

The Media Construction of Terrorism Pre and Post-9/11

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Abstract

There is very little research available today examining the construction of terrorism in the media and the differences in those constructions both pre and post-9/11. In this paper, there is an analysis done in this area that demonstrates the change that took place in media reports about terrorism as a result of 9/11. A sample was gathered using Lexis-Nexis to search *New York Times* articles for the ten-year period before 9/11 and the decade following 9/11. Variations of the word “terror” were used in the search and were then looked at using qualitative analysis along with some basic quantitative analysis. A list of themes were found in the two decades, some similar and some different. I found that the media was much more inclined to use the word terrorism after 9/11 and the frequency in terrorism reports were a lot higher, creating a fear-inducing mindset amongst Americans.

The media is a prime influence on how we perceive a wide variety of topics. Different sources claim that the media effects how we act even after we are done watching movies or the news (How Does the Media Influence the Way People Behave? 2013). We can trace our modern views on terrorism back to things we heard on television news programs, online news articles, and from newspapers. What do Americans picture when they think of a terrorist? We

can find the answers to this in the news media, but the real question is how long have these views been around? What I look to examine, is the role the media played in constructing our view of terrorism both before and after the attacks of September 11th, 2001. I am going to determine whether or not the construction of terrorism and terrorists was the same before the events of 9/11, or if this is a recently new idea that is the result of those attacks.

Literature Review

The way we view terrorism nowadays is that it is typically violent, often large-scale events that make national news. Since 9/11, it is impossible to not hear about some form of terrorism. The word itself provokes a specific reaction within many people based on the way we have been raised to view terrorism (Hawthorne 2012). We tend to overreact to terrorism by thinking that it causes so much death and destruction, when in reality it is actually war that brings about more death than terrorism and we should think of it more “as small-scale war” instead (Hawthorne 2012: 1). In the United States, we have a tendency to label acts of violence as terrorist attacks because the government uses it to refer to attacks on our military and foreign military forces within the country (Hawthorne 2012). So in reality, we tend to overuse the term “terrorism” and classify any act of aggression against us or our allies as an act of terror. What makes terrorism distinct from war though, is fear. If an act incites fear within a number of people, it is more likely to fall under terrorism, and what could lead to us qualifying this as terrorism is humiliation (Hawthorne 2012). Most people are embarrassed to admit that they are afraid of something, and therefore terrorism can cause us to be angry that we are embarrassed, leading to us wanting to fight against it. Other characteristics of terrorism besides the implementation of fear are that acts must be violent and they must be political in nature or

have some sort of political motive behind them (Duyvesteyn 2004). But why are these three things considered to be characteristic of terrorism, and have our perceptions always been this way?

Terrorism itself is hard to define because it is socially constructed (Jenkins 2003). The classic phrase in political science courses is “one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter” which simply means that terrorism is in the eye of the beholder. It cannot be defined in a simple sentence, but rather it differs from society to society and is shaped and changed over time (Jenkins 2003). It is this reason that analysts are interested in this concept of “new terrorism” that seems to have developed in this post-9/11 world.

New terrorism is challenged in *How New Is the New Terrorism?* By Isabelle Duyvesteyn. Terrorism is said to usually be a small-group activity, and before 9/11 your “typical” terrorist was seen as a single male, ages 22 to 25, trained at a university, and had grown up in middle to upper class urban environment and held anarchist or Marxist ideologies (Duyvesteyn 2004: 441). This varies greatly from what most of us who grew up in a post-9/11 era may describe as a terrorist.

The attacks on September 11th brought about a change in people’s perceptions of terrorism. We can probably attribute this to the enormous shock and destruction that was caused by these attacks both on a physical and emotional level (Duyvesteyn 2004). There are some new concepts of terrorism that have come around recently: first, that terrorists operate internationally and are a part of loosely organized networks. Second, they are motivated by

religion. Third, terrorists use weapons to harm as many people as physically possible. Fourth, they do not choose victims carefully, but more generally (Duyvesteyn 2004: 443).

