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Terrorism and the Media: Patterns of Occurrence and Presentation, 1969-1980

Abstract

"What we have to do is tell people about what's going on in the world." This quote from Ted Koppel, an ABC anchorman, taken from a recent TV commercial for the network news, captures the key focus of this paper. To what extent does television news accurately inform its viewers about what is going on in the world? We begin to answer this question by focusing on one topic which is both of political significance and has received a large amount of coverage from the networks: International terrorism. (I) By comparing the amount and type of coverage which international terrorism received from the networks over the period 1969 to 1980 to a more systematic set of data based upon world-wide reports of international terrorism over the same period, we can test the degree to which viewers are provided with an accurate picture of what international terrorism is, where it is happening, against whom, and how often. In addition, we look more closely at network treatment of a single terrorist incident to speak to the more subtle ideological aspects of media coverage.

The organization of this paper is as follows. In the next two sections we examine television news in general terms, discussing its strengths and weaknesses as a provider of information, considering previous theoretical and empirical work on the topic, and laying out our expectations. In the fourth section we give the details of our specific analysis, discussing the choice of international terrorism, operationalizing concepts, describing the data sets, and explaining the methods. Section five is a presentation of results with a brief discussion. Section six is a more detailed case study of coverage of the seizure of the Dominican Republic Embassy in Colombia in 1980. The final section consists of a summary, discussion and some concluding remarks concerning network coverage of international terrorism, and the larger questions of television as a source of political information and political agendas.

Comments

NOTE: At the time of publication, the author was affiliated with Rutgers University. Currently (January 2008), he is a faculty member of the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania.

TERRORISM, POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND WORLD ORDER

Edited by

Henry Hyunwook Han

Central Michigan University

UNIVERSITY
PRESS OF
AMERICA



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I. Introduction

"What we have to do is tell people about what's going on in the world." This quote from Ted Koppel, an ABC anchorman, taken from a recent TV commercial for the network news, captures the key focus of this paper. To what extent does television news accurately inform its viewers about what is going on in the world? We begin to answer this question by focusing on one topic which is both of political significance and has received a large amount of coverage from the networks: International terrorism. (1) By comparing the amount and type of coverage which international terrorism received from the networks over the period 1969 to 1980 to a more systematic set of data based upon world-wide reports of international terrorism over the same period, we can test the degree to which viewers are provided with an accurate picture of what international terrorism is, where it is happening, against whom, and how often. In addition, we look more closely at network treatment of a single terrorist incident to speak to the more subtle ideological aspects of media coverage.

The organization of this paper is as follows. In the next two sections we examine television news in general terms, discussing its strengths and weaknesses as a provider of information, considering previous theoretical and empirical work on the topic, and laying out our expectations. In the fourth section we give the details of our specific analysis, discussing the choice of international terrorism, operationalizing concepts, describing the data sets, and explaining the methods. Section five is a presentation of results with a brief discussion. Section six is a more detailed case study of coverage of the seizure of the Dominican Republic Embassy in Colombia in 1980. The final section consists of a summary, discussion and some concluding remarks concerning network coverage of international terrorism, and the larger questions of television as a source of political information and political agendas.

II. Television as an Agenda Builder

That television is an important provider of information is obvious. It is the major source of news for the U.S. population today, with more people citing it as such than any other medium. In addition, younger people are even more likely to depend on TV over newspapers and magazines, and give indications of remaining so as they grow to adulthood (Jennings and Niemi, 1981). Systemic indicators of change point in a similar direction. The number of newspapers in operation (or remaining independent) has been declining steadily in recent years, while the number of TV stations broadcasting (from under 50 to over 700) and TV sets in use (from under 5% to almost 100% of U.S. homes) has risen dramatically in the past three decades (The Media Book, 1978). And of course the expected cable explosion will increase the movement to television as a source of information.

What is the impact of this move to an electronic mass media society? The answer to this question hinges on the answer to two more focused ones: What is the nature of the information provided by television? And, what is the nature of the influence of that information on the population? Much of the political science literature on the media and politics has focused on the latter question, employing survey research of one form or another to tap the impact of media use on political attitudes, information and behavior. The results of this kind of analysis suggest a modest relationship between media use and political involvement, with the relationship less strong for TV use than newspaper use (Patterson, 1980). Such analysis suffers from being unable to adequately distinguish media users from non-users, as the investigators themselves readily admit. In a society in which virtually everyone has a television and in which "on an average day, 80 percent of all Americans are reached by television and newspapers (and) on a typical evening the television audience is close to 100 million people, nearly half the entire population" (Graber, 1980) it is difficult to identify people who are truly uninfluenced by the media. Awareness of this situation has led theorists to consider the more subtle effects of the electronic media, such as passive learning:

This form of learning may be said to be largely passive in that neither motivation nor interest is a prerequisite for the attainment of knowledge. Information and knowledge, in other words, are "caught rather than taught" (Krugman and Hartley, 1971). Thus, passive learning is effortless and, although the knowledge gained may in fact be used when triggered by later events or situations, it is unrelated to immediate needs or situations. Many people may find themselves holding and imparting information which they did not consciously seek to acquire, and later acting on the basis of this information (Zukin and Snyder, 1982).

This kind of passive learning has been demonstrated in several different settings, including the watching of networks news (Wamsley and Pride, 1972). This line of research suggests that a main role of the electronic media may well be its agenda-setting function (Graber, 1978, 1980; Shaw and McCombs, 1977): "When the media make events seem important, politicians are likely to comment about them and to take action. This enhances widespread belief in the importance of these events and assures even more public attention" (Graber, 1980).

