similar findings exist for British and German news organizations.²⁵ Nacos also argues that the news media's restricted use of the t-word is not necessarily due to political correctness. Instead, news organizations fear that the use of the "terror" label may jeopardize their future access to terrorist groups and their supporters.²⁶ Finally, Nacos highlights two additional patterns that determine the news media's linguistic choices. First, news frames are based on stereotypical reporting, for example in Western countries the press tends to frame Islamic violence as terrorism in comparison to Christian or Jewish violence. This corresponds with Epstein's argument for a media bias toward certain groups and ideologies. The second pattern is the "follow-the-leader syndrome"²⁷ in the process of news production, which reflects the news media's tendency to embrace the language of governmental officials.

Hypotheses

From the theoretical overview several hypotheses are identified. First, research thus far has shown that before 9/11 the news media were selective in their use of the t-word.²⁸ After 9/11, however, an extensive public discourse on terrorism emerged and several studies point to the emergence of an ideological bond between American policymakers and the media.²⁹ The current analysis therefore seeks to examine whether the news media adopted the official "War on Terror" frame after the attacks as expressed in the following hypothesis:

H1: American media framed politically violent organizations as terrorists more frequently after 9/11 than before 9/11.

Furthermore, as noted earlier, news organizations' goals and policies play an important role in determining media content. Consequently, the study also addresses the following hypothesis:

H2: News organizations that identify with a conservative political ideology are more likely to frame politically violent groups as terrorist, before and even more so after 9/11.

According to Nacos, Western media are biased in the coverage of Islamic groups due to "a tradition of thoughtless and stereotypical reporting patterns."³⁰ As expressed in the third hypothesis:

H3: Western media are more likely to frame groups of Islamic affiliation as terrorists, before and after 9/11.

Finally, research has shown that American victims of political violence increase the likelihood that American media will use the t-word.³¹ This article therefore controls for victims' national origin, as expressed in the following hypothesis:

H4: Organizations that target Americans are more likely to be framed as terrorists compared with those who target other nationalities.

Case Selection

Cases were selected using the Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism (MIPT) Terrorism Knowledge Base, which contained an extensive data set of politically violent groups.³² The case selection process involved two steps. First, all organizations that had an official, direct link with Al Qaeda were dropped.³³ This is important because groups that are not related to Al Qaeda are less likely to be incorporated into the "War on Terror" discourse. From the remaining cases the author chose the most active and lethal organizations. Active and lethal organizations are organizations that either killed over 100 people or executed over 100 attacks during the study period (1998–2004). This criterion was used since a high rate of incidents or fatalities increases the likelihood that organizations receive a considerable amount of media coverage.³⁴

Seven organizations remained after the case selection process:³⁵ the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC); the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ); the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) operating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan and Uganda; the Basque Fatherland and Freedom (ETA) in Spain; the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) operating in Sri Lanka; and the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M) operating in Nepal (see Appendix 1 for a short description of the organizations). Finally, the analysis also includes Al Qaeda as a baseline for comparison.

There is an ongoing dispute in the literature over the definition of terrorism. For the purposes of this study the U.S. State Department definition was adopted, which characterizes terrorism as: "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience."³⁶ This definition includes key components of non-state terrorism that capture the characteristics of Al Qaeda and the organizations under scrutiny. In fact most definitions, academic and nonacademic, appear to be appropriate³⁷ since all seven groups and Al Qaeda are "sub-national organizations" that strive to further their political goals by violent means and target mainly civilians. The organizations may differ in their ideologies, goals, and strategies but all are by definition a manifestation of a terrorist operation.

To evaluate the official U.S. stance toward the seven organizations the study relied on the U.S. State Department's annual reports of international terrorism (1997, 1999–2004).³⁸ The reports include a list of organizations officially designated by the Secretary of State as terrorist groups as well as a short description of each group. In 2000, the U.S. State Department created two lists of organizations; one is the formal designation list and the second is a list of "other selected terrorist groups."