The first concept of new terrorism that is brought forth is the idea that terrorists operate internationally, whereas traditional terrorists would only operate within their respective countries. This is proven to be false in Duyvesteyn's article by stating that in the past, networks have operated internationally, but it may not have been as well-known as it is in this post-9/11 era (Duyvesteyn 2004). The second contest is that new terrorism is motivated by religion, not by politics as was traditionally the case. This also is false based on several historical cases in which terrorists acted due to religious motivations, such as wanting to please their God (Duyvesteyn 2004: 445). Therefore, new terrorism can be seen as being both religiously and politically motivated. The third point about the change in the terrorist's choice of weapon is also not valid. Traditional terrorists use basically the same form of weapons as the current ones, with the only difference being that the weapons operate on a much larger scale nowadays (Duyvesteyn 2004: 447). As to the victims, this remains the same as it was traditionally. Terrorist networks are concerned with inflicting as much damage as they can, regardless of whom the target is a majority of the time. This discussion aims to show that there is no difference between the traditional idea of a terrorist and the modern idea that we, especially those within the United States, have as a result of the attacks on 9/11.

By examining what terrorism is, who commits it, and why, we are able to continue on with the evaluation of why we actually see things this way. Where we get our information from is just as important as the information itself. We need to understand why we define things the way we do and who is bringing us these definitions. In the United States, technology is

everywhere and it is practically impossible to avoid it. Because of this, we gain a lot of our information from the media. The media can be held responsible for a large majority of our views, especially when it comes to how we see and define terrorism today.

Has the meaning behind the word “terrorism” changed since 9/11? Well, the events on September 11th represent a huge point in U.S. foreign policy, and the coverage on this topic picked up substantially as a result of the events. In research, it has been shown that before 9/11, the media was very careful and selective about how often and in what way they discussed terrorism.

Terrorist networks need the media as much as the media needs the terrorists. Violent acts committed by these groups provide great material for major media outlets, and it gives the terrorist networks a platform to display their cause (Nagar 2010: 534). In the past, the media have only used the “t-word” for certain acts of political violence, such as those who were committed by left-wing extremists compared to those committed by other groups/organizations (Nagar 2010: 535). It was found that there were certain acts that were considered to be acts of terrorism such as: hijacking, assassination, and suicide bombing (Nagar 2010: 535). It is said that if the victims of the attack are Americans, the likelihood of the attack being classified of a terrorist act goes up substantially (Nagar 2010: 535). After 9/11 there is a clear trend in using the word “terror” more openly than there was in the past and there is also a tendency to target Islamic groups more often due to the perpetrators of 9/11 being Islamic (Nagar 2010). Before 9/11, newspapers typically used word like rebels, guerillas, and revolutionaries to describe what we would call terrorists in this post-9/11 world (Nagar 2010: 537).

The media in the United States covers terrorism by focusing on who committed the act, what happened, where it happened, and how they did it rather than why it actually happened in the first place (Nacos 2005: 437). Americans want to know what happened, not necessarily the motives behind the act. We do not take the time to understand why these things happen; all we know is that there is supposedly a certain group that is responsible for the acts. The reason that this keeps selling in the media though is the reason that “wars sell papers” (Boaz 2005: 337). With the U.S. and their “war on terror” there is a constant flow of information coming in and if the people will buy it and watch it, the media will continue to sell it. It is from this sale of media that we get our perceptions of terrorism and terrorists themselves. Unfortunately, a large majority of the time these perceptions are negative and result in discrimination against a certain group.

Due to 9/11, there have been many negative perceptions about Muslims. Anti-Muslim organizations have dominated the media since 9/11 by depicting massive fears and dangers that these people can supposedly cause (Bail 2012: 855). Islam has been in the spotlight since the tragedies of September 11th and there has been a horrendously violent stigma attached to their religion, including those who say they continue to plot to overthrow the U.S. government (Bail 2012: 855). There have been people who want to make Islam illegal to practice in the United States and people who spew hate towards anyone who might possibly be Muslim, including Obama. The media stories over terrorism have the ability to create widespread fear and anxiety, they threaten the natural order, and it creates instability with the possibility of change (Bail 2012: 857). Within the media, there is a separation placed between Muslims and ourselves, which is represented by this “us” versus “them” mentality (Bail 2012: 857). That kind

of mentality creates a tension because it gives the impression that there is this huge clash between Islam and the Western world and that we are constantly at war with each other (Kabir and Bourk 2012: 325). This can be described as the “Muslims as enemies” frame that the media can place on them by describing them to be these radical religious terrorists who only want to disrupt the Western world and overthrow the United States’ government (Bail 2012: 863).

