The Antagonist and Protagonist Approaches of Televising Extremism and Terrorism

HATEM EL ZEIN
Central Queensland University, Australia
hatem.elzein@cqumail.com

ABSTRACT

This paper illuminates a current issue related to reporting extremism and terrorism because the developments in the communication technology and the spawn of television stations that seek scoop have allowed the extremists and terrorists not only to transmit their messages, but also to recruit followers and entice supporters throughout the world. Owing to this emerged problem, this paper answers the following question: can the mainstream media televise extremism and terrorism and what is the suitable approach in this regard? To approach this question, this paper reviews the existing literature and debate related to reporting extremism and terrorism. Guided by agenda-setting theory, it adopts a qualitative approach and focuses in the analysis on two contemporary cases aired by Australian broadcasters to verify the argument that the media should be professional and responsible in the cases related to reporting extremism and terrorism. This paper concludes that the media may maximize the publicity of the extremists and terrorists and consequently it may allow them to achieve their agendas. Drawing on these findings, this paper develops models related to the significance of media to the extremists and terrorists and their targeted audiences. Thus, it presents a set of recommendations can be adopted by the media outlets when they report extremism and terrorism.

Keywords: *Extremism, Television, Terrorism, Agenda-Setting Theory, Media Responsibility*

INTRODUCTION

The paradigm of airing the extremists and terrorists' activities, including interviewing their figures and advocates, relies on the editorial policies set by the media outlets on how to inform their audiences and achieve a scoop. Thus, many public media outlets consider the policy of their governments when they report extremism or terrorism or host their advocates. For example, when a former suspected terrorist appeared in Q&A program on Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) and quarrelled with a member in the Australian Parliament to provide irrational argument, the Australian Government denounced hosting of such figures and considered this act a betrayal of Australians and as a result it ordered an inquiry.

In this regard, this paper discusses the right and responsibility of the mainstream media, particularly television, in reporting extremism and terrorism. Before delving in reviewing the literature to present the pro and con arguments, this paper distinguishes at the beginning between these two concepts.

To achieve its aim, the paper reviews critically the existing literature on reporting extremism and terrorism, pointing to two cases from the Australian media outlets, particularly the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC).

This paper outlines three relevant media theories to reporting extremism and terrorism, concluding that the agenda-setting theory is the adopted one in this form of research

because it is related on how the media should approach and portray the issues of extremism and terrorism.

As it is guided by agenda-setting theory, this paper points why the media is significant to the extremists and terrorists. As a result, it presents a model on how the media can play a role to achieve the agendas of the extremists and terrorists. In this vein, the paper pinpoints that the media policies should oppose the agendas of the extremists and terrorists. Thus, it recommends a set of procedures on how the media can play a responsible way to protect the society from the propagation of the extremists and terrorists' messages.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This review of literature aims to present the debate related to media and terrorism in order to conclude why the media outlets should be responsible whether in reporting news stories related to extremism and terrorism, or conducting interviews with extremists and terrorists. It outlines the debate that hinges around two arguments: in favour approaches of televising extremism and terrorism, and the approaches that warn from opening air to the extremists and terrorists or reporting their news without censorship. Thus, this review is seminal because it allows the elaboration of the findings and recommendations based on the discussion of the arguments. However, it is significant to present at the beginning the denotations of extremism and terrorism.

Extremism and Terrorism

There is no one definition of extremism. Generally, extremism is "a political term which determines the activities that are not in accordance with norms of the state, are fully intolerant toward others, reject democracy as a means of governance and the way of problem solving and also reject the existing social order" (Sotlar, 2004, p. 703).

The problem of extremists is in their agendas and not in the way to achieve them (Sotlar, 2004). Thus, the problem of extremists is represented by the ideology they hold (Mudde, 2000).

However, there is a difference between extremism and radicalism. Frisch (cited in Mudde, 2000) points that, "What we characterise as 'extremist' today, used to be characterised as 'radical'. Nowadays, attempts that are characterised as 'radical' are those aimed at one-sided solutions that go 'down to the root' of certain problems, without (yet) aiming at the full or partial elimination of the free democratic order" (p. 12).

Similar to the denotation of extremism, terrorism has a global impact and there is no international consensus on its definition. One of its definitions, which this research adopts, that terrorism is, "The use of violence to target non-combatants ('innocents' in the *jus in bello* sense) for political purposes" (Frey & Wellman, 2003, p. 263). This definition of terrorism could be applied to any organisation, state and individual(s), who are using deliberately violence against innocents, whatever their intention or their goal. As a result, extremist organisations turn into terrorists when they use violence to achieve their agendas and objectives.

As it has become a global phenomenon in recent years, some researchers consider terrorism a form of communication. Schmid and de Graaf (cited in Schlesinger et al., 1983) argue that, "Terrorism can best be understood as a violent communication strategy. There is a sender, the terrorist, a message generator, the victim, and a receiver, the enemy and/or

the public. The nature of the terrorist act, its atrocity, its location and the identity of its victim serve as a generator for the power of the message" (p. 156).

In this context, the relationship between terrorism and media postulated a new term "media-oriented terrorism" to denote that terrorists intend from their acts to entice the media outlets and public attention (Martin, 2010).

In this vein, Suter (2008) agrees with Martin that the best vehicle for publicising terrorism is the media. Based on Martin and Suter's arguments, it could be observed that terrorism and extremism may not succeed without the media. As noted earlier, terrorism in itself is a form of communication, but it needs the media to achieve its goal.

The Historical Debate on Media and Terrorism

The attacks against the United States of America on 11 September 2001 were a historical event in the world of terrorism and counterterrorism. People in the United States and throughout the world watched on television, on that day, the dramatic fall of the twin towers of the World Trade Centre in New York. However, the discussion related to media and terrorism precedes the September attacks.

In this context, Goodin (2006) argues that, "'Terrorism' is one subject that is particularly prone to being over reported in the media. This had been true well before 11 September 2001" (pp. 134 & 135).

Due to its importance in the last century, terrorists were aware about the importance of the media alongside with their actions. Rosie (1986) observes that, "From the mid-1960s it became possible for a terrorist group to hijack an aircraft (or ship) anywhere in the world and have news of the event flashed round the globe within hours" (p. 24).

