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Media Attention to Terrorist Attacks: Causes and Consequences

Project Leads

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Statement of Problem

Political movements that engage in terrorism typically have too few material resources—personnel, funds, or territory under their control—to achieve their goals through legitimate political action or large-scale organized violence (Fromkin, 1975). Terrorist attacks are part of an indirect strategy for achieving their political objectives by influencing an audience (Crenshaw, 1981). These terrorist groups differ in the audiences that they seek to influence and in the messages they seek to communicate to their chosen audiences (Kydd & Walter, 2006). Some use terrorism to convince opponents to concede to their demands. Other terrorist groups seek to provoke authorities into engaging in indiscriminate repression, which will undermine support for the government and justify the use of terrorist violence. Some use violence to demonstrate to current and potential supporters a capacity to deliver powerful blows against their opponents. Media attention is an important vehicle by which terrorists communicate with their audiences, and thus a central goal of many terrorist groups is to influence the scale and tone of media attention to their attacks (Hoffman, 2006; Jenkins, 1975; Nacos, 2002).

However, terrorist attacks vary widely in the amount of media attention they receive. Most terrorist attacks receive no attention from major media outlets. Others, such as those in New

York and Washington, DC, in 2001, London in 2005, and Mumbai in 2008, received heavy coverage (Kern, Just, & Norris, 2003, p. 40). This research brief summarizes the current understanding of factors influencing the decisions of media outlets to devote attention to terrorist attack and discusses how such coverage influences potential sympathizers and supporters.

Understanding media attention to terrorism can inform homeland security policy in at least four ways. First, the fact that most terrorist attacks receive no or little media attention suggests that terrorist groups vary substantially in their ability to design attacks to garner media attention. It is not easy for terrorists to manipulate the media coverage they receive. Knowledge of why some terrorist attacks succeed and others fail to attract media attention could provide important insights into the political goals, media savvy, and organizational capacity of the perpetrators.

Second, a better understanding of the motivations of and constraints facing media outlets could inform the design of media relations and public diplomacy strategies of agencies responsible for counterterrorism. As discussed in greater detail below, some argue that media outlets have incentives to provide overly extensive coverage of terrorist attacks. This coverage can provide terrorists with a vehicle for conveying their political messages to mass audiences, and it can also distract from public understanding of the difficulty of preventing terrorist attacks and the steps that the authorities take to achieve this objective. Research in this area has begun to explore, in a systematic manner, the conditions under which the media are more or less likely to devote considerable coverage to terrorist attacks rather than other topics or other aspects of counterterrorism.

Third, the structure and competitiveness of the news industry appear to influence media attention to terrorism. As the media environment becomes more decentralized and competitive, news outlets may try to maintain market share by devoting more attention to terrorist attacks that employ novel tactics or that are particularly violent. Such a development could pose new challenges for the media relations of homeland security agencies by giving the public a distorted picture of the threat from terrorism and reducing the ability of the authorities to explain their policies and to put the problem of terrorism in an appropriate context.

Fourth, existing research is beginning to explore how the tone with which the media covers terrorism influences the attitudes and behaviors of mass publics, including voters, as well as potential sympathizers with terrorist movements. There is considerable evidence that coverage of terrorism increases fear and anxiety and that these emotional changes influence the preference of some members of the public for counterterrorism policies that rely on force. This may make it more difficult for authorities to respond to terrorist attacks with other types of policies, even if these policies might produce superior results. It is sometimes claimed that terrorists are effective in manipulating media coverage to convey their message to a mass audience and to gain sympathizers and supporters (e.g., Hoffman, 2006). However, systematic

research in this area is in its infancy, making it difficult to draw definitive conclusions about how terrorists' narratives influence their level of public support.

There are notable limitations in existing research on media attention to terrorism. Most studies have focused on elite Western media outlets. Much less is known about the attention to terrorism from more popular media outlets, which have very large audiences. Also, little is known about how terrorism is covered by the press in non-Western countries. Such countries experience a considerable amount of terrorism, and some are of particular concern to U.S. foreign policy. Many plausible explanations of media attention have not yet been systematically explored. There is a particular need to better understand how media attention influences the attitudes and behaviors of individuals, other terrorist groups, and government authorities. At the same time, technological developments such as easy access to media outlets through the Internet and advanced tools for sophisticated automated analysis of media content promise to open up new areas for investigation in the future.