We can see the media’s influence on us by a study done that said that only 4.9 percent of Americans were unfavorable against Muslims in November of 2001, and this progressed to 9.7 percent by 2007 (Bail 2012: 870). When people constantly see something in the media, they begin to take it as the truth and take on those ideals themselves. In the United States, a majority of people have not even met someone who identifies themselves as Muslim, yet there is still this bias towards them by us immediately thinking they are some extreme suicide bomber terrorist.

Americans have a tendency to be very judgmental, and also very protective of the things we love. So it comes as no surprise that we saw the attacks on 9/11 as a massive threat, where some saw this as a terrorist attack, we saw it as an “attack upon ‘freedom’” (Kennedy 2012: 272). Obama stated in his speech announcing the death of Osama bin Laden that we did not choose this fight, they did (Kennedy 2012: 272). This goes to show that there is a mentality that has been created by the media that states that there is a “them” that is completely separate and different from us.

The construction of terrorism has altered over time and it shifts based on location. The media is our main source of information these days and a large part of the judgments we make

are the result of what we see and hear from the news. The media has socially constructed terrorism over the years and since 9/11, it has picked up in frequency and intensity.

Methodology

Utilizing content analysis of the sample I have put together from the *New York Times* (NYT) is the best way to determine how the media has constructed terrorism both pre and post-9/11. Content analysis in the field of sociology is defined as a research method that is used to analyze social life by examining and interpreting words and images from sources such as documents, films, and other media (Crossman). I found that using qualitative research with a small amount of basic quantitative research was more beneficial than using strictly quantitative. This allowed me to do some pre-coding by identifying differences in the main themes in each sample. I did this by taking a small sample of ten articles from each decade and finding common themes throughout the articles. I then coded the larger samples but applying those themes to the whole set of articles. I also did some basic quantitative analysis in order to find the differences and similarities in some of the terminology used in each sample.

Sample

I found my sample by using the research database LexisNexis and searched for the key terms “terrorism” and “terrorist” within print articles from the *New York Times*. The *New York Times* is one of the country’s best print papers, always reporting a lot of the stories that are happening not just domestically, but internationally as well. I searched two different time frames in order to find a total of sixty articles that covered a span of twenty years. I broke up the twenty years into two ten-year spans: one pre-9/11 and one post-9/11.

I first searched from September 11th, 1991 to September 10th, 2001 and a total of 33 articles that came up. The second span was from September 11th, 2001 until September 11th, 2011 where 455 articles came up when I searched the same exact terms. The reason I used September 11th, 2001 as the midway point for the research sample is because this was the most explosive terrorist attack on U.S. soil in the country's history and therefore I intend to prove that this event changed the way that the American media portrays terrorism in the *New York Times*.

After I chose my sample, I began the process of coding for themes throughout the articles. First, I worked on pre-coding by reading through and analyzing my small sample made up of ten articles each, to find the common underlying themes across the sample. Once I finished with the small sample, I applied some of the themes I found to the larger sample to see if the rest fit the themes as well, and they did. I divided these themes into the pre and post-9/11 constructions, as the themes were different for each. During the pre-9/11 period, I found that suicide bombers and religious overtones were still common, but the United States was not as concerned with terrorism as it was believed to not take place in the U.S. Nor were these terrorist acts committed solely by Islamic fundamentalists, but more often by the Irish Republican Army or the Tamil Tigers. Common post-9/11 themes included mentions of Al Qaeda, the war on terrorism, and there is more of a focus on the Middle Eastern countries. I analyze each of the themes from the two decades further below.