One of the arguments, which emerged after the mid of 1970s, is that covering terrorism by the media has a contagion effect, because it serves in spreading terrorism whereas some terrorists consider the actions of other terrorists as models can be followed (Dobkin, 1992; Kirsten, 2007). In 1981, there was a turning point in the United States when President Reagan pointed in his inaugural address to the starting point for examining the emergence of the terrorist threat (Dobkin, 1992). In this regard, the global status quo of terrorism in 1980s led to an academic debate on television about this phenomenon. Hence, the issues of extremism and terrorism required explanations from academics and experts rather than covering their related news stories. Thus, Goodin (2006) denies any relation between the increase of terrorism as a result of reporting the terrorist attacks. "A 1987 study of coverage of international terrorist incidents by television news, for example, found that there was no systematic relation between the frequency of news reports and the frequency of actual terrorist incidents, worldwide" (Goodin, 2006, p. 135).

The problem is not with Goodin's argument, which is based on an empirical study in 1987; however, the problem is in the responsibility of the media on how it should report terrorism. This issue will be discussed further in a later section in this review.

On the other hand, the media after 9/11 has become further aware of the phenomenon of terrorism, because the attacks on the United States were televised. Goodin (2006) finds out that, "With September 11, of course, US television coverage of terrorism soared. The number of news stories about terrorism on the three major networks [in the United States] jumped from around 178 in the 12 months prior to September 11 to 1345 stories in the twelve months afterwards" (p. 135).

This massive coverage has been noticed by academics dealing with media and terrorism. One of the observations is the change of the discourse of the media outlets when they deal with terrorism, after the United States' launch of the 'global war on terror.' In this context, Qureshi (2009) argues that, "We must accept that the 9/11 attack brought about a significant change in the global view on terrorism. The entire media even the global broadcasters like CNN are committed to the 'US Patriotic Act'" (p. 224).

It could be observed from Goodin and Qureshi's arguments that the September attacks were a turning point in reporting terrorism, where the then American administration played a major role in using the media to change the global view on terrorism, because "the media overwhelming adopted the language of the 'global war on terror' when reporting terrorism" (Brinson and Stohl, 2009, p. 230).

These arguments are applicable on the case of reporting terrorism in the United States, but it would be difficult to define a global consensus on terrorism, and it is difficult to find a global language on how the media should report extremism and terrorism.

In addition to these developments, the emergence of the social media platforms allows extremists and terrorists not only to transmit their messages, but also to recruit followers and entice supporters throughout the world. In this regard, the social media platforms are used by a number of sympathisers with extremists and terrorists to recruit foreign fighters in order to travel to Syria and join the notorious military organisations (Carter et al., 2014). As a result of the significance of the social media to extremists and terrorists, some governments have blocked many websites and virtual platforms to protect their citizens from the influx of the hostile propaganda (Kimmage & Ridolfo, 2007).

Televising Extremism and Terrorism
Although the social media platforms used by extremists and terrorists to transmit their messages, television is still considered one of the most important mediums to report extremism and terrorism, because it can reach wider audiences.

Schlesinger et al. (1983) argue that television news is probably the main source of footages of terrorism for audience, because television is widely seen by the public and it may has an impact on the audience. In this context, Lewis (2005) asserts that, "Television remains the most widespread and significant medium in the global communication of terror and political violence" (p. 7)

Due to its audio-visual characteristic, the same authors argue that "television as a privileged place in the debate on 'terrorism' has been further secured by the rise of counter-insurgency theories which see the state fighting a continuing battle for hearts and minds, in which television as the dominant mass medium, plays a strategic role" (ibid, 143). Thus, terrorists and terrorist organisations have known early the importance of television and consider it their favourable medium to promulgate their messages and broadcast their activities (Chaliand, 1987; Martin, 2010).

Notably, there is a difference between television and print media in reporting terrorism, because television focuses on the event itself rather than the context and circumstances (Dobkin, 1992). This argument has been built on the fact that, "Television news coverage lends immediacy and adds a dimension of drama not captured in print media. Reports of terrorism presented on television constitute high drama due to the compelling nature of coverage, the centrality of personalities, the intense emotional and symbolic content, and the priestly role adopted by news personalities" (Dobkin, 1992, p. 4).

The dramatized coverage of television to terrorism occasionally becomes unusual, because it exaggerates the event. This is the main problem when television screens terrorists' acts or airs interviews with extremists and terrorists. Nacos (1994) agrees with the arguments that emphasise on the importance of television in its coverage, however, she says that, "It has been charged time and again that television coverage of terrorism is excessive and that the media blows the importance of these events out of proportion" (p. 56).

The appearance of the former suspected terrorist Zaky Mallah in a talk show program on the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) in June 2015 and his debate with MP Steven Ciobo to provide an irrational argument provoked the Australian Government and the then Prime Minister considered hosting Mallah a betrayal of Australians and ordered an inquiry. This governmental anger is due to the nature of ABC as a national broadcaster provided Mallah with a platform to transmit his message to millions of Australians (Donald, 2015). Although ABC tried to investigate this error of judgement to muzzle the voices of criticism, some commercial media outlets made a use of this incident to exaggerate their campaigns against the national broadcaster for hosting a former suspected terrorist live on air.

Exploiting the Media by Extremists and Terrorists?

As noted earlier, the argument of the Australian government against hosting Mallah on television implies that extremists and terrorists are tending to exploit the media to transmit their messages. Historically, this notion of exploitation the media by extremists and terrorists has been observed and discussed by many researchers, as well as politicians and even terrorists themselves who agree that the media is a useful tool to entice attention. William Whitelaw, the former Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, points out that, "The principal object of the terrorists' acts of violence is to draw attention to themselves and gain notoriety… They bomb and murder their way into the headlines" (cited in Schlesinger et al., 1983, p. 12).

In this regard, some academics agree that terrorists consider their actions as a device to maximise publicity and entice public attentions, because the media outlets will cover their violence (Frey & Wellman 2003; Schaffert 1992). In this vein, Qureshi (2009) argues that, "The new media has provided a perfect vehicle for terrorists to transmit their message and now the terrorists have learnt to manipulate the media as well" (p. 225).