According to the annual reports the FARC, LTTE, ETA, and PIJ have been formally designated as terrorist organizations since at least 1997. In 2000, the AUC was added to the same list. In 2001, the LRA was categorized as a terrorist group and in 2002, CPN-M was added to the list as well; both groups were added to the less formal list of "other selected terrorist organizations." One can infer that post-9/11 six of the seven organizations were seen as executing terrorist operations by the Bush administration. To determine the official U.S. position toward CPN-M before it was designated a terrorist organization in 2002, the author conducted an extensive search of the White House archive³⁹ and presidential papers⁴⁰ but was unable to find any information on the organization.

Methodology

To test the hypotheses the author conducted a content analysis of articles covering the seven organizations in American newspapers. The analysis relies on articles in the *New York Times* (NYT) and the *Washington Times* (WT). These two newspapers were chosen since they are perceived to hold different approaches toward issues of national security, with the latter considered more conservative.⁴¹ The overall search covered the time period 1998–2004, three years preceding and three years following 9/11. The sample of articles analyzed was gathered from the Lexis-Nexis database using the name of the organization as a search term. Aliases common in the organization's countries of origin were also used on occasion; for example, "Tamil Tigers" for LTTE and "Maoists" for CPN-M. For two organizations the sample includes all articles published during the study period (LRA and AUC). For the others a sample of articles was randomly selected. Coding all articles would have been prohibitive in terms of time. The articles included in the sample represent news reports, editorials, and commentaries. Letters to the editor and commentaries written by non-journalists were dropped since the focus is on the way the news media frame political violence. For the period before 9/11, 372 news stories were examined; 468 news stories were examined for the period after 9/11. For comparison the news coverage of Al Qaeda was also analyzed. The author randomly selected 76 articles written before 9/11 and 200 articles written after 9/11 (see Appendix 2 for the code book).

The unit of analysis is the entire article. Each article was coded for the following variables.

Dependent Variable—Media Frame

To establish the frame the article was divided into logical segments. First, the labels that describe political violence were coded separately for each segment. Second, the article frame was determined based on the most frequent label. The analysis included two possible labels: (a) neutral labels such as rebels, guerrilla, militants, paramilitaries, and insurgents. These labels were coded 0 and (b) negative labels—depictions that are rooted in the word "terror" such as terrorist, terrorism, or terrorize. These labels were coded 1.⁴²

Independent Variables

First, each article received a score for the primary source that provided the descriptive labels for politically violent organizations. The author distinguished between two types of

sources: (a) media sources, that is, journalists' reports and analyses (coded 0) and (b) official sources, that is, governments and official experts (coded 1). In some cases articles were based on both official and media sources; such cases are coded 2.⁴³ All other independent variables are dichotomous—the time period (before or after 9/11), the newspaper (the *New York Times* or the *Washington Times*), and a dummy variable for each organization.

Intercoder reliability for the terrorist label and primary source variables was tested using Krippendorff's alpha. Two coders analyzed a subsample of 100 articles included in the analysis. For the dependent variable (primary label), alpha was .82 (an average of 96.4 percent agreement). For the primary source variable, alpha was .73 (an average of 87.4 percent agreement).

Findings

The findings are presented in two stages. The first section presents descriptive statistics to provide an initial representation of the media frames that were utilized in the coverage of political violence. The second set of results is based on logistic regression analysis.

Descriptive Statistics

Al Qaeda

As a baseline for comparison the author content analyzed the coverage of Al Qaeda. The results are overwhelmingly skewed. Both before and after 9/11 both newspapers used the terror frame almost exclusively. Nonetheless, there are two main differences between the two periods. First, as expected the magnitude of coverage substantially increased after 9/11. Second, before 9/11 the terror frame dominated the articles primarily because the news reports were dependent on official sources. However, after 9/11 reporters adopted the official language and directly labeled Al Qaeda as a terrorist group. Whether this was a result of the "follow-the-leader syndrome,"⁴⁴ the religious affiliation of the group, or the fact that the attacks were so devastating and on American soil, in the eyes of the American media Al Qaeda was nothing less than a lethal and sophisticated terrorist network.

The Seven Organizations

The results of the content analysis indicate that overall the news media have been reluctant to use the terrorist frame when covering politically violent organizations. The aggregate results show that before 9/11, both newspapers framed politically violent organizations as rebels, guerrillas, separatists, revolutionaries, paramilitary, or militants (rebel label in tables and graphs) 75 percent of the time. After 9/11, this figure dropped to 65.8 percent. Figure 1 shows statistics on the use of the t-word for each group.