Given this importance in agenda-setting for the media, the question raised earlier concerning the accuracy and quality of the information broadcast takes on added significance. If the viewer is in part determining her sense of what is important in the political world from a partially unconscious process of media exposure, then what is being transmitted is critical. Our knowledge in this area is somewhat less developed. Much has been written, for instance, concerning the organizational, economic, personal, and technological constraints in the production of network news, and about how these constraints should, theoretically lead to certain distortions in the selection of stories to present and ways to present them (Epstein, 1974; Crouse, 1972; Gans, 1979; Sigal, 1973). These analyses are supported with specific examples, limited case studies, and personal

reflections which are valuable contributions, but lack a certain generalizability. The more systematic content analyses that are done can demonstrate what is shown on television, but can only speculate as to the appropriateness of the choice and mix of subjects (Patterson, 1980; Gerbner and Gross, 1976; Dominick, 1977).

What is needed is not only a careful analysis of what is presented on the evening news, but also a baseline or standard against which to measure that presentation. Funkhauser does this in an analysis of media coverage of issues in the 1960's (1973). In this analysis he compares the number of stories on Vietnam, crime, and urban riots to more objective measure of their significance. For example he compares the number of articles on crime in Time, Newsweek, and U.S. News and World Report to the number of crimes reported in the U.S. per 100,000 people throughout the decade of the 1960's. He finds that for all three issues studied, the coverage peaked before the events themselves, leading to a sense of lessened importance at the same time that the issues were equally or more prevalent. What we are proposing is a similar analysis focusing on a different issue and a different medium.

III. Network News and International Terrorism

Previous analyses of network news broadcasts suggest that certain biases in coverage exist. The search for mass appeal and the visual nature of the medium leads to a preoccupation with the dramatic, the conflictual and the violent (Gerbner et al., 1978). Given this fact, international political terrorism would be expected to receive a fair amount of network coverage. Our content analysis, to be described in detail later, bears this out: Over the period from 1969 to 1980 not one month passed in which the networks did not devote at least one story to the topic. In addition, international terrorism is a topic of some considerable political importance. It is defined here as the use or threat of violence for political purposes, designed to disrupt or intimidate a larger sphere than the immediate victims, and involving actions and/or individuals that cross national boundaries. As such it is an important indicator of political, social and economic dissatisfaction and instability. In addition, as we shall see, it is a growing phenomenon in the international system. It is, therefore, a good choice for our test of the accuracy of network news generally, as well as an important topic in and of itself.

An expectation of extensive coverage does not mean an expectation of accurate coverage. Indeed, the literature on network news suggests the existence of biases that make it extremely difficult for the networks to accurately cover either the extent of or the motivations for political terrorism. Interviews with and surveys of both viewers and editors suggest a bias away from foreign news in favor of national stories in the U.S. (Epstein, 1974; Weaver and Mauro, 1978; Rubin, 1979). In addition, that foreign news which is covered tends to emphasize U.S. involvement (Gans, 1979) and/or extremely violent events (Diamond, 1975). Further, news coverage is filtered through values and news gathering procedures that tend to accept and support the existing social order (Gans, 1979). Other

constraints of costs, technology, manpower and language skills lead to biases away from peripheral areas, both nationally and internationally (Lent, 1977; Bogart, 1968; Graber, 1980). Applying this specifically to the issue at hand, we would, therefore, expect an exaggeration of the amount of terrorism involving U.S. citizens, an exaggeration of the amount of terrorism crossing into the U.S., and an exaggeration of the types of terrorism which are most dramatic, unusual or violent. Terrorism involving less central (from the U.S. point of view) nations and issues, that occurs in less accessible areas, or that is more routine are expected to get less coverage. In addition, we expect coverage to downplay the dissatisfaction with the social order or political ideology of terrorists.

The overriding expectation centers on the networks central motive or purpose to the extent that the industry sees its role as one of, as mentioned above, "telling people what is going on in the world," then the coverage of international terrorism should approach an accurate reflection of the political reality. To the extent, however, that concerns for audience appeal, consistent themes and economic gain dominate, concerns for accuracy become secondary. Our own bias, given a reading of the literature and being members of the viewing audience of network news, leads us to expect the latter.

IV. Data and Methods

The analysis to follow involves three separate data sets. The first is a content analysis of network news broadcasts. The data was collected by examining the Television News Index and Abstracts published monthly by Vanderbilt University. The abstracts contain limited information, and do not provide direct quotes, but do have several key bits of information that we were able to utilize. Specifically, we were able to determine if a story dealt with the topic of international terrorism, where the event took place, what type of an event it was (kidnapping, hostages, etc.), the nationality of the victims, the type of citizen involved (military, diplomat, private citizen, etc.), the nationality of the terrorist, and the length of each individual story in seconds. This information was gathered for all weekday network news broadcasts for all three national networks (ABC, CBS, and NBC) from January, 1969 to December, 1980.

The method of data collection involved going through the detailed index for each month and recording the location of any broadcast that possibly contained a reference to an international terrorist event. The abstracts for these broadcasts were then examined, and those that did not meet our definition of international terrorism were discarded. The information described above was then recorded for the remaining broadcast segments. Several checks on this approach were also included. First, for three years of broadcasting, the data was collected both by the method described above and by a page examination of the entire yearly abstract. The two approaches were then compared to see if there was any loss of information by using the first method. Second, for the two different year, the data was collected by two separate investigators, and the results compared. Both of these checks suggested that the main method of data collection was successfully capturing all of the relevant information.