As many terrorists and terrorist organisations try to disseminate their messages to the public, they have established directly and indirectly relationships with some reporters (Martin, 2010). In this vein, there are examples of the relationships between journalists and terrorists. An example is the attendance of Al-Jazeera Syrian journalist, Ahmad Zeidan – who produced the documentary 'Ben Ladin Unmasked' - the wedding feast of ben Ladin's son (Tatham, 2006). Another example is the case of Tayseer Alluni, Al-Jazeera's former reporter in Afghanistan, who was sentenced to seven years' jail in 2005, because the court concluded that he has had collaborated with Al-Qaida (Lia, 2008).

From an extremist or a terrorist's point of view, Hans Joachim Klein, the former member of the German left-wing militant group, who participated in the attack against the Headquarter of The Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in the Austrian Capital Vienna in 1975, confided to Der Spiegel: "We… asked ourselves… what would be an action that no one can disregard, that everyone must talk about in the media

and report on. We found it: a bomb. Even though the bomb did not explode, this story went halfway around the world" (cited in Weimann & Winn, 1994, p. 118).

Some researchers argue that extremists and terrorists try to succeed in sending their messages. If successful, terrorists can transmit their messages and images to million houses throughout the world, and thus they may succeed in enticing some audiences to their side if they embedded their messages with sentimental content (Martin, 2010).

Thus, the publicity is in the hand of the media outlets which have the control on what to transmit to the public (Nacos, 1994). Wilkinson (cited in Venkatraman, 2004) argues that, "The free media in an open society are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and manipulation by ruthless terrorist organizations [...]. The media are almost bound to respond to terrorist propaganda of the deed because it is dramatic bad news" (pp. 106-108). Based on these arguments, it seems obviously that the media outlets report the news of extremists and terrorists to inform the public. However, the main issue is related to how the media report such news without allowing the extremists and terrorists to exploit the freedom of expression and press.

The Media Responsibility in Reporting Extremism and Terrorism

The earlier discussions imply that the media outlets, mainly television, should be responsible in its coverage of the extremists and terrorists' actions. Notably, the debate about the media responsibility in reporting terrorism among academics and politicians goes back to the end of 1970s and 1980s, especially in the United States and the United Kingdom. Rosie (1986) refers to this debate saying:

> *Increasingly Western governments (and in particular those of Britain and the USA) are arguing that terrorism cannot be defeated until the Western media stop playing into the hands of terrorists by providing saturation coverage of every major incident. The media (and particularly the American media) respond by saying that what is happening must be reported, and the phenomenon with which they are confronted. These arguments were vigorously aired during and after the hijacking of a TWA jet to Beirut in June 1985 when the American TV crews were given access to the hostages, and relayed day-by-day, often live coverage of the events home to the United States. In Britain, the BBC fell foul of the British government in 1985 for planning to broadcast television interviews with two Ulster extremists, one of whom had been a leading light in the provisional IRA [Irish Republican Army] (p. 25).*

Some politicians and academics point that the media represents an important platform for terrorists, arguing that the media should deprive terrorists from transmitting their messages. Thus, the former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher concluded when the violence of the Irish Republican Army reached a peak that, "Publicity is the oxygen of terrorism" (cited in Qureshi, 2009, p. 237).

Nacos (2002) agrees with Thatcher's comment and reiterates that the, "Former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher had it right when she proclaimed the publicity is the oxygen of terrorism. If anything has changed in the last ten or fifteen years, it is the increased availability of the sort of oxygen Mrs Thatcher warned of and upon which mass-mediated terrorism thrives" (p. 27).

Goodin (2006) comments on Thatcher's phrase, pointing out it was "employed by British home secretary, Douglas Hurd, in 1988 when invoking his powers under the Broadcasting Act to outlaw the radio or television broadcasting of speeches by representatives or supporters of various named organizations involved in The Troubles…" (p. 131). In this regard, Goodin (2006) warns the media outlets from transmitting terrorists' reports, because they may intend to gain legitimacy or to fear the public.

These arguments are no longer applicable, because politicians, academics and researchers should seek other ways to counter extremists and terrorists' propaganda, especially with the progress of new communication technologies. As a preventive procedure, some governments have tried to control terrorists' messages.

In their studying UK and US newspapers' coverage of the London attacks on 7 July 2005 and the transatlantic terror plot on 8 October 2006, Brinson and Stohl (2009) conclude that, "The media coverage in these particular situations, seem to 'err' on the side of the government, by creating frames in the news supportive of the government position, as opposed to providing the terrorist with the 'oxygen' they seek to have their message prevail" (p. 243). Thus, "When President Bush said to the country that Americans are vulnerable to weapons of mass destruction in the hands of terrorists, for example, the media headlined those comments and effectively magnified the public's fears" (Moeller, 2008, p. 7). However, the role of politicians and media is crucial to control the public fears and prevent the terrorists from achieving their agendas.

One of the important issues is the negative influence of terrorists' messages on public opinion. Norris (cited in Brinson and Stohl, 2009) argues that "one sided messages of terrorism will influence public opinion, how people evaluate terrorism and its actors, and perceptions of future risk and threats" (pp. 229-230). In this vein, Qureshi (2009) agrees with Norris' argument pointing to the damaging effect of the media outlets on the audience when they transmit terrorists' messages as facts.

From governmental perspective, the state media can adopt the governmental policy in reporting terrorism. This has been verified clearly by the previous arguments. However, there is still the issue of the commercial media, which is often accused of spreading fear when reporting terrorism and relaying terrorist messages. Notably, reporting terrorism in Western democracies is one of the important issues, because extremists and terrorists may benefit from the freedom of press and expression (Weimann & Winn, 1994).

Officials and academics observe the danger of reporting terrorism and thus they requested the media to put editorial criteria. Clarke (2003) argues that:

> *Terrorists need the media to spread the fear that the terrorist wishes to create. But at the same time terrorists generally stand for intolerance and do not support openness. Terrorists fear new ideas; new religions and they see the modern world as a threat, not an opportunity. It is the role of the media to create a more open world. The terrorist who manipulates the media in the short run will come to be fearful of the media as they seek to better inform the public about the narrowness of terrorist ambition (p. 66).*

However, there is always an intersection point between media and terrorism. This point is related to the need of the media, especially the commercial media outlets, to report

terrorism and the need of extremists and terrorists for the media. This relationship is described as "a symbiotic relationship" (Ghetti, 2008, p. 489).