Several details are noteworthy. First, the media's frame for the PIJ varied dramatically from the media's frames for other groups. For the PIJ the terrorist frame was used over 65 percent of the time before 9/11; this percentage decreased by approximately 12 percentage points after 9/11. Second, ETA's coverage after 9/11 differs from its coverage before the attacks, with the use of the terror frame sharply increasing from 13 percent to 73 percent of the articles. There was also a slight increase in the framing of FARC as a terrorist organization from 5 percent to 21 percent. Little to no change was found from before to after 9/11 for the remaining organizations. It is interesting to note that the number of incidents or fatalities apparently did not have any impact on media frames. For instance, the

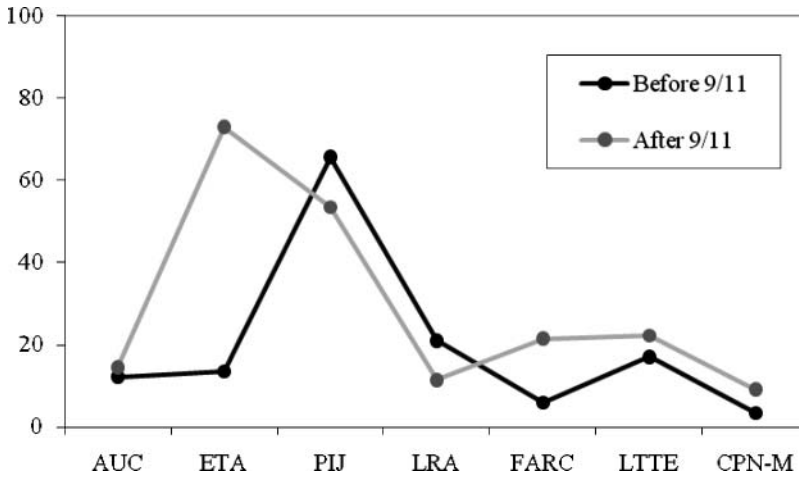


Figure 1. Changes in the terrorist frame, before and after 9/11.

number of fatalities caused by the LRA increased from 26 people before 9/11 to 344 people after 9/11. Nonetheless, the t-word was hardly employed in the coverage of the group (see Appendix 3 for the exact percentages).

The results also show variation between the two newspapers. Figure 2 demonstrates that on average the *Washington Times* tended to use the terrorist frame more often. Before 9/11, articles in the *New York Times* rarely used the t-word, with the exception of news articles about the PIJ. The study also did not find any real over-time change in the coverage of the *New York Times* except in the case of ETA, for which there was a sharp increase from 10 percent to 60 percent.

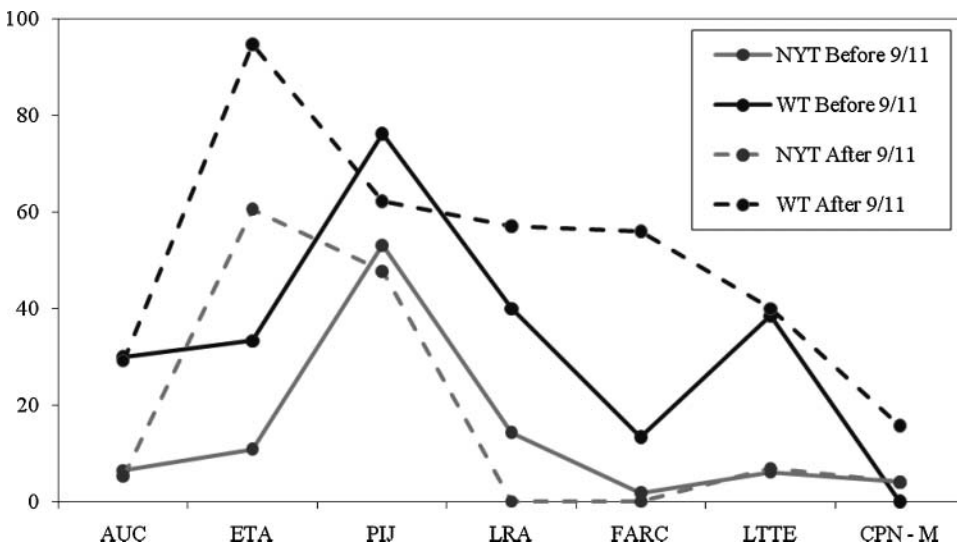


Figure 2. Changes in the terrorist frame by newspapers, before and after 9/11.