Our baseline, or measure of actual terrorist occurrences is provided by the research of Edward F. Mickolus. The data set, known as ITERATE (International Terrorism: Attributes of Terrorist Events), is a content analysis of world-wide information sources and is designed to provide, among other things, a systematic picture of trends in international terrorism (a review of the specific sources used in the data collection is provided by Mickolus, 1977).(2) While ITERATE is limited to reported acts of terrorism and is, therefore, not a perfect reflection of real world events, it is generally regarded to be one of the few methodologically rigorous attempts to catalogue terrorist occurrences over time (Mitchell and Kelly, 1981) and is used or cited throughout the academic literature on this subject (Alexander and Finger, 1977; Milbank, 1976; Bassiouni, 1981; Mitchell and Kelly, 1981). In short, it provides as accurate a view of the actual patterns of international terrorism as is available today.(3)

The final data to be used are the actual video tapes of all the broadcasts involving the takeover and holding of the Dominican Republic Embassy in Columbia. The abstracts allow us to examine the general trends in presentation but, in order to get a more complete grasp of the subtler aspects of the coverage, we include this detailed case study based upon the video broadcasts themselves. In addition, examining the actual broadcasts provide a third check on the accuracy of the abstracts we use for the trend analyses.

The units of measurement compared in the analysis are number of minutes (and seconds) of coverage by the networks, and number of terrorist acts documented in the events data. We chose number of minutes rather than number of events because, given our emphasis on passive learning and agenda setting, and given television's basic visual impact, the key variable is clearly exposure time. To equate a 10 second announcement to a 3 minutes story would be to miss the way in which television affects its viewers.

In actually comparing the network coverage to our baseline of terrorism's incidence, we focused on three major types of comparisons. First, within each year, we were interested in how accurately television divided its time among the types of terrorist acts, their locations, etc. Second, across years we were interested in how accurately the networks adjusted the amount and emphasis of their coverage to match the changing occurrence of international terrorism in the world. Finally, we were interested in reconstructing the conclusions a viewer of the network news would draw about trends in international terrorism, and how these conclusions compare to a more "objective" catalogue of events. In all cases we also compare the three networks to each other to see if one is a more sensitive transmitter of the political world, or if the constraints of time, money, technology and information sources lead to similar patterns of coverage.

V. Findings

Table 1 (See the attached) presents the basic patterns of occurrence and coverage over the twelve year period under examination. It is immediately obvious that, first, all three networks are extremely

similar in their patterns of coverage and, second, none of them very closely parallels the pattern of actual occurrence of international terrorism. For example, from 1969 to 1970 the amount of terrorism increased by over 80%, while coverage remained virtually the same for all three networks. Conversely, between 1970 and 1971, terrorism dropped only slightly (about 17%) while coverage dropped an average of 78%. This type of relationship can be found throughout the twelve year period examined. In fact, in five of the 11 "jumps" from one year to the next, the amount of coverage moves in the opposite direction from the movement in the amount of terrorism reported. In 1978, by far the year with the most international terrorist events, the coverage on ABC and NBC ranked 8th lowest out of the 12 years, and CBS coverage was its 10th lowest.

Another way to get a sense of the erratic nature of the coverage is by comparing the ratio of minutes covered to number of events over the period examined. While we can not say what a proper amount of coverage is, we would expect that consistent coverage would mean a relatively consistent ratio. The greater the variability in the ratio, the greater the distortion in coverage, with high ratios exaggerating the amount of terrorism and low ratios playing it down. We present these ratios in Table 2, (see the attached), along with the average ratio for the twelve years. Once again, the similarity in coverage across the three networks is striking, and once again the inconsistency in coverage also stands out.

The ratios vary from a low of .15 for CBS in 1969 to a high of 1.37 on ABC in 1980. This indicates coverage with very little connection to real world occurrences. In 1969, 1979, and 1980, the amount of coverage on all three networks greatly exaggerated the amount of terrorism relative to coverage in other years. Similarly, in 1978 or 1974, the amount of coverage downplayed the amount of terrorism. And these misrepresentations seem to have little to do with the absolute amount of terrorism.

The total amount of coverage is only one consideration in evaluating television coverage of international terrorism. What about the substance of that coverage? Do the networks divide their time up in ways that result in a realistic view within each year? We attempted to gauge this by examining terrorism's location as reported by the networks and comparing it to the event's actual locations. Table 3, (see the attached), represents information relating to this question. The numbers are the percentage of the coverage devoted to each of the geographic areas listed, minus the percentage of terrorism which the events data shows actually occurred in that area for that year. The numbers, therefore, are a measure of within-year distortion by the networks: The closer to 0, the less the distortion. A large positive number means "too much" air time to that area, while a large negative number means "not enough" air time. For example, in 1969 NBC devoted 37% more of its coverage of international terrorism to terrorism in North America than it should have.

An examination of Table 3 uncovers several important characteristics of network coverage of terrorism. First, as we found with overall coverage, there is a tremendous similarity among the networks in terms of what areas of the world they focus on. Second, as we

expected, North America is often over-represented in the coverage, by as much as 57% (NBC in 1970). Third, the most distorted areas are the Middle East, where terrorism is exaggerated by an average of 25%, and Latin America, where it is downplayed by about 17%. A fourth point of interest concerns the volatility of the coverage. Distortions in coverage are all the more disturbing because they can occur suddenly, after years of much different coverage. A viewer of the network news would have an image of 1969 and 1975 as years of terrorist activity in Asia that would be exaggerated, while 1972 would appear unduly peaceful in the Far East. The Middle East is always over-covered, but even here certain years stand out as gross exaggerations (1970, 1974, 1979, and 1980). Western Europe was over-covered in the early 70's, but has been under-covered since 1974. The only areas which show very little distortion are those where very little international terrorism occurs: USSR/Eastern Europe, Africa, and the Pacific. All together these three areas account for only 5% of all the international terrorism which was reported in the period under examination.