Background

An important objective of work in this area is to explain why some attacks receive more media attention than do others. Explanations for this variation fall into two categories. The first category highlights features of the attacks themselves, such as the tactics, targets, and perpetrators. The second category looks at the goals and environment of media outlets and investigates the hypothesis that many media have powerful self-interested motives to “hype” terrorism. Another stream of research investigates how media attention to terrorism influences attitudes and policy preferences in target audiences and among potential supporters of the terrorist group.

Attack Characteristics

There is a long-standing literature on how attack characteristics influence media attention to terrorism. The unit of analysis is typically either the individual terrorist attack or the amount of coverage the media devotes to terrorism over a particular span of time. Characteristics of attacks are drawn from one of the many terrorism databases now available to researchers. Weimann and Winn (1994) use the RAND Corporation's terrorism database; Delli Carpini and Williams (1987) draw on the International Terrorism: Attributes of Terrorist Events (ITERATE) database of transnational terrorist attacks; and Chermak and Gruenewald (2006) use the Federal Bureau of Investigation's list of domestic terrorist attacks as well as those reported in the Terrorism Knowledge Base of the Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism, which has since been merged with the Global Terrorism Database maintained at the University of Maryland (LaFree & Dugan, 2007).

Researchers then search media outlets for reports that mention such attacks. Media attention is measured by the number of newspaper stories, words in newspaper stories, or

length of broadcast segments devoted to terrorism or by content analysis of the coverage these media provided (Chermak & Gruenewald, 2006; Delli Carpini & Williams, 1987; Weimann & Winn, 1994). The most valuable studies to date have used carefully trained human coders to link large numbers of terrorist attacks to media attention. This process is time-consuming and expensive, limiting the variety of media sources included for analysis. Chermak and Gruenewald (2006), for example, measure media attention from only the *New York Times*; Hoffman, Jengellely, Duncan, Buehler, and Rees (2010) analyze terrorism coverage in *The Washington Post* and *USA Today*; and Delli Carpini and Williams (1987) include the evening news broadcasts of the three major U.S. broadcast television networks. Weimann and Winn (1994) include the broadest range of outlets but are still limited to three television networks and eight newspapers from the United States and other Western countries.

Terrorist attacks vary substantially in the degree of media attention they attract. Most attacks receive no media attention from major Western news outlets. Weimann and Winn (1994, p. 68) estimate that the newspapers in their sample cover approximately one third of transnational terrorist attacks, whereas television news cover roughly one in six attacks. Chermak and Gruenewald (2006) found that an even smaller percentage of terrorist incidents in the United States are reported in the media. This literature is quite consistent about how the characteristics of attacks influence media attention. Attacks receive more coverage when they harm or kill victims, involve hijackings or aircraft, have known perpetrators, and select targets associated with Western countries. In their study of transnational terrorism, Weimann and Winn (1994) found that attacks that inflict injuries are twice as likely to attract media attention as those that do not; attacks in which the perpetrator can be identified are 4 times as likely to be reported in newspaper and 10 times as likely to be reported on television; attacks in the Middle East or Europe are twice as likely to receive media attention as attacks perpetrated in Latin America (Delli Carpini, & Williams, 1987, reach similar conclusions). Very similar factors influence media coverage of attacks that take place within the United States (Chermak & Gruenewald, 2006).

However, these conclusions are based on a small number of studies—some of which were published over 10 years ago—that draw on a handful of (mostly English language) media sources in one or a few countries. It is not clear whether the patterns in these studies persist today. The studies also do not address systematically a number of other attack characteristics that might influence media attention.

At first glance, one might conclude that this level of media attention is surprisingly low. Because many terrorist attacks are deliberately designed to be newsworthy, it might be expected that a higher percentage would attract at least some media attention. There are a number of explanations—in addition to those analyzed in these studies—of why most attacks receive no attention. In some countries, the authorities may prevent media outlets from reporting on terrorist attacks. Also, the studies summarized in this brief rely on media outlets based in countries with robust traditions of press freedom. Patterns of media attention differ in

countries where the media have fewer resources or where the authorities actively suppress reporting on terrorism to minimize public fear and the political influence of opposition groups that resort to violence. Drakos and Gofas (2006) conclude that the underreporting of terrorist attacks is particularly prevalent in non-democratic countries that lack a free press (although their unit of analysis is reporting on the aggregate number of attacks in a given year rather than media attention to specific attacks).