Statistical Analysis

The following results are based on a more formal examination of the likelihood that news organizations use the terrorist frame in the coverage of politically violent organizations. A logistic regression of media frames was run on the following predictors: primary source (categorical variable), newspaper, time period, and a dummy variable for each organization. Results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 shows several interesting patterns. First, reliance on official sources or both media and official sources instead of only media sources makes it more likely that a terror label is used. Both effects are large in substantial terms and highly statistically significant. Another important finding is that there is no significant difference in the probability of using the terrorist frame before and after 9/11. The dummy variable for after 9/11 is positive but does not reach conventional levels of statistical significance. Third, the probability that the *Washington Times* uses the terrorist label is significantly higher than for the *New York Times*. Finally, we can also see that there is some heterogeneity among politically violent organizations. The probability that the PIJ and ETA are labeled terrorist is significantly higher than for the omitted politically violent organization, the AUC.

Table 2 presents a second model which includes two full sets of interaction terms. The first set of interaction terms is between the organizations' dummy variables and the time dummy variable. The second set is between the organizations' dummy variables and the newspaper dummy variable. These additional 12 interaction terms allow the time trend and the effects of both newspapers to vary by politically violent organizations.

The inclusion of interaction terms complicates the interpretation of logistic regression coefficients since main effects now have to be interpreted conditional on the value of the other main effect included in the interaction term. In order to facilitate the substantive interpretation of the results the article therefore reports simulated first differences in expected probability for several quantities of interest.⁴⁵ These are shown in Table 3.

Table 1
Logit coefficients for media frames of political violence

	Coefficients	Robust std. err.
Official sources	3.273***	0.319
Media and official sources	2.811***	0.435
<i>Washington Times</i>	1.725***	0.244
After 9/11	0.361	0.256
CPN-M	-0.303	0.578
LTTE	0.284	0.483
FARC	-0.316	0.506
LRA	0.002	0.611
PIJ	2.373***	0.452
ETA	1.997***	0.533
Constant	-4.793***	0.512

***p < .01.

n = 812.

Omitted organization—AUC.

Omitted category for sources—media sources.

Table 2
Logit coefficients for media frames of political violence with interaction terms

	Coefficients	Robust std. err.
Official sources	3.314***	0.330
Media and official sources	2.726***	0.453
<i>Washington Times</i>	1.292*	0.719
After 9/11	0.227	0.678
CPN-M	0.321	1.235
LTTE	-0.440	0.881
FARC	-3.104*	1.655
LRA	0.549	1.514
PIJ	3.273***	0.746
ETA	0.550	0.942
CPN-M*After 9/11	-0.829	1.265
CPN-M* <i>Washington Times</i>	0.293	1.069
LTTE*After 9/11	0.589	0.851
LTTE* <i>Washington Times</i>	0.751	0.913
FARC*After 9/11	1.339	1.065
FARC* <i>Washington Times</i>	2.678*	1.455
LRA*After 9/11	-1.871	1.322
LRA* <i>Washington Times</i>	1.446	1.162
PIJ*After 9/11	-1.169	0.790
PIJ* <i>Washington Times</i>	-0.576	0.806
ETA*After 9/11	2.049**	1.028
ETA* <i>Washington Times</i>	0.508	1.092
Constant	-4.470***	0.706

*p < .10, **p < .05, ***p < .01.

n = 812.

Omitted organization—AUC.

Omitted category for sources—media sources.