The change in the number of articles printed alone during the two time frames can be seen as a huge indicator that 9/11 changed our perception of terrorism as influenced by the media. Pre-9/11 there were only 33 articles that came up over a ten-year span compared to the

455 articles that were written post-9/11. Just this shows that terrorism itself became more prevalent post-9/11. In the pre-9/11 sample, the variations of the word “terror” (such as “terrorism” and “terrorist”) come up a total of 92 times, whereas in the post-9/11 sample, the same words pop up a total of 250 times. The sheer numbers shown above indicate that the frequency of terrorism being brought up in the news media post-9/11 more than doubled than what it was before 9/11. The below table represents the basic quantitative analysis, or number count, of the number of times each article referenced the word terror in the pre-9/11 sample, followed by the numbers from the post-9/11 sample. The white boxes depict the article number, and the gray boxes below state the number of references made in that article.

Pre-9/11 Sample

Article	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
References	4	3	13	3	8	0	3	1	6	0	4	0	1	6	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	29	2	3
Total = 92																														

Post-9/11 Sample

Article	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
References	19	4	8	8	13	3	12	19	10	8	7	8	6	9	8	4	1	7	5	3	7	7	7	19	17	7	4	5	6	9
Total = 250																														

Pre-9/11 Themes

From September 11th, 1991 until September 10th, 2001 there were very few articles printed that have to deal with terrorism in the *New York Times*. In my small sample which contained ten articles (chosen at random per a random number generator), there was a list of themes that became prevalent. One of the first points was the inference that terrorism is still a large problem, just not in the United States. Terrorism only happens elsewhere such as in Israel,

Palestine, or England. This is not to say that Americans were never attacked in the pre-9/11 era, because they definitely were. In an article about the first bombing of the Twin Towers, it was said that “American targets have been singled out by terrorists before” (Bernstein, NYT 3/7/1993). The only difference between then and now is that we have never been attacked on American soil before. In the sample, we see this by noticing a large amount of stories concerning the conflict in Israel and Palestine, and also in England with the IRA. The United States believed at this point that they were immune from terrorist attacks because this was America, it never happens here. After the first attack on the Twin Towers, it was said that “a terrorism threshold had likely been crossed” (Bernstein, NYT 3/7/1993). This event opened up the possibility that maybe the United States was not as strong as people believed it to be. This first attack was approached cautiously because there were those who thought that this could potentially lead to the United States being attacked even more than now since there was one second-string group that was able to pull it off.

This translates into the second theme which is that rather than being focused on Al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden, there is more coverage of groups such as the Irish Republican Army (IRA). Al Qaeda existed as an Islamic terrorist organization during this time period, but there is not one mention of the group throughout the entire pre-9/11 sample. Instead, there is a larger focus on other groups that have been identified as terrorist organizations. The following chart displays a basic quantitative analysis of some of the groups/conflicts that are the main focus of this pre-9/11 sample.

Group	Number of Articles
Irish Republican Army	11
Israel/Paelstine Conflict	5
Local Rebel Groups	5
Osama bin Laden	3
Hamas	2
Red Brigades	1
Tamil Tigers	1
Other	2

It is because of this, that within the United States during this time period, we have a less of a harsh outlook on terrorism since it has yet to affect us directly. The way the articles have been written, there is almost a calmness or aloofness to some of them where it seems as though we are only reporting the information, not really investing ourselves emotionally into the problem of terrorism. We see this in the second article in the sample where it states, “Mr. bin Laden, who is believed to be hiding in Afghanistan, is accused of leading a global terrorism conspiracy against Americans, which included the two embassy bombings” (Weiser, NYT 6/28/2001). The sentence here lacks the emotional and passionate quality that we might see in news reporting after 9/11. It makes no mention of what his group is, or why they are against Americans and it does not even indicate that we care much about this problem.

Before bin Laden orchestrated the attacks of September 11th on the United States, there were multiple people who believed that it would be much more beneficial to capture him and try him rather than torture him (NYT 12/23/1999). We can also see this in certain articles where we even refer to him as “Mr.” bin Laden, showing a level of respect for him. The fact that we are showing some form of compassion towards bin Laden at this point shows the degree to which we are almost indifferent towards terrorism.