In countries with a free press, terrorist organizations must compete for media attention with a wide range of other actors such as politicians, sports teams, entertainers, private firms, and other terrorist groups. Compared to others seeking media attention, it is possible that terrorist organizations are quite successful, although no study has addressed this issue directly. Theory suggests that terrorism should be heavily covered compared to other types of events because it meets many of the criteria that communications research on “news values” identifies as increasing media attention. In particular, terrorism occurs suddenly and unexpectedly, involves conflict, often selects prominent or symbolically important targets, can often be attributed to specific terrorist groups, and provokes strong feelings of fear and dread in media audiences. All of these factors have been shown to increase media attention to issues other than terrorism (Breckenridge & Zimbardo, 2007; Brighton & Foy, 2007; Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Harcup & O’Neill, 2001).

Another reason why many attacks receive little or no media attention may concern the motives or goals of the terrorist organizations. This possibility has not been investigated systematically across many different types of terrorist groups. For some terrorist groups, maximizing media attention is a very important objective. The central leadership of Al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan, for example, places a heavy emphasis on garnering media attention to influence public opinion in many parts of the world (Lynch, 2006). Media attention may be less important for terrorist groups that want to communicate with other audiences. Terrorist groups in Columbia that seek to intimidate law enforcement and judicial officials, for example, may not see great value in attracting widespread media attention if there are other means for ensuring that government officials know that they may be targeted for murder or kidnapping.

Media Environment

It is commonly claimed that terrorists and the media both benefit from high levels of media attention to terrorism (Hoffman, 2006). Terrorists gain from media attention that communicates their goals and grievances to a wider audience. The media gain larger audiences because, as previously discussed, terrorist attacks tap many of the characteristics that communications research identifies as important for media attention. This perspective holds that terrorists and media outlets have a symbiotic relationship in which both can benefit from media attention to terrorism.

Claiming that they do not “hype” terrorism, professional journalists argue that terrorism is an important public policy issue and deserves substantial coverage from the media. Norms of

professional journalism—including objectivity and balance—limit media outlets’ willingness to exploit terrorism to increase their audience share and lead them to devote substantial attention to the views of governments when covering episodes of political violence (Bennett & Paletz, 1994; Zaller & Chiu, 1996).

Systematic empirical evidence on this question is mixed. Nelson and Scott (1992) compare incidences of transnational terrorism, as measured in the ITERATE database, with attention from the *New York Times* to investigate the hypothesis of a symbiotic relationship between terrorism and media attention. The researchers’ statistical results indicated that media attention does not increase terrorism. Although terrorist attacks lead to more media attention to terrorism, as expected, such media attention does not in turn encourage more terrorism in the future. In a more recent study, Rohner and Frey (2007) used data on both domestic and transnational terrorist attacks and media attention from the *New York Times* and a Swiss newspaper. In contrast to Nelson and Scott (1992), Rohner and Frey found strong confirmation for the symbiosis hypothesis; in their data analysis, terrorist attacks caused an increase in media attention, which in turn is associated with more terrorist attacks in the future.

Rohner and Frey (2007) suggested that this different finding was explained by the globalization of the media landscape since Nelson and Scott (1992) published their paper 15 years earlier. However, they do not advance a detailed explanation of precisely how or why media globalization could be expected to produce this change. Scott (2001) provides a more developed reason why the media’s effect on terrorism is difficult to determine. The symbiosis hypothesis concluded that media outlets would devote substantial attention to all or most terrorist attacks, but as previously discussed, this was not the case; only a small fraction of attacks receive any media coverage. Scott argued that the media is closely attuned to the preferences of the public, which experiences diminishing marginal utility from news about terrorism. Information about each additional terrorist attack should be of less interest and value to members of the public. If this is the case, media outlets motivated solely by an interest in increasing their audience share would moderate their coverage of terrorism so as not to “bore” readers and viewers. In his empirical analysis, Scott found that the media attention devoted to an attack decreases in periods when other attacks occur. This is consistent with the idea that the public does not have an unlimited appetite for information about terrorism. Media outlets thus do not have to rely solely on norms of professional journalism to avoid hyping terrorism; their interest in sustaining their audience should lead them to limit additional attention to terrorism.