Table 3
First differences for the expected change in the media frame

	Each organization	Before vs. after 9/11	<i>New York Times</i> vs. <i>Washington Times</i>
ETA	0.10* (0.04)	0.23* (0.09)	0.24* (0.14)
PIJ	0.17* (0.03)	-0.14* (0.06)	0.11 (0.16)
LRA	0.01 (0.02)	-0.07 (0.09)	0.11* (0.07)
FARC	-0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.007)	0.06* (0.02)
CPN-M	-0.001 (0.01)	-0.02 (0.04)	0.04 (0.03)
LTTE	0.003 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.07* (0.03)
Overall		0.01 (0.009)	0.09* (0.02)

*First difference significance at the 95% confidence level.

Standard errors in parentheses.

The first column of Table 3 shows differences in the expected probability of being labeled terrorist across organizations. It confirms the author's earlier finding that the PIJ and the ETA were significantly more likely to be called terrorist than the other organizations.

The second column shows first differences in the expected probability of being labeled terrorist before and after 9/11. Interestingly, the expected probability for ETA increased by .23 whereas the expected probability for the PIJ decreased by .14. Both of these first differences are highly statistically significant. First differences for the rest of the organizations in contrast are small and statistically insignificant.

The last column of Table 3 shows first differences between the *Washington Times* and the *New York Times*. For all organizations the probability that the *Washington Times* used the terrorist frame was higher than the probability that the *New York Times* used the terrorist frame. This difference in the probability of labeling an organization as terrorist ranges from 0.04 for the Maoists in Nepal to 0.24 for ETA. Most of these differences are statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence level.

Finally, the results also show that the probability that a terror frame is used is 0.45 (0.31) higher when a news report relies primarily on official sources (on both sources) instead of media sources. These first differences are also significant at the 95 percent confidence level.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings do not support the first hypothesis. No significant difference was found between the coverage of political violence before and after 9/11. The only exception was ETA, for which the use of the terror frame significantly increased after 9/11. The terrorist attacks in Madrid on 11 March 2004 provide a plausible explanation for this surprising result. Many of the articles that framed ETA as a terrorist organization were published just after the attacks. During the first three days the Spanish government blamed ETA for the bombings and both newspapers categorized the events as acts of terror and compared the bombings with 9/11. After it had become clear that the attacks were executed by a group related to Al Qaeda the reports on Spain adopted the "War on Terror" frame, mentioning ETA only in the general context of political violence in Spain.

The results support the second hypothesis about differences between the two newspapers. They show that the two newspapers differed significantly in their coverage of politically violent organizations both before and after 9/11. The *Washington Times*'s less restricted use of the t-word can be viewed as a manifestation of the newspaper's conservative approach toward national security issues including political violence. Consequently, this finding suggests that editorial policies and organizational goals play an important role in shaping media frames.

With regard to the religious affiliation of the groups, the results show that both before and after 9/11 the news media were more willing to use the terrorist frame in the coverage of the Islamist PIJ.⁴⁶ This finding resonates with Epstein and Nacos's evidence about media bias in the coverage of certain groups stemming from stereotypical thinking.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, it is important to note that the study period includes the Second Intifada with its waves of extreme violence executed by Palestinian organizations such as the Al-Aqsa Brigades, Hamas, and the PIJ. The extensive use of suicide bombing and lethal attacks on civilians may have affected media coverage during those years.

The fourth hypothesis is not supported based on a qualitative analysis of the few news articles mentioning the involvement of American victims. For example, several of these articles highlighted the kidnapping and sometimes even killing of Americans by the FARC

while maintaining the rebel/guerrilla frame. Likewise, an article from 23 October 2003 reported on a U.S. convoy ambushed in the Gaza strip. The event was described as follows: "Palestinian militants shifted their focus to American targets yesterday, blowing up a U.S. Embassy convoy in the Gaza Strip, killing three security guards and wounding another."⁴⁸

To conclude, the empirical findings presented here make some contribution to the theoretical discussion on the news media's use of the word "terror." First, after 9/11 the news media remained inconsistent in their use of the t-word when covering politically violent organizations not linked to Al Qaeda. While the newspapers' dependency on official sources significantly increased the probability that a terror frame is used the news media did not simply adopt the official language. For instance, in several articles world leaders (from Israel, Nepal, and Sri Lanka for example) unsuccessfully attempted to present their local conflicts as part of the "War on Terror." Moreover, reporters often mentioned the American official stand toward the seven organizations by primarily citing the State Department's annual reports of international terrorism. Nevertheless, in most articles journalists held on to their professional practices by consistently employing neutral labels.