When the media outlets report terrorism, they serve the aim of terrorists and encourage other terrorist groups to engage in more terrorism. Ghetti (2008) argues that terrorists are inspired by the actions of other terrorists, and thus there is a possibility the inspired terrorists may increase their attacks which is reinforced by publicity provided by the media. Thus, Martin (2010) warns the media, arguing "It is conceivable that interviews with terrorists, media scooping, and other reporting practices may send messages to terrorists, encourage supporters, cause victims to react, engage the target in a global forum, elicit sympathy and convince political and journalistic analysts to affix favourable labels to the group or movement" (p. 395).

However, Nacos (1994) has an opposite argument, pointing out that the public does not accept the argument that terrorist attacks would not occur if the media outlets simply stopped reporting terrorism.

Nacos's argument is true on the one hand that the media cannot stop terrorist acts. On the other hand, this argument ignores the influence that the media has when reporting terrorists' actions. Ghetti and Martin's arguments are crucial in verifying the potential role of the media outlets in supporting terrorism whether directly or indirectly, because they may have a negative influence when they report terrorist acts.

In his discussion of the American media coverage of terrorism, Jenkins (2003) argues that, "When we read or watch media coverage of terrorism, we have to understand the limits of what media knows, what they can say, and how completely even the most critical journalists depend on the good will of federal law enforcement and intelligence agencies. Yet the news media are not the only way that people form their images of terrorism" (p. 138).

It seems that the lack of a world consensus on the definition of terrorism prevents the existence of a useful criterion on how the media should report terrorism. The debate on this issue goes back to the 1980s. Schlesinger et al. (1983), who focused on discussing the televising of the Irish Republican Army's actions and its messages in the United Kingdom, agree with the argument that since terrorism is outside the consensus, broadcasters do not feel obliged to treat it in a balanced or impartial manner. The same authors, who discussed the power of media during conflicts, requested from the media to ensure its diversity principle and availability to everyone. Drawing on this argument, the media should report terrorism. However, reporting terrorism without professional measures in the post-9/11 may threaten the media role in the society and it might be accused of irresponsibility even if there is no global consensus on the definition of terrorism (Venkatraman, 2004).

Thus, the major problem is not in the definition, but in the media policy. In this regard, Venkatraman (2004) argues that social responsibility is the solution to save the media and the public from the influence of terrorists. Similarly, Suter (2008) argues that, "The media must be responsible in how they report terrorist attacks. Otherwise, they may find they are part of the problem, rather than the solution" (pp. 277 & 278).

It has been made clear from these arguments that the media outlets should be aware when they report extremism and terrorism. They should be responsible for delivering news professionally, not the terrorists' messages.

A resolution on terrorism and the media adopted by the participants in the Conference on Terrorism and Media held in Manila on 1 and 2 May 2002 agrees with the right of the media to report on terrorism, but in a responsible way:

> *The media have both a right and a duty to report fully on terrorism in the interest of the public's right to know and to promote open, informed debate about terrorism; All parties to conflicts should respect the right of journalists to investigate and report freely on conflict and to have maximum access to conflict areas.*
>
> *The threat of terrorism should not be used as an excuse to impose restrictions on the right to freedom of expression and of the media, or on freedom of information, and specifically on the following rights: to editorial independence; to protect confidential sources of information; to access information held by public bodies; to freedom of movement; and to privacy of communications.*
>
> *Media outlets, journalists and publishers and broadcasters associations, academic institutions and other civil society organisations should take measures to enhance the capacity of the media to report professionally on terrorism and to promote tolerance, including through training and providing opportunities for discussion of ethical issues relating to reporting on terrorism (Boafo & Coudray, 2003, p. 127).*

In revisiting the case of ABC, the presenter of Q&A talk show Tony Jones opposed directly Mallah's argument that officials, such as MP Steven Ciobo, who support the regulation towards stripping Australian citizenships from dual national terrorists, are encouraging individuals in the Australian Muslim community to travel to Syria in order to join ISIS (Meade, 2015). Furthermore, ABC conducted an internal investigation to find how Mallah attended the talk show (Donald, 2015).

In this context related to the significance of the media responsibility, the then Australian Prime Minister praised previously Jones' colleague Emma Alberici who engaged in a media debate with Hizb ut-Tahrir's spokesman Wassim Doureihi after he provided an irrational argument on the program the Lateline on 8 October 2014 (Bourke, 2014).

During the siege of Lindt Cafe in Sydney in December 2014, the Australian media outlets, particularly the public and commercial televisions, followed the police's instruction by refraining from broadcasting any video shows the demands of the gunman Man Haron Monis or the status quo of the hostages despite these videos were uploaded on YouTube (Meade, 2014). These examples support the argument that the media should be responsible in such sensitive cases, because it is the responsibility of the media to report extremism and terrorism in a professional and ethical way and its responsibility to investigate the backgrounds of its guests.

In presenting a significant archival example of the media responsibility in broadcasting the terrorists' messages, it is important to note how CNN dealt with an interview conducted by Al-Jazeera's reporter Tayseer Alluni with Osama ben Ladin on October 20, 2001. Although there was an agreement between the two satellite televisions and Al-Jazeera did not provide the videotaped interview to CNN. However, CNN obtained the videotaped interview from what so called an independent source and aired excerpts on January 31 and February 1, 2002 in a professional and responsible way, filtering what it wants to screen to its audience (El-Nawawy & Iskander, 2002; Miles, 2005). Hence, there is a potential impact of the leaders' frames on the conflict (Adisa et al., 2016).

In conclusion, this review of literature has presented the academic and political debate on televising extremism and terrorism. It has pointed out that the media outlets should be responsible in its reports and news stories related to extremists and terrorists. Drawing on this literature that pointed to the protagonist and antagonist approaches of televising extremism and terrorism, there is a gap on how the media outlets, particularly television, can play a responsible role in facing the extremists and terrorists' propaganda.

METHODOLOGY

The nature of the analysis in this paper is critical and the approach is suited to be qualitative. Thus, the methodology adopted in this paper, which is qualitative, aims to address the question: Can the mainstream media televise extremism and terrorism and what is the suitable approach in this regard?