Even in the post-9/11 sample, we see indication that we did not care about terrorism before 9/11 happened since we believed that it could never affect us. One of the articles stated that “the Bush administration saw terrorism policy as important but not urgent prior to 9/11” (Bumiller, Shenon, NYT 3/26/2004). In retrospect, it is very easy to see that we definitely should have taken the threat of terrorism much more seriously, and perhaps we may have been able to make one small change in the outcome of the events on September 11th, 2001. Terrorism was almost seen as a joke pre-9/11 for some people. Clearly, times have changed since then.

Due to the theory that it seems that we are not as interested in terrorism in the pre-9/11 period, it goes to show that we are definitely much more careful and thoughtful when we act against terrorists. By this, it is implied that we think out our plans and actions and weigh the pros and cons rather than making any sort of knee-jerk reactions as we may have done or will do in the post-9/11 world. Regarding the U.S. bombing of Libya pre-9/11, we said that, “we retaliated only after we had concrete intelligence information showing the Libyans were involved” (Shenon, NYT 4/5/1997). This statement shows that we carefully thought out what we were going to do before we did anything, which is not very similar to our actions post-9/11 when we were eager to seek revenge against terrorists.

Although we were not as concerned or passionate about the issue of terrorism, it seems that we at least acknowledged the fact that terrorism has most definitely advanced in the past few years. One of the things mentioned in the sample was the “increased sophistication and stealth of Middle Eastern terrorists who make Americans a target” (Shenon, NYT 4/5/1997). The quote continues by stating:

“They are no longer the unsophisticated local dissidents that throw Molotov cocktails. They are very sophisticated in the whole structure they’ve set up—how they train each other, how they call on each other for support, how they move. About the only thing we know is that we must go on the assumption that we will continue to be the victims of terrorism, and that terrorists will hit us again” (Shenon, NYT 4/5/1997).

This statement made by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the time, General John Shalikashvili. There is an acknowledgement here that terrorists are becoming much more advanced and secretive compared to where they were at in the past. The United States seems to take notice of the fact that this is a pretty serious global concern, as it makes it much harder to identify terrorist activities. But, there is still a lack of the sense of urgency that we see in the media reports about terrorism post-9/11.

One of the themes that has always been present in terrorism is that there is almost always some large tie to religion. It is one of the major components of terrorism and we see this displayed throughout the sample where religious groups are committing various acts of terrorism in the name of their religion. Pre-9/11, the sample is not as one-sided as a lot of the sample in the post-9/11 period. This is due to the fact that 9/11 concentrated our attention on Islamic fundamentalists rather than on a variety of different religious groups such as what we see pre-9/11. We still see a lot of the Islamic/Muslim overtones in six of the thirty articles in this first sample, but there is also a wide array of stories concerning the IRA, which is a Catholic organization. But this goes to show that before the attacks of September 11th, we were not as keyed in on all of the Islamic terrorist groups even though they were still out there and

operational. There was more of an eclectic taste of stories being reported during this decade and it seems as though 9/11 tainted the media reporting on this topic.

The last theme that I found in this sample is one that we still find in the post-9/11 sample, and it also continues to be used strongly today. It is the usage and/or commonness of suicide bombers and bombs in general. Most Americans might only tie this in with Islamic fundamentalists, but this is seen a lot throughout the pre-9/11 sample with other groups as well. There is mention of suicide bombings, or bombings in 13 of the 30 articles in the sample. This makes up a pretty decent portion, showing that even though it may not be the main focus of the articles, it is showing that we associate bombings with terrorist attacks still before September 11th.

Pre-9/11, the frequency in which terrorism was reported was pitiful to say the least. There was an extreme lack of coverage concerning this topic, but there were still a variety of themes that could be found in the limited sample. Below is a chart compiled using basic quantitative analysis in order to count the number of articles that contained each theme.