At the same time, however, this means that “to compete successfully for media attention, terrorists must be original enough to stage incidents that are a departure from past events. Hence, large media returns to terrorism come mostly from the perpetrators’ imaginative abilities” (Scott, 2001, p. 126; others who focus on how terrorists stage their violence to attract attention include Nacos, 2002, and Rada, 1985). This incentive to undertake novel types of attacks poses a real policy problem because it suggests that terrorists will constantly develop

new means of attack and seek out new types of targets, making it far more challenging to devise effective countermeasures. The desire for media attention may also help explain some characteristics of the “new” terrorism, which is characterized by more victims, the indiscriminate targeting of civilians, and frequent use of suicide tactics (Hoffman, 2006).

This focus on the marginal benefit to the consumer of additional news about terrorism is an important contribution to work on the symbiosis hypothesis. At the same time, however, there are a few limitations to this line of inquiry. For example, it is based on a single study, which draws on data from the 1970s and 1980s for transnational terrorist attacks, and it is not clear whether the findings from Scott (2001) could be replicated for more recent data or for domestic terrorist attacks. Similar to all of the studies discussed in this brief, Scott (2001) relies on a very limited range of media—in this case, the *New York Times*. One wonders whether these conclusions would differ if less elite media sources were used or if the study analyzed media in countries that experience terrorist attacks more regularly. Scott (2001) also does not include as control variables any of the factors shown in other studies to influence media attention. The conclusion that terrorists innovate new types of attack to garner media attention ignores the role of defensive measures taken by the authorities, which have been shown elsewhere to reduce terrorism quite consistently (Sandler & Enders, 1993).

It is often claimed that competition *among* media outlets for audience members has a strong influence on attention. A more competitive media environment, according to this line of thinking, should threaten the market share of even well-established “hard” news outlets and lead them to devote more attention to terrorism. Surprisingly little serious empirical attention has been devoted to this claim. Hoffman et al. (2010) studied how coverage of terrorism has evolved in two U.S. newspapers, *The Washington Post* and *USA Today*. The researchers measured media attention to various topics in the coverage of terrorism, including coverage of violent attacks, of counterterrorism policy, of the consequences of terrorism, and so on. The researchers hypothesized that a more competitive media environment will lead to greater media attention to violent attacks and a reduction in coverage of other aspects of terrorism. Not surprisingly, the amount of coverage in these two media outlets devoted to all aspects of terrorism has increased hugely since 2001. In addition, greater competitive pressures, measured as declines in circulation and the introduction of new types of news competition on cable television and the Internet, increase coverage of terrorist attacks. The researchers also found a long-term trend in which articles specifically about terrorist attacks become longer and are placed closer to the front page of the newspaper, although the size of this effect is small. These conclusions are consistent with the idea that a more competitive news environment encourages greater attention to terrorist attacks.

However, Hoffman et al. (2010) also found that coverage of counterterrorism measures is consistently longer and more prominent than is coverage of attacks. This means that these newspapers continue to devote more resources to presenting information reflecting government positions and actions than information about the more sensationalistic details of

specific attacks, although attention to these areas has increased over time. The researchers argued that this finding was consistent with the emphasis on news values, which has prevented the more sensationalistic aspects of terrorism, such as violent attacks, from crowding out policy analysis and discussion. As discussed in greater detail below, it is not clear whether this finding would hold in all media outlets. The corporate cultures of both *The Washington Post* and *USA Today* reward serious journalism to a greater extent than other media sources. It is possible that the tone of coverage has shifted more dramatically in other types of media outlets.

Effects of Media Attention

Recall that one goal of terrorist violence is to influence an audience or audiences via media attention. What is known about the influence of terrorism on mass attitudes and policy preferences?

A number of studies found that exposure to media coverage of terrorism increases fear and anxiety. In a survey of Israelis conducted shortly after a series of deadly terrorist attacks, Keinan, Sadeh, and Rosen (2003) found that exposure to coverage, including “horrifying details” of attacks, was associated with the development of symptoms similar to post-traumatic stress disorder. After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Schuster et al. (2001) conducted a national survey in the United States. Their respondents reported substantial increases in indicators of stress. Increases in stress occurred throughout the country, suggesting that media coverage communicated the emotional impact of terrorism to distant audiences. Bleich, Gelkopf, and Solomon (2003) reported similar responses in a national survey conducted in Israel. Cho et al. (2003) found that the emotional content of media coverage influences subjects’ responses. Other studies have used experimental research designs rather than surveys to address similar questions. Stone (2000), for example, found that subjects exposed to media coverage of terrorist attacks experienced greater increases in anxiety than did a control group exposed to media coverage unrelated to terrorism.