Similar kinds of distortion are evident when we examine types of terrorist incidents. Table 4, (see the attached), presents data on the main forms of terrorism. These seven types of acts account for over 80% of all the international terrorism which occurred over the period studied. Once again we see that similarities among the networks and distortions in coverage of certain types of incidents is the norm. Bombings, which are by far the most prevalent form of terrorist act (46% of all terrorism) are grossly deemphasized, on the network news. Political threats are also downplayed, despite occurring quite frequently every year. Conversely, hostage seizures and hijackings are given far more coverage than their actual occurrence warrants. The massive coverage which the Iranian hostage crisis received is an extreme example of magnification of an event, but is not by any means unique. Coverage of armed attacks shows a more erratic pattern, with periods of relatively appropriate coverage followed by sudden increases in the relative attention paid to this type of event.

The final pattern of general international terrorism to be examined concerns incidents involving U.S. targets or victims. Table 5, (see the attached), presents evidence of over- and under-coverage of international terrorism against U.S. citizens as compared to terrorism against other nationals. Surprisingly, terrorism against U.S. citizens is not systematically over-covered as we expected for the reasons explained earlier. Instead, relative coverage of terrorism against U.S. citizens follows the general pattern we found for the other elements examined. Coverage is very volatile, with years of great relative under-coverage (an average of 50% less the coverage in 1971 devoted to U.S. targets than expected), and equally great over-coverage (1979 and 1980). It is interesting to note that, just prior to the explosion in relative coverage in 1979 and 1980, there was a year of relatively low coverage. The combination of these two distortions may have added to a sense of victimization on the part of the U.S. in this period. We will consider this in more detail at a later point.

While the relative coverage of terrorism against U.S. citizens was neither more accurate nor more consistently exaggerated than

overall terrorism, it is possible that when coverage of this phenomenon is considered by itself it demonstrates more consistent patterns. That is, perhaps the failure of the networks to accurately portray overall international terrorism is a function of a perceived lack of importance or centrality to the viewing audience. Terrorism involving U.S. citizens, on the other hand, may be central enough to be more closely monitored and, therefore, more accurately portrayed.

Tables 6 and 7, (see the attached), replicate the information presented in Tables 1 and 2, except this time only for terrorism involving U.S. targets. From Table 6 it is clear that the pattern of coverage of terrorism involving U.S. citizens does not differ much from that of overall terrorism. Nor does it any more accurately reflect real world changes in terrorism. In six of the eleven shifts from one year to the next, coverage of terrorism moves in the opposite direction as the amount of terrorism. For example, while the amount of terrorism against U.S. targets was doubling between 1977 and 1978, the amount of coverage was cut to a ninth of its 1977 total. In fact, 1978 received by far the smallest amount of coverage for the entire period, even though it was the year with the most terrorism aimed at U.S. citizens and U.S. facilities. Even in years where increases or decreases in coverage paralleled increases or decreases in events, the ratio of change was often as misleading as change in the wrong direction. For example, between 1970 and 1971 acts against U.S. targets decreased by 7% while coverage decreased 87 to 89%.

When we turn to the ratio of minutes of coverage to number of events, we find even more fluctuation than in the case of overall terrorism. A terrorist incident in 1978 averaged .02 minutes of coverage, while 1969 averaged over a minute, 1979 over two minutes and 1980 over 3. As usual, all three networks show similar patterns of coverage. The average coverage per event is higher in the case of terrorism against U.S. citizens than it is for overall terrorism, however.

Our data do not allow us to examine where terrorism specifically against U.S. citizens occurs on a year by year basis, but we can look at types of acts against U.S. citizens alone. Table 8 (see the attached), presents this information. As can be seen, the networks are not more accurate at capturing a realistic view of terrorism against U.S. citizens than they are at showing overall terrorist acts. As with overall terrorism, bombings are greatly under-covered, as to a lesser extent, are threats. Although hijackings are consistently over-covered, coverage of kidnappings, hostage seizures, assassinations, and armed attacks is more volatile. The extremes in coverage, however, seem to be more pronounced in attacks on U.S. citizens than in the overall case. Although bombings are under-covered by 30 to 55 percent in the overall case (Table 4), under-coverage of 60 to 70 percent is not uncommon in the U.S. coverage. Conversely, over-coverage of hijacking is more extreme in the case of U.S. targets. Generally, however, the patterns are quite parallel.

For the first time we also see a few areas in which the networks differ sizably in coverage patterns. In 1978 CBS devoted much more of its air time to assassinations and assassination attempts against U.S. targets than did the other networks. A similar pattern occurs

in the coverage of armed attacks in 1978. The coverage of terrorism in 1978 was quite small, however, permitting the percentages to vary a great deal with only small differences in coverage. The data on U.S. victims also allow us to examine variability in coverage that is related to the type of U.S. citizen victimized by terrorist attacks. Table 9, (see the attached), presents information on under- and over-coverage of terrorism against U.S. government officials, military personnel, business executives, and private citizens. As can be seen, the networks fare no better in this breakdown than they do in the others. Attacks on government officials were greatly underplayed in 1970, 1971, and 1972 and grossly exaggerated in 1974, 1979, and 1980. Attacks on the military were under-covered in 1976 through 1980, but over-covered in 1969, 1971, and 1975. Attacks against U.S. business executives, the most common target of international terrorism over the twelve year span, were, with the exception of 1978, consistently down-played. And terrorism against U.S. private citizens, the least common occurrence against U.S. targets, is magnified in seven of the twelve years studies. The type of U.S. citizens attacked, like all of the other categories examined, is badly misrepresented by the network news.