Owing to this gap concluded in the systematic review of literature, this paper debates the existed literature focusing mainly on two cases aired by Australian broadcasters: the siege of Lindt Cafe by the gunman Man Haron Monis on 15 December 2014 and the controversial appearance of the former suspected terrorist Zaky Mallah in Q&A program on ABC on 22 June 2015.

To draw its findings and recommendations from debating the archival data, this paper is guided by agenda-setting theory because it considers that both the media outlets on one side and the extremists and terrorists on the other side have their own different agendas. This media theory is relevant to the political debate and the public sphere (Salman et al., 2016). In this regard, it is crucial to point to the media theories that are relevant in the studies on how the media outlets should report extremism and terrorism.

There are three theories can be approached based on the way of investigation. Framing as a media theory can be applied to know how the extremists and terrorists and their news presented in media, because the main assumption of this theory is how the discourse is shaped (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Cultivation theory focuses on the impact of the media discourse on a targeted audience (Dominick, 2012). However, agenda-setting theory focuses on the idea that the media should pay attention on how certain issues should be informed to the public (Weaver, 2007). This theory concludes "that there is a strong correlation between the emphasis that mass media place on certain issues (e.g., based on relative placement or amount of coverage) and the importance attributed to these issues by mass audiences" (McCombs and Shaw, cited in Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007, p. 11). Thus, this theory is "not information about the issue that has the effect; it is the fact that the issue has received a certain amount of processing time and attention that carries the effect" (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007, p. 14).

Drawing on this theory, the paper considers that the issues related to extremism and terrorism should be presented to the public after filtering because it is suggested, as this paper argues, that the media outlets should set its own agendas that align with the interests of the audience and oppose the agendas of the extremists and terrorists. Thus, the media policy in this case of reporting extremism and terrorism is at the core of agenda-setting theory.

FINDINGS

In summarising the significance of media to extremist and terrorist organisations, this paper has found that the media can provide these factions with a platform to achieve three goals; "to get attention, thereby get recognition and aspire to achieve legitimacy for their actions"

(Qureshi, 2009, p. 227). Furthermore, some messages of such organisations may have another goal – that is, sending hidden codes to their followers and supporters (Dadge, 2006; Martin, 2010; Suter, 2008). These goals allow ultimately these organisations to gain publicity through the media outlets that can transmit their actions and messages to a wider audience (Qureshi, 2009). If these organisations do not have their own media outlets, they can only gain publicity from other media outlets that cover and report their actions and messages (ibid; Schlesinger et al., 1983; Weimann & Winn, 1994). In the latter scenario, advancing objectives and achieving agendas through media remain in the hands of other media outlets. These outlets may have different agendas, or may impose censorship on the contents of certain messages; thus they may report the messages of these organisations from their own perspectives and according to their editorial policies. As a result, such coverage may have a negative impact on the agenda of these organisations. Based on the identified goals, as shown earlier, Figure 1, which is developed by the author, illustrates how publicity of extremist and terrorist organisations that do not have their own media outlets is boosted, and to what extent their objectives are advanced when other media outlets cover their news and events.
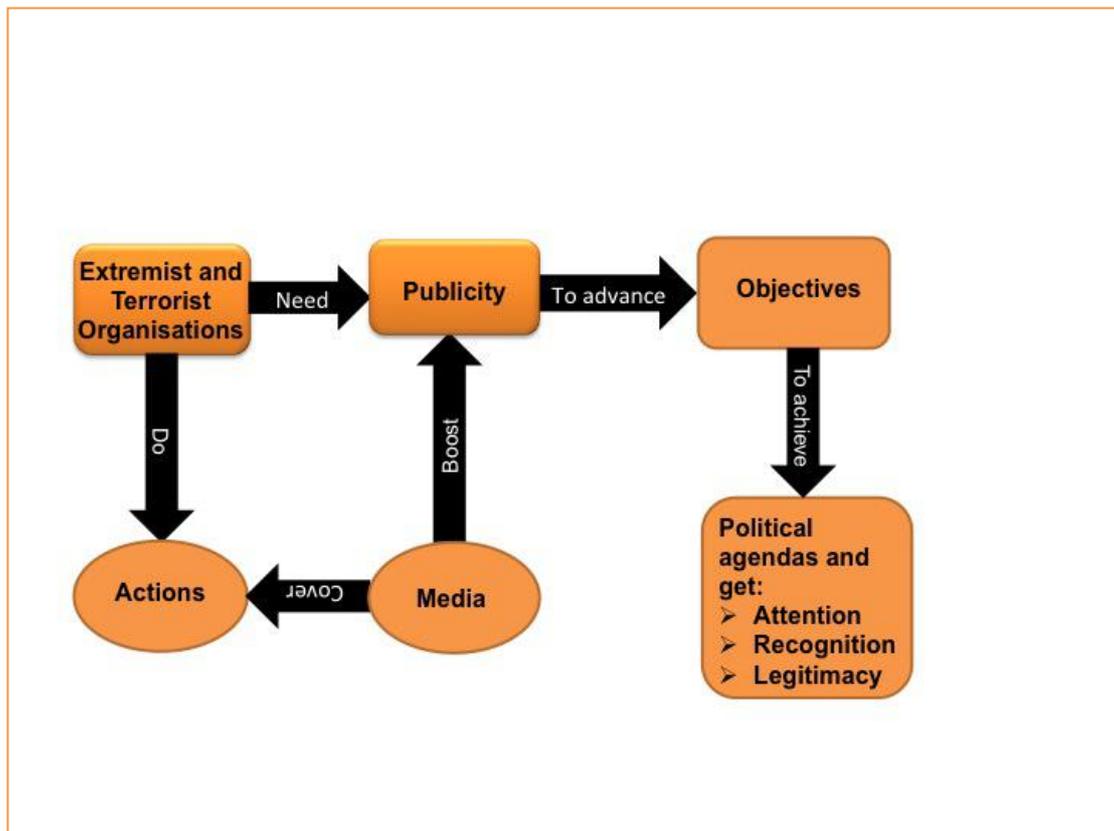

Figure 1: Model developed by the author of how media advances objectives of extremist and terrorist organisations