Other recent studies have investigated how the fear and anxiety created by terrorism influence policy beliefs and preferences. A consistent finding was that fear and anxiety increase support for the use of force in countering terrorism. In a carefully designed study, Berrebi and Klor (2008) found that terrorist attacks have a substantial influence on political attitudes of voters in Israel and tend to increase political polarization. A series of papers by Huddy and others, based on a nationally representative survey conducted in late 2001 and early 2002, found that “individuals who appraised the risk of terrorism more highly were more supportive of overseas military action, approved of President Bush’s handling of events post-9/11, supported a curtailment of civil liberties, and wanted increased surveillance and tighter immigration restrictions placed on Arabs” (Huddy, Feldman, Taber, & Lahav, 2002, 2005). Gadarian (2010) showed that this reaction is influenced in important ways by the emotional tone of media coverage of terrorist attacks. Her study uses an experimental design that



manipulates both the presence of a threat from terrorism and the emotional cues provided by media reports of terrorist activity. She concludes that the emotional content, not simply the factual information, in media reports has a sizable and statistically significant influence on policy attitudes. Subjects exposed to media reports with emotional content were more likely to support the use of military force, support spending on foreign policy, and approve of specific counterterrorist and foreign policies.

Some terrorist groups engage in violence as a means of gaining popular support for their causes or organizations. The media is drawn to cover terrorism because terrorism evokes important news values. In doing so, media outlets may also provide terrorists with an outlet to air their grievances to a larger audience (Hoffman, 2006). A terrorist organization may hope that attacks will convince potential supporters or sympathizers that the organization is capable of inflicting substantial harm or demonstrate that the organization is more effective than rival groups in challenging the authorities (Chenoweth, 2010; Kydd & Walter, 2006).

There is far less systematic knowledge about the conditions under which media attention to terrorist violence convinces individuals to sympathize with or to offer active support to the implicated terrorist groups. A number of studies suggested a range of conditions under which this might occur. For example, Paul (2009) surveyed the literature to list humiliation, hatred, repression of human rights, foreign occupation, lack of political freedom, self-defense, and specific grievances as possible factors motivating support for terrorism. This issue is very important for counterterrorism and counterinsurgency policies. Contemporary U.S. counterinsurgency policy emphasizes the importance of winning the support of the population and denying such support to insurgent and terrorist groups (U.S. Department of the Army, 2007), but few studies have addressed this issue in a rigorous manner.

Weimann (1991) exposed subjects in an experimental study to varied media coverage of terrorist actions. He found that levels of support for terrorism were generally quite low, but increased if the press coverage presented the terrorist organization as “brave,” “just,” “good,” or “kind.” A recent paper by Lemieux and Asal (2009) implemented a more sophisticated experimental design. Subjects were exposed to vignettes of fictional personal experiences and asked if they would respond by engaging in violence, by engaging in peaceful political activity, or by doing nothing. These vignettes varied in the degree of risk from each action and in the type of grievance the respondent held against the authorities. Controlling for other factors, the study found that participants exposed to stronger grievances are more likely to engage in both violence and peaceful protests and to believe that both of these actions were justified.

These studies suggest that even groups that engage in violence against noncombatants can garner some mass support, but there are significant limitations to our understanding of how and when this can occur. Both papers use general descriptions such as “brave” or “grievance” to describe how terrorist violence may be justified by individuals. This approach is less useful for policy purposes because it does not identify the specific grievances that do and do not motivate support for terrorism and insurgency. The studies have the strength of using

experimental designs, which allow for carefully controlled comparisons that might be difficult to execute in a field setting. The applicability of these experiments to settings where terrorism occurs regularly, however, is not clear. Weimann (1991) relied on a small sample of Israeli students for his study, and Lemieux and Asal (2009) used a large national sample of U.S. residents. Findings from these groups may differ from those in other countries where terrorists launch attacks regularly.

Synthesis

Terrorist groups vary in their ability to gain media attention through terrorist attacks. Existing research concludes that most terrorist attacks do not receive attention from major media outlets such as large-circulation, quality newspapers in the United States and western Europe or from evening news broadcasts on television.