Theme	Number of Articles
Terrorism happens elsewhere	27
Focus not on Middle East	15
Less harsh reactions	6
More careful to act	5
Increased sophistication of terrorists	3

Religiously motivated	16
Bombings mentioned	12

Post-9/11 Themes

Post-9/11 is made up of some of the same themes that we see in the pre-9/11 sample. We still see the frequency of bombings, and the strong emphasis on Islam, although in this time period, it is dramatized compared to what we have seen in the media up to this point. I believe that 9/11 changed the way that we view a lot of the aspects of terrorism due to the fact that it caused so much trauma and heartbreak for a lot of Americans. One of the most obvious themes we see, as was illustrated earlier, was the number of times the word terrorism is used compared to what we saw before the events of 9/11. There was a drastic increase in its usage in the media since that day because we were suddenly thrust into the middle of it and it became a large concern for a lot of Americans. But there were also other themes that were pretty clear throughout the entire sample.

The first theme that I noticed was the added emphasis on Middle Eastern countries. Rather than the focus being in England with the IRA, there is an increase in the *New York Times* zeroing in on areas such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran. One of the articles stated that “Iran is a grave threat to regional security” (Shanker, NYT 12/9/2007). This statement demonstrates part of the distrust that has developed between the United States and some of the Middle Eastern countries. Immediately after 9/11 there was an increase in interest in the Middle East, which is emphasized in one of the articles in the sample that claims that the

number of students who joined Introduction to the Middle East classes and terrorism classes went up drastically (Rubenstein, NYT 10/14/2001). The influx in the number of students demonstrated the increased interest in the Middle East as a result of the 9/11 attacks and this was mimicked throughout a majority of the sample.

Along with more mention of Middle Eastern countries, there was a lot more mention of Al Qaeda throughout this sample, compared to the pre-9/11 sample that does not use the name of the group even once. Al Qaeda became very popular after the attacks of September 11th since they were the group that claimed responsibility and this thrust them into the spotlight. Those events gave the group the spark they needed in order to be taken seriously as an organization. Led by Osama bin Laden, the group gained a lot of media attention and was able to project their views to the world with ease. Al Qaeda is mentioned multiple times in almost half of the articles in the sample, with other groups mentioned being the Taliban and Hamas. Both of the other groups mentioned refer to Middle Eastern Islamic terrorist organizations. The below chart shows the breakdown of the topics of each article of the post-9/11 sample. It is shown that Al Qaeda was the dominating topic, followed by general terrorism, then Islamic and Middle Eastern terrorism. All these topics are interrelated, showing a common theme in the post-9/11 sample: that the media in the United States was mainly focused on Islamic-related terrorism and terrorist groups following the attacks of September 11th, 2001. We can attribute this to the fact that 9/11 was a major event that popped the safety bubble that most Americans believed we were contained in and we therefore came to fear the groups that attacked us.

Main Topic	Number of Articles
Al Qaeda	12
Terrorism in General	7
Islamic Terrorism	6
Middle East Terrorism	4
Other	1

The media constructed 9/11 as a big turning point in the history of our country and therefore the terms pre and post-9/11 began to pop up. Not only are these terms used today, but 9/11 itself is referenced many times in regards to terrorist activity, whether inside or outside of the United States. In the post-9/11 sample, the attacks of 9/11 are mentioned a total of 58 times throughout all of the articles. The media uses 9/11 to serve as a reminder for Americans of the negative effect that terrorism has had on this country and by inserting this date into their articles, it creates a mindset or feeling for the reader that terrorism is bad and we should be fearful or even hateful towards it. The attacks are used as a catalyst to elicit a response from the reader so that the media can continue to shape the public's view on terrorism by not allowing us to forget what Al Qaeda did to us as a nation on that day.

As a result of 9/11, we as a country declared a global "war on terror". By this, it means that we decided to make it our mission to combat terrorism not just within our own borders, but to attempt to put a stop to it all over the world. One of the problems people face nowadays though is defining terrorism. Before 9/11, there may have been a less stereotypical definition out there, but most Americans view a terrorist as being someone of Arab or Middle Eastern

descent, or as a suicide bomber. This is due to the fact that the media has shaped us to see terrorists this way. But aside from the issues of defining terror, we made it our duty to wipe out terrorism on a global level. Throughout the sample, the war on terror is only specifically mentioned in four articles, but in each of those four, it is repeated multiple times and is one of the main focuses. The war on terror has become the driving force behind our ferocity towards any terrorist organization no matter whose borders they are within. This seems to be a very important theme present in the post-9/11 world seeing as it fuels our motivation against terrorism.