This paper has also found that organisations that have their own media outlets can report their actions and transmit their messages to boost publicity, advance their objectives and consequently achieve their agendas. Access to one's own or affiliated media outlets can provide the extremist or a terrorist organisation with a route by which to transmit a steady flow of original messages and reports from its own particular perspective. These messages,

which enhance the objectives, are not limited to actions and are embedded within the agenda of the militant organisation. Based on this literature, Figure 2, which developed by the author, illustrates how extremist and terrorist organisations that have their own media outlets are able to boost publicity, advance their objectives, and achieve their agendas.
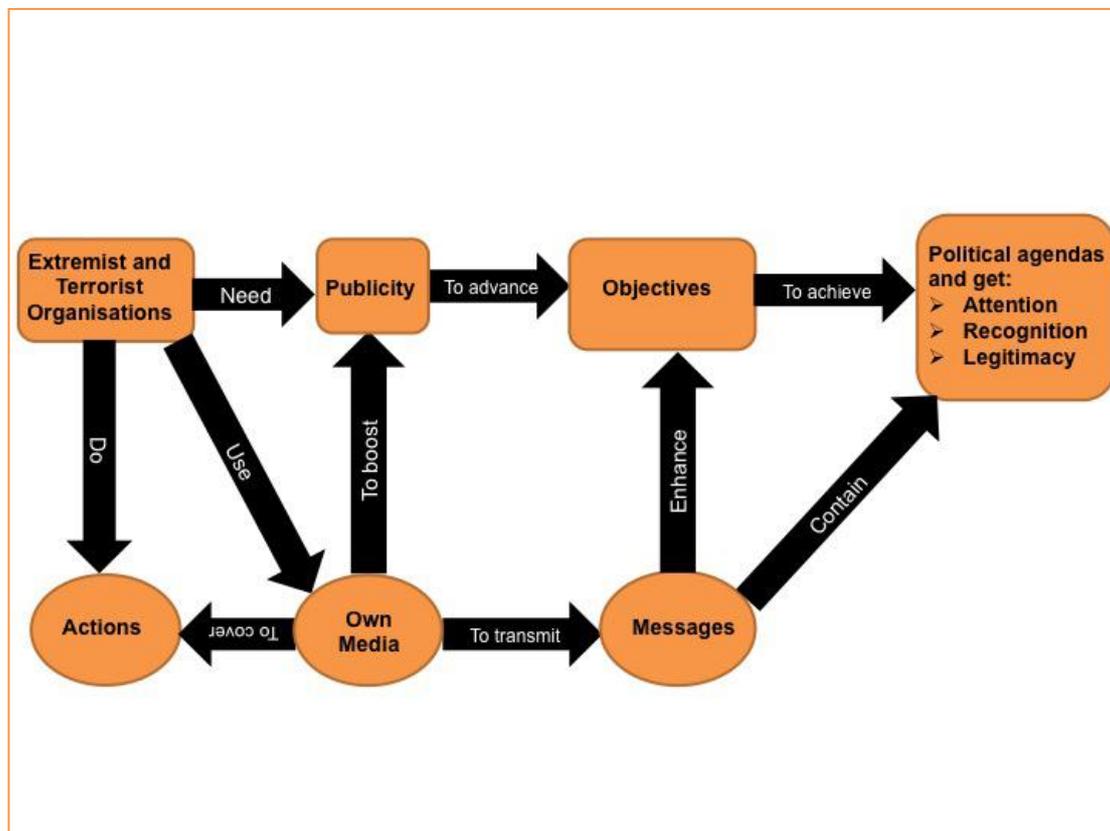

Figure 2: Model developed by the author of how extremist and terrorist organisations use their own media to advance their objectives

In a comparison between the two models (Fig. 1 & Fig. 2), it can be argued that the second model is more effective for extremist and terrorist organisations to achieve their agendas. It provides them with the control over time and space to transmit their original messages, which reflect their identities, and advance and enhance their objectives.

As the extremists and terrorists need the media to transmit their messages, this paper has argued that the media outlets can report terrorism and extremism, but in a responsible way. When the commercial and state media outlets broadcast extremists and terrorists' news and actions, they have their agendas which hinge around the idea of informing the public and achieving a media scoop. However, the process of informing, as noted previously, should be based on an editorial policy avoiding the extremists and terrorists' exploitation of the media outlets. Having delineating this fact, the agendas of extremists and terrorists differs from the agendas of commercial and state media.

In this vein, understanding the agendas of extremists and terrorists is crucial for the media outlets. Such understanding can allow the media outlets to counter professionally any sort of exploitation to the freedom of speech by extremists and terrorists in order to transmit their messages and achieve their agendas.

Although extremists and terrorists can exploit social media platforms, this virtual medium can be blocked or its content can be removed and consequently the message