On a more general note it seems that the selective use of the terror label suggests that the news media are rather cautious in their coverage of political violence. Two possible reasons may explain this tendency. First, the news media may strive for objectivity and balance, which would be called into question by the use of the t-word since it implies choosing a side. The fact that the t-word is often put in quotation marks seems to support this interpretation. Second, as noted by Nacos, news organizations may wish to maintain access to politically violent groups, which use of the t-word might jeopardize.⁴⁹

Several caveats are in order. First, the present article focuses only on the elite press. Future research might want to analyze popular newspapers, which could be more likely to adopt the official language. Moreover, the method of content analysis cannot capture the organizational culture of news media organizations. Interviews with editors and reporters might further our understanding of their choice of media frames. Finally, future research should examine whether readers indeed distinguish between the terror label and seemingly neutral labels such as rebel, militant, or guerrilla. If readers fail to distinguish between these labels the literature would be required to reexamine its theoretical propensities toward the significance of the t-word and to rethink the relationship between the news media and terrorist groups.

Appendix 1

Short Description of the Seven Organizations⁵⁰

1. Lord's Army Resistance (LRA)—a radical Christian group based in Northern Uganda and Sudan, aiming to overthrow the government of Uganda. The LRA was formed in 1992 and is led by Joseph Kony, who believes that the organization should maintain a high level of brutality and violence to achieve its goals. Murder, torture, rape, and kidnapping are the organization's hallmarks.
2. The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)—a communist organization, formed in the 1960s. The FARC's main goal is to replace the current democratic regime in Colombia with a communist government. The group's known strategies are mainly kidnapping in the rural areas of Colombia, but lately the organization increased its use of urban terrorism.
3. United Self-Defense Group of Colombia (AUC)—this right-wing group represents an umbrella organization for the paramilitary forces that were formed to fight the

- terrorist organizations from the left (FARC, ELN). The organization relies on the cocaine trade to finance its operations.
4. Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)—operating in Sri Lanka, the organization strives to form an independent state in the Tamil-dominated areas. The organization targets both governmental officials and common citizens. Lately the organization's leader was killed and it is not yet clear if the group is capable to continue its operation.
 5. Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)—an offshoot organization of the Muslim Brotherhood movement. The PIJ was founded in the 1970s, and it ultimately blends “Palestinian nationalism, Sunni Islamic fundamentalism, and Shi'a revolutionary thought into its ideological agenda.”⁵¹ The organization's belief is that the liberation of the Palestinian people and the destruction of Israel are imperative to the formation of an Islamic empire.
 6. Basque Fatherland and Freedom (ETA)—a nationalist organization that is dedicated to the creation of an independent state for the Basque people. The organization was formed in 1958 and since then has been one of the most active terror groups in Europe.
 7. Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M)—one of the most dominant Communist groups in the world. The organization strives to create a “New Democracy” in Nepal that is based on the philosophy of Mao Tsetung.

Appendix 2

Code Book

Newspaper: NYT = 0; WT = 1.

Date: given in full.

Page number: page on which the report/article starts.

Format: news report = 1; brief reports = 2; a journalist's column = 3.

Author: the name of the journalist.

Muslim Connection (only PIJ): non Islamic group = 0; Islamic group = 1.

American Connection: victims are not Americans = 0; victims are Americans = 1.

Primary Label

Label appears in headline: rebel/rebellion/insurgent/insurgency/guerrilla/militant/combatants/revolt/revolutionary/paramilitaries/insurrection/separatist = 0; terror/terrorize/terrorist/terrorism = 1; freedom fighter/liberation movement/independence movement = 3; no label = 99.

Label appears in lead paragraph: rebel/rebellion/insurgent/insurgency/guerrilla/militant/combatants/revolt/revolutionary/paramilitaries/insurrection/separatist = 0; terror/terrorize/terrorist/terrorism = 1; freedom fighter/liberation movement/independence movement = 3; no label = 99.