The final issue to be examined concerns the overall images of international terrorism that are left by twelve years of network coverage. What pictures of this phenomenon are developed after years of TV news viewing? Tables 10 and 11, (see the attached), show the patterns of over- and under-coverage for overall international terrorism. Terrorism in the USSR, Africa, Asia and the Pacific is fairly well represented, but these four areas combined only account for 12 percent of the total amount of terrorism that occurred. Terrorism in North America, which is about 10 percent of worldwide terrorism, is also quite adequately covered. Distorted coverage is most prevalent where terrorism is most prevalent. Terrorism in Latin America and Western Europe is downplayed by 11 and 17 percent respectively, while terrorism in the Middle East is greatly exaggerated. Because 75 percent of all international terrorism occurs in these areas, such inaccuracies have a particularly significant effect on the viewing public's knowledge of terrorist activity.

The greatest distortions in types of terrorist incidents occur with the under-coverage of bombings and threats and the over-coverage of hostages seizures and hijackings. The same general pattern holds true when only attacks against U.S. targets are considered (Table 12).

Finally, when the twelve year coverage of types of U.S. victims is examined, a pattern of exaggerating government victimization and dismissing terror against business is apparent. In all the twelve-year combined comparisons, the similarity among networks is dramatic.

VI. The seizure of the Dominican Embassy in Colombia: A Case Study

Our examination of overall trends in network coverage of political terrorism does not get at the ways in which specific events are portrayed. It cannot, therefore, answer important questions such as: How are terrorist acts explained? What aspects of a terrorist act are deemed newsworthy? How are the terrorists themselves

portrayed? Acts of political terrorism pose two difficult problems for journalists. First, they are faced with difficult choices when deciding how much coverage to give to a particular event. On the one hand, there is always the chance (or the chance that someone will make the accusation) that prominent coverage will encourage further acts of violence. On the other hand, ignoring such events may encourage even more violent acts that cannot possibly be ignored (Gans, 1979). Second, there is a problem regarding the content of the coverage that is given to terrorist acts. On the one hand, journalists do not want to glorify political terrorists and in this way encourage other terrorists. On the other hand, in countries lacking political freedom but abounding in substantial grievances, political terrorism is a highly effective means for bringing attention to such complaints. In order to address these issues, we now turn to a detailed examination of coverage of a single act of political terrorism: The sixty day seizure of the Dominican Republic's Embassy in Bogota, Colombia.

In our analysis of this event, we compare the amount and content of its coverage by the three network evening news programs with its coverage by the New York Times. We choose the Times as a baseline for comparison not because we believe in its "objectivity," but because network journalists themselves use it as a standard setter:

The Times is treated as the professional setter of standards, just as Harvard University is perceived as the standard setter of university performance. When editors and producers are uncertain about a selection decision, they will check whether, where, and how the Times has covered the story; and story selectors see to it that many of the Time's front-page stories find their way into television programs . . . (Gans, 1979:180)

In our analysis, then, we will compare the networks and the Times in the amount of coverage and, more importantly, the content of the coverage given to the embassy seizure. More generally, we are interested in determining the view one would have of the embassy seizure if one relied solely on the broadcasts of the networks as opposed to relying solely on the Times.

On February 27, 1980, a group of armed individuals shot their way into the Dominican Embassy in Bogota. The takeover of the embassy occurred during a party celebrating the Dominican Republic's independence and, consequently, nineteen ambassadors were among the 53 hostages taken. The intruders identified themselves as members of M19, an anti-government guerrilla force that had been operating in Colombia since 1974. The seizure of the embassy was to last until April 27, when the members of the M19 freed their remaining hostages and flew to Cuba where they were granted asylum. These are the basic facts about the particular terrorist incident we will be examining. As we demonstrate, there were vast differences in the manner in which the Times and the networks chose to cover the event.

The Extent of Coverage

Columns one, two and three of Table 14, (see the attached), summarize the amount of coverage given by the Times and the three networks to the Colombian event. All three networks devoted a similar

number of broadcasts to the event. However, while ABC and CBS reported on the situation in the first minute of their broadcasts on four occasions, NBC led with the embassy seizure only once. The Times ran stories on the crisis for 52 of its 61 days and on nine days, these stories made the first page. Obviously, due to the differences in medium it is difficult to draw any conclusions about the relative differences in extent of coverage between the networks and the Times.

In addition to periodic features on various aspects of the embassy seizure, both the networks and the Times ran short news stories concentrating on daily significant developments in the crisis. While the form and balance between news and features was similar between the Times and the networks, the content of these stories was quite different in the two media.

The Content of Coverage

While the great bulk of both network and newspaper coverage of the hostage situation dealt with detailing day-to-day events (e.g., meetings between government and guerrilla representatives, release and escape of hostages, they spent varying amounts of time on other subjects related to the crisis). In this section we examine coverage of four subjects: Colombian government and society; the guerrilla group M19; the demands made by M19, negotiations and resolution of the crisis; Diego Asencio, the U.S. Ambassador to Colombia and one of the hostages at the Dominican embassy. Three of these four subjects are critical for developing an understanding of the embassy seizure; one, while not critical to understanding the seizure, serves to highlight differences between network and Times coverage of the event.