The last two themes I found had a smaller presence throughout the sample, but I believe that they are still very important in the construction of our post-9/11 views on terrorism as portrayed by the media. The first one is the idea that the United States now sees themselves as obligated to combat terrorism, whether others want them to or not. The United States has been more apt to insert ourselves into issues compared to pre-9/11. There has been more of an interest in global matters, especially when it comes to weapons manufacturing and handling. Only two years after 9/11, the *New York Times* had an article that said that there was definitely room for improvement on this matter and that “we need more routine and forceful means of policing the world’s nuclear materials” (Wright, NYT 9/11/2003). In another article almost two months after the events of 9/11 the *New York Times* wrote about how we need to safeguard nuclear sites much more than before (Tagliabue, NYT 11/3/2001). Part of this paranoia can be attributed to the fact that we wanted to be able to protect ourselves and prevent an attack like 9/11 from happening ever again.

The last theme that I recognized was that terrorism has seemed to become the norm in the post-9/11 world for Americans. Since 9/11, we have almost come to expect the worst from every situation. In an article by Clyde Haberman of the *New York Times*, he uses “but at least it wasn’t a terrorist act. Whew!” multiple times to prove the point that Americans expect these things to happen to us nowadays (Haberman, NYT 7/20/2007). It is a sad realization, but it is also true. Americans assume that we are going to be attacked by terrorists just because it is the United States and therefore, our mindset has changed. Terrorism is become the norm and we are much more fearful because of it.

The post-9/11 offered up some very useful information in the media reports on terrorism. There was a substantial increase in reports on a global level following the attacks on the World Trade Center. Although there were some themes that did not change from the previous decade, there were quite a few new ones that cropped up as well. The following table shows the number of articles contained in each theme.

Theme	Number of Articles
Focus on Middle East	16
Al Qaeda	12
Mentions 9/11	21
Mentions “war on terror”	4

Conclusions

The research concludes that there were some similarities in the media reporting of terrorism alongside of the vast differences in the two decades. It cannot be denied that there was a significant increase in media attention following 9/11 and therefore we see much more reporting concerning terrorism all over the world.

Pre-9/11 offered a view of terrorism that was less concerned with the religious aspects that we see a lot of today. In researching the sample, there were a small number of articles even available for the time frame compared to after 9/11. Reporters were a lot less likely to use variations of the word "terror" during this decade, and most of the reports were concerned with the IRA in England rather than Middle Eastern groups which were the clear focus of the post-9/11 reports.

The post-9/11 themes shared some similarities and some differences with the pre-9/11 sample, but overall there was a clear difference in the two times periods in the reporting in the media. The frequency in which terrorism was reported picked up drastically following the attacks on 9/11. As a result of the events, the media has paid much more attention to terrorism on a global level. There is a heavier emphasis on Islamic fundamentalist organizations and a heavier focus on the Middle East. The United States was more inclined to go out of their way to hunt down and stop terrorists as a result of 9/11. Declaring a war on terror made it the supposed duty of the United States to do this. These themes were prevalent throughout the entire sample.

The media has played on this fear that Americans now have in order to continue to remind us that terrorists attacked us on our soil. The media has constructed terrorism in such a way that we are constantly thinking of them as a dangerous threat to us and to our country. I found in the data that before 9/11, terrorism was not nearly as important and the media was focused on various types of groups. Post-9/11, this changed by shifting to a more concentrated focus on Islamic groups such as Al Qaeda. It can be concluded that 9/11 was a major event not only for the media within the United States, but also on the global level. It brought attention to events that have always been happening but had gone unnoticed over the years. With the attack on the United States, it made the problem of terrorism a much larger and much more serious one. Through the data and the research done in this study, I can say that 9/11 without a doubt influenced the media in their reporting on terrorism and through that, has influenced all of the readers by shaping their views of terrorism to mimic what is portrayed in the media.

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Appendix A- Data Sources

PRE-9/11 SAMPLE

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