Attacks that result in death or injury, involve tactics such as airline hijackings, and are perpetrated against Western targets regularly attract more media attention. This is consistent with research on news values in other areas of communication studies about the factors influencing media attention to particular events. Most of the research in this vein was conducted in the 1980s and 1990s. The research could be updated to include more media outlets and to evaluate the effect of “new” terrorism tactics such as suicide attacks and attacks designed to kill or injure large numbers of noncombatants.

Less is known about how the media environment influences attention to terrorism. Some studies have found that terrorists and media outlets have a symbiotic relationship, in which both can benefit from coverage of terrorism. Other studies reach different conclusions and question the public’s appetite for more news about terrorism. This area of research would benefit from more theory and research.

Terrorism is effective in provoking fear and anxiety, and there is some evidence that terrorism leads individuals to support counterterrorism policies that are based on military force. This response appears to be influenced by the emotional content of media reports on terrorism. This finding suggests that the media’s approach to covering terrorism has an important effect on the authorities’ responses, although this link has not been evaluated in a systematic manner.

Little is known about how terrorists use violence to garner public support for their political goals. One study found that the media’s framing of a terrorist attack can influence perceptions of the group that launched it. Another study concluded that grievances against the authorities can lead individuals to consider supporting political violence. This issue has important and direct homeland security policy implications and would benefit from additional research.

Future Directions

Both terrorism and the news media have experienced important changes in the past two decades. There have also been important technological and data advances during the same period. These changes open up new questions for research on media attention to terrorism and new ways of answering questions about the topic. They also raise the possibility that conclusions from past research about media attention to terrorism may be no longer valid and therefore may be less useful for informing homeland security and counterterrorism policies. The following issues would merit attention from future research in this area:

1. How do “new media” such as blogs, content farms, and social networks linked to traditional media outlets influence coverage of terrorism? This issue is increasingly important as the audiences and “news holes” of traditional media decline in size and as more people rely on new media for news and information. The interactive and decentralized nature of new media may mean that its coverage is less heavily influenced by journalistic norms of what constitutes “news.” However, because many new media outlets rely on traditional media for basic information about political developments, new media attention may be broadly similar to that of traditional outlets such as newspapers and television. Greater competition from new media for audience share might also lead traditional media to devote more attention to the sensationalistic aspects of terrorist attacks; the results reported in Hoffman et al. (2010) and previously discussed suggest that this is a plausible hypothesis.
2. How do “soft news” outlets such as entertainment programs and magazines and late-night talk shows decide to allocate attention to terrorism? Such outlets are now important providers of news—more Americans watch soft news programming than all of the cable news networks combined (Baum, 2003). The large audiences of soft news outlets might attract greater public attention to issues of homeland security. Such outlets, though, might be more likely to cover the sensationalistic aspects of terrorist attacks—such as those involving very large numbers of casualties or novel tactics—and present viewers with an even less comprehensive portrait of the threat from terrorism; Rohner and Frey (2007) suggest that this is likely the case. Existing research on media attention has focused almost entirely on “hard” news outlets, especially the *New York Times* and the three major U.S. broadcast television networks evening news broadcasts, and thus has not directly addressed this issue.
3. Most studies of media attention use human coders to identify and analyze media reports about specific terrorist attacks. This is time-consuming and expensive, limiting the range of media outlets included in research studies. New technologies and data sources have the potential to make this process more efficient and to dramatically increase the scale of data utilized in studying media attention. News aggregation services such as LexisNexis, Google News, and the Europe Media Monitor might allow researchers to easily access a far larger range of news sources, which in turn could make it feasible to compare media attention across many different types of outlets such as newspapers, new media, and soft news. At the same time, the large scale of media information now available presents new challenges for research (Lazer

et al., 2009). Human coding is not feasible when measuring media attention from hundreds or thousands of media outlets. To fully exploit these data, researchers will need to develop or modify supervised and unsupervised tools for information retrieval and content analysis (Monroe & Schrodt, 2008; for a discussion in the context of conflict research, see Schrodt, 2006).

4. An important and under-researched area concerns how terrorist organizations use violence to increase their political support among a target population and how media attention influences this process. There are a number of plausible hypotheses about the conditions under which this does and does not occur. The few systematic studies in this area have the strength of using carefully controlled experimental research designs, but they have not yet investigated the most important potential causes of support for terrorism or been undertaken in field settings. This research could be extended by using experimental designs that manipulate a wider range of types of media coverage to investigate the effects on multiple populations.

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