Colombian Government and Society--In both news and feature stories, and especially at the beginning of the crisis, the Times spent a good deal of its coverage on social and political problems in Colombia. On March 2, for example, a Times article discussed the long history of political violence in the country; the growing power of the military in the country; accusations of human rights groups that the government tortured political prisoners; the fact that, despite having the oldest Constitution in Latin America, Colombia has been ruled under a state of seige for 17 of the past 20 years, (New York Times, March 2, 1980). Indeed, this article reported that many believed that the Minister of Defense, an army general, was actually running the country. On March 5, an article discussed the upcoming Congressional by-elections and noted the hostage crisis as an excuse for suppressing their electoral activities (New York Times, March 5, 1980).

On April 17, the newspaper reported that Amnesty International had "unequivocally concluded" that "political prisoners were systematically tortured by Colombian military personnel" (New York Times, April 17, 1980). In short, Colombia was portrayed by the Times as an extremely troubled country with a, at best, tentative and faltering democratic system.

Network coverage of Colombian government and society was, to say the least, considerably different from the Times. Indeed, none

of the networks dealt with these subjects at any length. As column four of Table 14 indicates, no network spent even as much as a minute on this subject over the entire 61 days of the crisis. Further, with one exception, this limited time was devoted to simply noting that Colombian elections were taking place and negotiations were suspended for that day. CBS reported on March 5, for example, that the Colombian President hoped for a large turn-out and an impressive victory for his party as a demonstration of popular support for his handling of the hostage situation. No mention was even made in later broadcasts of whether the government hopes were realized. No mention was ever made of the power of the military, human rights violations, past violence in the country, or any of the subjects that the Times dealt with at length. Indeed, the only hint a viewer received that Colombia was anything less than a well-functioning American-style electoral democracy was a brief note on ABC on April 27: It referred to the fears of some "liberals and leftists" that the government would use the hostage crisis, now resolved, as an excuse for an extensive crack-down.

Ironically, the only recognition of social problems in Colombia came in NBC's coverage of the resolution of the hostage crisis. Here, the network aired the statement of a U.S. State Department spokesperson reporting on Diego Asencio's impression of his former captors and their view of Colombian society:

"He (Asencio) thought the terrorists were extremely fuzzy-minded. One of the members was babbling about children being beaten up and homeless and starving and old people without jobs and the CIA running the country. Well in the first place, that's just not a picture of Colombia, let alone other country in this hemisphere, as you know. Asencio replied, 'If my friends were running this country, as you allege, I can assure you they would have been here before now to rescue me.'"

In short, Colombian government and society, to the extent it was dealt with at all by the networks, was portrayed as a working electoral democracy. In the one spot mentioning guerrilla views of poverty, unemployment and outside political interference, they were blithely rebutted. The contrast between network and Times coverage is quite stark.

M19--The nature of the group that seized the Dominican Embassy received quite different coverage in the two media. The first difference is in what the group was called. We believe that there is a significant difference between calling a group "terrorist" (which has strong negative connotations and ignores the political nature of a group's acts) and referring to it as "leftist," "guerrilla," "militant," or "rebel" (which assumes that it has an overtly political motive for its actions). Table 15, (see the attached), compares the ways in which the three networks and the Times (in its headlines) referred to the group that seized the embassy. Significant differences emerge between media and between networks. As the figures indicate, both NBC and ABC referred to the group as "terrorists" a significant amount of the time. In contrast, CBS was scrupulous in referring to the group as "leftists," "guerrillas,"

or "militants," its sole use of the term "terrorist" came on the first day of the crisis and was not repeated. Interestingly, the networks seldom referred to the group by its name of M19. Indeed, ABC used the term seven times in a brief report on the group (discussed below) in the second day of the seizure and then only once thereafter. NBC used the group's name only twice, both times in narrative accompanying pictures of the group's flag flying over the embassy with the title "M19" clearly displayed.

In headlines, the Times coverage differed significantly from the network's. They consistently referred to the group as "guerrillas" and five times called them "rebels"--a term that clearly conceded the group's political status. In general, the Times portrayed the group as one of many guerrilla groups operating within Colombia. They reported that the group had its origins in the socialist wing of the Nationalist Party of General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, who had ruled as a "virtual dictator" from 1953-1957. The newspaper suggested that the ideology of the group was quite "heterodox" and difficult to classify. However, the group was clearly distinct from other Moscow and Cuban influenced guerrillas operating in the country. In two feature stories, the Times discussed the group's past activities and noted that: "The group is known for its theatrical, free-wheeling style, directed as much towards gaining attention as toward terror, but it is also known for the military precision of its operations" (New York Times, March 10, 1980). Most importantly, the Times also reported on several occasions that the embassy seizure had apparently been precipitated by the death of a member of the group while undergoing interrogation by military authorities. His funeral took place the day before the embassy was seized.

Network coverage of the M19 group differed considerably from Times coverage. CBS and NBC scarcely discussed the group at all, as indicated by column five in Table 14. Indeed, the only reference that CBS made to the possible motivations or ideology of the group was to report, on March 8, that the Colombian government believed that the group were common criminals and not leftist ideologues. The report was based upon a government claim that the group had stopped demanding the release of political prisoners and only really wanted money and safe-passage. No other network or the Times made a similar report.