cannot reach all the audiences. However, television is considered the leading medium to address the audiences. Besides to its audio-visual modes and due to its nature as "a spatial forum" (Wahab, 2011), television is multimodal, because it also holds a kinetic mode which contributes to the process of meaning-making (Darwish, 2009). This issue may explain the refrain of Australian televisions during Lindt Cafe siege from broadcasting the related videos uploaded on YouTube to prevent the gunman from sending his message, to respect the hostages and to protect the public. In an attempt to categorise the audiences, Figure 3, which is developed by the author, shows that there are three types of audiences can be targeted by extremists and terrorists: followers, supporters and not immune audiences which do not have background information about the agendas of extremists and terrorists.
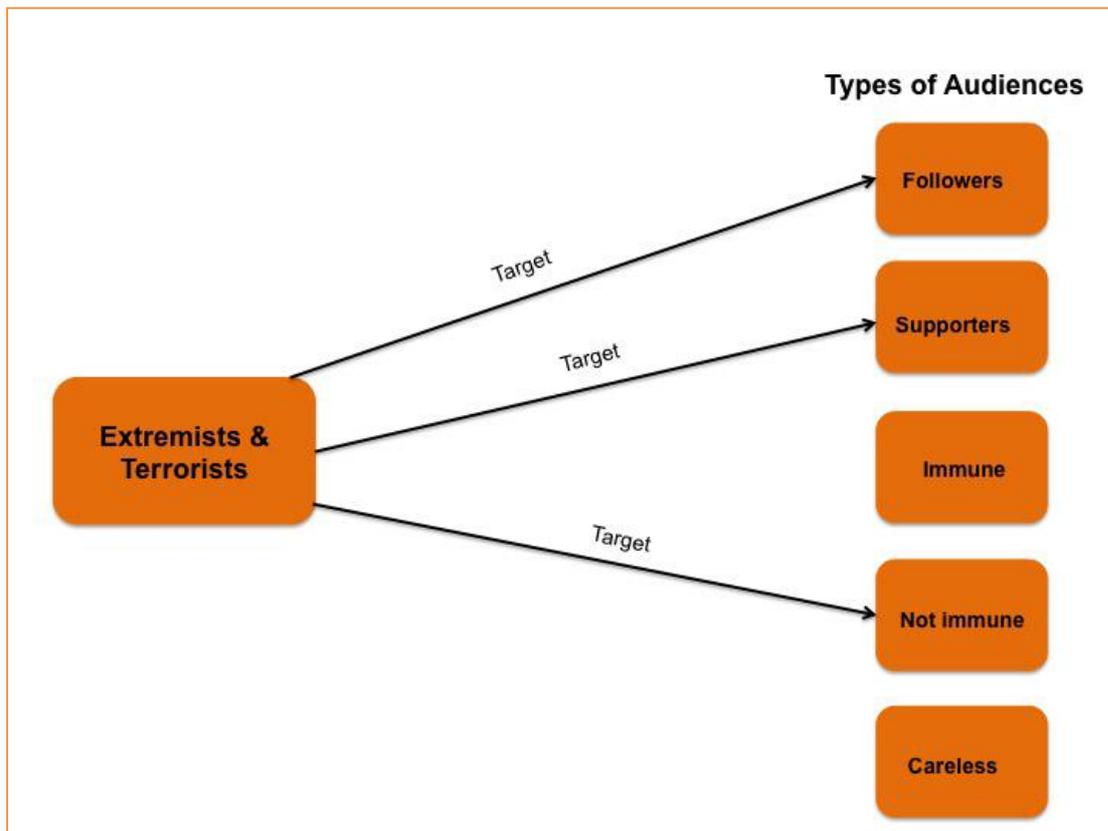

Figure 3: Extremists and terrorists target three types of audiences (the model developed by the author)

Based on the categorisation of audiences in Figure 3, the media outlets can play a role in preventing the extremists and terrorists from sending messages to their followers and supporters. Also, the media outlets can protect not immune audiences from extremists and terrorists' propaganda. For example, when Emma Alberici engaged in a debate with Hizb ut-Tahrir's spokesman, who attributed the emergence of ISIS as a result of occupation in the Middle East, it seems that she aimed to provide counter arguments to protect the audiences who are not immune against the negative propaganda. In this context, this point may explain why the government has become furious from ABC when Mallah appeared on Q&A to provide an illogical argument.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As noted earlier, it is the responsibility of every media outlet to set its own editorial policy and/or follow the governmental regulations to prevent extremists and terrorists from achieving their agendas under the pretext of freedom of speech and press. In this regards, this paper recommends the followings:

➢ The media outlets should distinguish between extremism and terrorism when they describe a certain individual or a group. In this regard, the absence of the global definition of terrorism is not an excuse for any media outlet to report extremism and terrorism without any sort of responsibility. In this context, any media outlet can adopt the governmental standpoint, or the definitions of extremism and terrorism, including identifying their groups and individuals.

➢ It is important for the commercial and state media outlets in any country to work together to produce a media charter about the suitable way on how to report extremism and terrorism.

➢ The gatekeeper in every media outlet should be in charge to censor and edit any extremist and terrorist's content or footages based on the editorial policy.

➢ The education sector whether schools or universities can help the media outlets by providing students with adequate knowledge about the danger of extremism and terrorism to protect the generations and turn them into immune audiences.

CONCLUSION

This paper has reviewed the debate about televising extremism and terrorism. It has pointed to the significance of the media, particularly television, for extremists and terrorists to transmit their messages. Guided by agenda-setting theory, this paper has warned that extremists and terrorists may exploit the media outlets to transmit their messages. Thus, the media outlets should be aware when they report news about extremism and terrorism. Thus, the paper has theorised to the media responsibility, arguing that the media outlets can report extremism and terrorism, but in a responsible way to protect the public.

In this regard, the paper has provided cases from ABC and Lindt Cafe siege as examples to recommend how the media should report extremism and terrorism and prevent the negative influence on the public. To achieve this aim, the media outlets should have better understanding of extremism and terrorism, including their organisations and figures. In addition, the media outlets need the cooperation of other active sectors in the society, such as the education providers, to create an immune culture against extremism and terrorism.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hatem El Zein holds PhD in Communication and Media Studies from Central Queensland University, Australia. He also holds a degree in Communication (Audi-Visual) from Lebanese University in 2003, a degree in Journalism in 2004 and another degree in Political and Administrative Sciences in 2005 from the same university. Also, he holds MA in Journalism and Communication from the University of New South Wales Australia in 2010. He was the head of Opinion Department, *Alrai* Newspaper, Kuwait (2005-2010). He can be reached at the following emails address and mobile number: hatemelzein@yahoo.com.au & hatem.elzein@cqumail.com Mobile: 0061449641962

REFERENCES

Adisa, R. M., Mohammed, R. B., Ahmed, M. K. (2016). Issues and Consequences of Newspaper Framing on Ethnic Conflict: A Qualitative Study of Ethnic Group Leaders' Conflict Frames. *Jurnal Komunikasi, Malaysian Journal of Communication, 32*(2), 294-316.

Boafo, S.T. K. & Coudray, S. (Eds.). (2003). *Media Violence and Terrorism*. Paris: The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Bourke, L. (2014, October 9). Tony Abbott backs Lateline Host Emma Alberici over Fiery Hizb ut-Tahrir Interview. *The Sydney Morning Herald*. Retrieved from http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/tony-abbott-backs-lateline-host-emma-alberici-over-fiery-hizb-uttahrir-interview-20141008-113fxd.html

Brinson, M. & Stohl, M. (2009). From 7/7 to 8/10: Media Framing of Terrorist Incidents in the United States and United Kingdom. In D. V. Canter (Ed.), *The Faces of Terrorism... Multidisciplinary Perspectives* (pp. 227-244). Chicester, UK: John Wiley & Sons.