Label appears in text: rebel/rebellion/insurgent/insurgency/guerrilla/militant/combatants/revolt/uprising revolution/revolutionary/paramilitaries/insurrection/separatist = 0; terror/terrorize/terrorist/terrorism = 1; freedom fighter/liberation movement/independence movement = 3; no label = 99.

Primary Source

Media sources (news reports, news analysis) = 0; official source (government and experts, including designated lists) = 1; both media and official sources = 2; organization and its supporters = 3; victims/family of victims = 4; source is unclear = 99.

Appendix 3**Distribution of Media Frames**

Organization	Before 9/11				After 9/11			
	Rebel (n = 279)		Terror (n = 81)		Rebel (n = 308)		Terror (n = 145)	
	<i>New York Times</i>		<i>New York Times</i>		<i>New York Times</i>		<i>New York Times</i>	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
AUC	29	93.5	2	6.5	35	92.1	2	5.3
ETA	39	84.8	5	10.9	13	39.4	20	60.6
PIJ	14	43.8	17	53.1	31	46.3	32	47.8
LRA	11	78.6	21	4.3	27	96.4	0	0
FARC	53	96.4	1	1.8	39	97.5	0	0
LTTE	44	88	3	6	27	93.1	2	6.9
CPN-M	22	88	1	4	47	94	2	4
	<i>Washington Times</i>		<i>Washington Times</i>		<i>Washington Times</i>		<i>Washington Times</i>	
Organization	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
AUC	7	70	3	30	17	70.8	7	29.2
ETA	4	66.7	2	33.3	1	5.3	18	94.7
PIJ	7	18.4	38	76.3	15	33.3	45	62.2
LRA	3	60	2	40	3	42.9	4	57.1
FARC	26	86.7	4	13.3	11	44	14	56
LTTE	16	61.5	10	38.5	14	56	10	40
CPN-M	4	100	0	0	28	73.7	6	15.8

Notes

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30. Nacos, *Mass-Mediated Terrorism*, p. 98.
31. Alali and Eke, *Media Coverage of Terrorism*.
32. The Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism database is no longer available online but similar data can be found at www.start.umd.edu/start/data
33. A direct link is defined as being an ally, training at Al Qaeda camps, being part of the Al Qaeda network, or receiving financial support from Al Qaeda.
34. Nacos, *Mass-Mediated Terrorism*.
35. Three Palestinian groups fit the two conditions— Hamas, Fatah, and Islamic Jihad—all somewhat fighting for the same cause. The Palestinian Islamic Jihad was chosen because it focuses exclusively on terrorist attacks. Similarly, both the *Ejercico Liberacion Nacional* (National Liberation Army—ELN) and the FARC in Colombia fit the criteria outlined above. Both organizations share the same ideology and are defined as allies in the dataset. (www.start.umd.edu/start/data/). The author has therefore decided to focus on the FARC and the AUC, both of which share a vicious rivalry.
36. See www.state.gov/global/terrorism
37. Alex P. Schmid and Albert J. Jongman, *Political Terrorism: A New Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Data Bases, Theories, and Literature* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1988).
38. See www.state.gov
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41. T. Groseclose and J. Milyo, "A Measure of Media Bias," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 120(4) (2005), pp. 1191–1237.
42. Initially the analysis included positive labels such as "freedom fighters" or "independence movement." These labels however were seldom used and therefore dropped from the analysis.
43. The analysis originally considered politically violent organizations and victims as possible primary sources. Since only one article mentioned a politically violent organization as primary source this category was dropped. No articles were encountered that relied on victims as the primary source.
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45. Gary King, Michael Tomz, and Jason Wittenberg, "Making the Most of Statistical Analyses: Improving Interpretation and Presentation," *American Journal of Political Science* 44(2) (2000), pp. 347–361.
46. A prior analysis of two Islamic groups, Hamas and Group Islamique Armée [Armed Islamic Group] (GIA), showed similar results.
47. Epstein, "The Uses of Terrorism"; see Nacos, *Mass-Mediated Terrorism*.
48. See *New York Times*, 23 October 2003, p. 1.
49. See Nacos, *Mass-Mediated Terrorism*.
50. See www.globalsecurity.org and www.start.umd.edu/start/data/tops
51. See www.start.umd.edu/start/data/tops/terrorist_organization_profile.asp?id=82

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