ABC devoted considerably more time to the group and its ideology. In fact, ABC was the only network to even mention the death of an M19 member in government hands as the possible cause of the embassy seizure. On February 28, they aired a short feature on the group that relied heavily on U.S. State Department sources who called the group "Maoist, Castroite, Trotskyite." ABC went on to note that M19 ". . . is most effectively described by its activities: Armed robbery, bomb attacks, assassination and kidnapping." As in the case of Colombian government and society, viewers relying on the networks, as opposed to the Times, would have come away with very different views of M19. The Times reader would have viewed the group as one with an eclectic ideology, prone to theatrical activities designed to attract publicity (e.g., on several occasions it was reported that the group's most well-known operation had been the theft of Simon Bolivar's sword from a Bogota museum) and only a

limited penchant for violent terrorist acts (especially when compared with the other guerrilla groups operating in the country). Against the background of its coverage of Colombian government and politics and prominent mention of the death of one of their members, the actions of M19, while perhaps not admirable, would have at least been understandable. In contrast, viewers of NBC's coverage would have had a hard time understanding what the group was, or what its motives were. Viewers of CBS might conclude they were simply a group of criminals attempting to extort money from the government. Viewers of ABC might have concluded that the group was a hard-line Communist guerrilla group controlled either by Peking or Havana and prone to gangsterish activities.

Demands, negotiations and resolution of the crisis--As might be expected on the basis of our discussion to this point, the two media differed considerably in their coverage of the demands made by M19, the course of the negotiations and the final resolution of the hostage crisis. In the Times, it was consistently reported that the guerrillas holding the embassy were making four demands: Freedom for 300 political prisoners; a ransom of \$50 million; safe passage out of the country; publication of a guerrilla manifesto documenting abuses by the Colombian government. During the negotiations, it was reported that the diplomatic corps in Bogota expressed much criticism of the Colombia government's refusal to bargain in good faith with the guerrillas (New York Times, March 16, 1980). On March 10, the Times reported that one reason for the government's intransigence was the widespread belief that many of the prisoners named by M19 had already been killed while in military prisons (New York Times, March 10, 1980). On March 18, an article reported that in retaliation for the escape of one of the hostages, the guerrillas had cut off phone lines to the outside and, in general, were making life tougher for the captives (New York Times, March 16, 1980). This story was corrected on the 20th, when it was reported that the hostages themselves had sent a message to the press protesting the Colombian government's actions. Further, the hostages expressed admiration for the way the guerrillas had calmly dealt with the escape of the Uruguayan ambassador and "they were consequently upset the next day when the Colombian Government asserted that the terrorists had shot at him three times" (New York Times, March 20, 1980). It turned out that the government had cut the phone lines, apparently to prevent the completion of a newspaper interview with the leader of the guerrillas in the embassy. During this interview, the guerrillas claimed that it was the government rather than M19 that had stalled the negotiations.

During the course of the negotiations, the Times reported on concessions made by both sides. On the guerrilla side, all hostages except the ambassadors were released; demands for ransom and the number of political prisoners to be freed were both scaled down. At the urging of the diplomatic community, the Colombian government agreed to speed up trials of accused guerrillas and the military released several people who had been accused of being M19 sympathizers. According to the Times, the breakthrough that finally led to the resolution of the crisis was the intervention of the Inter-American Human Rights Commission and their willingness to oversee the trials

of political prisoners in Colombia. It was estimated that the guerrillas were also given between \$6 and \$12 million upon their departure for Havana.

Once again, network coverage of the demands, negotiations and resolution of the crisis differed considerably from the Times' coverage. Of the three networks, only ABC mentioned that one of the guerrillas' demands was the publication of a manifesto documenting abuses by the government. When referring to the demand for prisoners' release, NBC called those named the "friends" of the guerrillas. In fact, this network only once referred to the prisoners as "political prisoners" using instead the terms "friends," "colleagues," "prisoners," or "so-called political prisoners."

While much of their coverage was devoted to the negotiations, network coverage focused on the arrangements and planning of the meetings: For example, showing pictures of a van being parked for a meeting and then clips of the guerrilla and government representatives going to and from the van. Little time was devoted to the concessions made by either side and no time was devoted to the intercessions of outside groups (i.e., the diplomatic corps or the Inter-American Human Rights Commission). NBC was the only network to charge that the guerrillas had cut the phone lines in retaliation for the Uruguayan ambassador's escape, however, neither they nor any other network reported that, in fact, it was the government that had cut off communication. No network mentioned the complaints issued by the hostages about the government's actions. While all three networks reported on the reduction in the demands of the guerrillas, no mention was ever made of the concessions made by the government (i.e., release of several detained by the military, offers to speed up trials, agreement to have human rights groups oversee trials).

Given the lack of substantive coverage of the negotiations, the resolution of the crisis was largely unexplained on the network news. No mention was made on NBC or CBS of the actual deal that was struck. Only ABC mentioned that, while the guerrilla demand for the release of political prisoners was not met, the government had made "other concessions." These other concessions were not specified.

Once again, the conclusions that one would draw from these two sources of news are quite different. Following the Times coverage, one would conclude that the negotiations had been marked by compromise on both sides and that the Colombian Government had been pressured by the diplomatic community, outside human rights groups and the hostages themselves. It was clear that the resolution was the result of a compromise struck between the two sides.

Network coverage, on the other hand, would have led one to different conclusions. Firstly, the political demands of the guerrillas were never made clear. Secondly, it was never made clear that other groups were involved in the negotiations in addition to the guerrillas and the government. Finally, no coverage was given to concessions made by the Colombian government. Thus, one could not be sure why the crisis ended at all when it did. In the networks' coverage, it seemed almost as if the guerrillas had simply grown tired of the siege and had agreed to depart for Cuba with none of their demands met but their own skins intact.