Carter, J. A., Maher, S., & Neumann, P. R. (2014). *#Greenbirds: Measuring Importance and Influence in Syrian Foreign Fighter Networks*. London, UK: King's College London, The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence.

Chaliand, G. (1987). *Terrorism: from Popular Struggle to Media Spectacle*. London, UK: Saqi Books.

Clarke, O. (2003). General Remarks on Terrorism and Media. In S.T. K. Boafo & S. Coudray (Eds.), *Media Violence and Terrorism* (pp. 65-66). Paris, The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Dadge, D. (2001). *The War in Iraq and Why the Media Failed Us*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.

Darwish, A. (2009). Translation and News Making: A Study of Contemporary Arabic Television. PhD Thesis, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane.

Dobkin, B. A. (1992). *Tales of Terror: Television News and the Construction of the Terrorist Threat*. New York, NY: Praeger Publishers.

Dominick, J. R. (2012): *Dynamics of Mass Communication: Media in Transition.* (12th ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Education.

Donald, P. (2015, July 17). Q&A: Program did Investigate Zaky Mallah before his Appearance, Department of Communications Report Finds. *Australian Broadcasting Corporation*. Retrieved from http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-07-03/report-finds-qa-did-investigate-zaky-mallah-before-appearance/6593810

El Nawawy, M. & Iskandar, A. (2002). *Al-Jazeera: How the Free Arab News Network Scooped the World and Challenged the Middle East*. Cambridge, MA: Westview Press.

Frey, R. G. & Wellman, C. H. (2003). *A Companion to Applied Ethics*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Ghetti, M. W. (2008). The Terrorist Is A Star!: Regulating Media Coverage of Publicity Seeking Crimes. *Federal Communications Law Journal, 60*(3), 482-534.

Goodin, R. E. (2006). *What's Wrong with Terrorism?* Cambridge, UK: Polity.

Jenkins, P. (2003). *Images of Terror: What We Can and Can't Know about Terrorism*. New York, NY: Walter de Gruyter.

Kimmage, D. & Ridolfo, K. (2007). *Iraqi Insurgent Media: The War of Images and Ideas*. Washington, DC: Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.

Kirsten, G. M. (2007). Media and Terrorism. In P. J. Fourie (Ed.), *Media Studies: Media history, Media and Society* (pp. 445-475). Cape Town, South Africa: Juta and Company Ltd.

Lewis, J. (2005). *Language Wars: The Role of Media and Culture in Global Terror and Political Violence*. London, UK: Pluto Press.

Lia, B. (2008). *Architect of Global Jihad: the Life of Al-Qaida Strategist Abu Mus'ab Al-Suri*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Martin, G. (2010). *Understanding Terrorism: Challenges, Perspectives, and Issues* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication.

Meade, A. (2014, December 16). How the Australian Media Reported the Sydney Siege - and Spared Us the Worst. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2014/dec/16/how-the-australian-media-reported-the-sydney-siege-and-spared-us-the-worst.

Meade, A. (2015, June 23). How Zaky Mallah Ended Up on Live TV: Q&A Producers Took a Calculated Risk. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/jun/23/how-zaky-mallah-ended-up-on-live-tv-qa-producers-took-a-calculated-risk

Miles, H. (2005). *Al Jazeera: The Inside Story of the Arab News Channel that Is Challenging the West*. New York, NY: Grove Press.

Moeller, S. D. (2008). *Considering the Media's Framing and Agenda-Setting Roles in State Responsiveness to Natural Crises and Disasters*. Paper presented at World Bank/CommGAP/Harvard Kennedy School workshop on The Role of the News Media in the Governance Agenda: Watchdog, Agenda- Setter, and Gate-Keeper, Cambridge, Massachusetts, May 29-31, 2008. Retrieved from http://www.hks.harvard.edu/fs/pnorris/Conference/Conference%20papers/Moeller.pdf

Mudde, C. (2000). *The Ideology of the Extreme Right*. Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press.

Nacos, B. L. (2002). *Mass-Mediated Terrorism: The Central Role of The Media in Terrorism and Counterterrorism*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Nacos, B. L. (1994). *Terrorism and the Media: From The Iran Hostage Crisis To The World Trade Center Bombing*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Qureshi, P. (2009). *Islamic Media*. New Delhi, India: MD Publications Pvt Ltd.

Rosie, G. (1986). *The Directory of International Terrorism*. New York, NY: Paragon House.

Salman, A., Mustaffa, N., Salleh, M. A. M., Ali, M. N. S. (2016). Social Media and Agenda Setting: Implications on Political Agenda. . *Jurnal Komunikasi, Malaysian Journal of Communication, 32*(1), 607-623.

Schaffert, R. W. (1992). *Media Coverage and Political Terrorists… A Quantitative Analysis*, New York, NY: Praeger Publishers.

Scheufele, D. A., & Tewksbury, D. (2007). Framing, Agenda Setting, and Priming: The Evolution of Three Media Effects Models. *Journal of Communication 57*(1), 09-20.

Schlesinger, P., Murdock, G. & Elliott, P. R. C. (1983). *Televising Terrorism: Political Violence in Popular Culture*. London, UK: Comedia Publishing Group.

Sotlar, A. (2004, December). Some Problems with a Definition and Perception of Extremism within a Society. In G. Mesko et al. (Eds.), *Policing in Central and Eastern Europe: Dilemmas of Contemporary Criminal Justice* (pp. 703-707). Retrieved from https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/Mesko/208033.pdf

Suter, K. (2008). *All About Terrorism: Everything You Were Too Afraid To Ask*. Sydney, Australia: Random House.

Tatham, S. (2006). *Losing Arab Hearts and Minds: The Coalition, Al-Jazeera and Muslim Public Opinion*. London, UK: Hurstand Company.

Venkatraman, S. (2004). *Media in a Terrorised World: Reflection in the Wake of 9/11*. Singapore: Eastern Universities Press.

Wahab, J. A. (2011). Television Talk Shows and The Public Sphere. *Jurnal Komunikasi, Malaysian Journal of Communication*, *27*(2), 29-45.

Weaver, D. H. (2007). Thoughts on Agenda Setting, Framing, and Priming. Journal of Communication 57(1), 142-147.

Weimann, G. & Winn, C. (1994). *The Theater of Terror: Mass Media and International Terrorism*. New York, NY: Longman Publishing Group.