One of the obvious differences between the broadcast and print media is the amount of space that is available for covering the news. While the New York Times has over thirty pages daily devoted just to national and international news, the networks are limited to approximately 23 minutes of total air time. Thus, one cannot expect the networks to provide the same sort of detailed information as the Times. In order to understand the degree to which the lapses in network coverage we have discussed are due to time limitations rather than to editorial decisions, we now examine the time and space devoted to coverage of the one American hostage, Ambassador Diego Asencio.

The New York Times, while mentioning Ambassador Asencio as one of the hostages, ran only one feature exclusively on the American (New York Times, April 6, 1980). Moreover, they also ran a feature on the hostage Mexican Ambassador (New York Times, March 21, 1980): We had apparently emerged as the leader of the hostage group and was the only hostage to participate in the actual negotiations between guerrillas and the government. Thus, the Times clearly viewed the American Ambassador as peripheral to the main story which was Colombia, the guerrillas, their demands and the negotiations.

As column seven in Table 14 makes clear, the networks did not treat the American Ambassador as the peripheral aspect. Both NBC and CBS devoted more time to the Ambassador than they did to Colombian government and society, M19, and guerrilla demands combined. ABC devoted less time to Asencio, but still this amounted to more than any other individual topic we have discussed. It should be noted that the figures in column seven do not represent simple mentions of the Ambassador, but rather reflect features devoted to him (e.g., interviews with his colleagues and family, pictures of him returning home, pictures taken of him while inside the embassy). Because of the significant amount of broadcast time devoted to a substantively insignificant actor, we conclude that the networks chose to downplay the other aspects of the story discussed above; coverage was limited by editorial decisions about what was either important or interesting about the story, rather than by time pressures.

In our analysis of overall trends in network coverage of terrorism, we found that this coverage was an inaccurate reflection of trends in actual events. However, the inaccuracies seemed to vary quite randomly. In our case study, we find a much more systematic pattern to the inaccuracies presented by the network news. These inaccuracies are well-captured by the biases in coverage resulting from journalists' acceptance of what Gans (1979: Chapter 2) calls "enduring values" as well as from a manner in which the networks gather their reports. Significantly, these biases are not evident in the Times coverage of the event we studied.

Three on Gan's enduring values are particularly important in explaining the coverage of the Colombian hostage crisis: Altruistic democracy, ethnocentrism, and an abiding faith in social order. Gans notes that the journalists he studied had a deep faith in democracy as it functioned in the United States. Although they were critical of certain aspects of the political system, they believed

it was the best system possible. Further ethnocentrism led these journalists to view even foreign news from a distinctly American perspective. That is, they tend to interpret events as if they were occurring against an American backdrop. Finally, a belief in the sanctity of the existing social order leads journalists to be deeply suspicious of anyone who attempts to change that order while operation outside of existing institutions.

Together, these three values explain a good deal about the way the networks covered the hostage crisis. First, the presence of a constitution and elections--the trappings of democracy--led the networks to assume that Colombia was a functioning democracy: Elections and a constitution were assumed to mean the same thing in Colombia as they did in the U.S. Second, the apparent presence of democratic institutions made M19's actions illegitimate: If the group had grievances, why weren't these grievances voiced through the electoral system? Third, the bias towards social order, coupled with the trappings of democracy, made violent challenges to the system even more illegitimate and incomprehensible. Given this worldview, it was unlikely that the networks would report extensively on M19's grievances or grant any sort of legitimacy to its members' actions. Further, ignoring these issues made for a much more seamless and unambiguous story. There could be "good guys" (the hostages, in particular Asencio and the government) and "bad guys" (the masked guerrillas). Because they clashed with the values of the journalists or the producers, issues like military control of the government, the torture and killing of political prisoners, and the marginal nature of Colombian democracy were best ignored.

One other difference between the networks and the Times is worth noting: The sources used by journalists. Gans notes that the journalists he studied had a pronounced tendency to rely almost solely on official sources. This tendency is in evidence in the network coverage we examined. The only two sources ever mentioned were the U.S. State Department and the Colombian Government; given the content of the broadcasts, it is unlikely that any other sources were ever consulted. In contrast, the Times reporting drew upon a wide range of sources: Various human rights groups, leftist newspapers, anonymous sources within the Colombian government, academics specializing in Colombia. Given the worldview of the network journalists and producers and the "neat" way the story could be packaged within this worldview however, these sources were largely unnecessary: It was clear that M19 was a socially and politically marginal group of near-gangsters, and it was unnecessary to probe further.

VII. Summary and discussion

As television becomes an increasingly important source of political information for the U.S. public, two questions are increasingly relevant to political scientists: "What are the effects of TV on the attitudes and behaviors of individuals?" And, "What is the content of television-based information?" Regarding the first question, findings that learning often takes place passively and that attitudes, agendas and behaviors are shaped by that learning increases the importance of finding answers to the second question.

In this paper we have tried to present a partial answer to the question by focusing on an important and heavily covered issue: International terrorism. By using a comprehensive data base of international terrorist events from 1969 to 1980 and comparing it to a content analysis of network news, we were able to see how accurately the images of international terrorism were presented. Our analysis suggests several things. First and most consistently, the networks presented almost identical views of international terrorism. The pressures for conformity appear to be formidable. Second, the single view which emerges is quite inaccurate. The overall amount of coverage varied in almost random fashion, showing no relationship to the amount of terrorism occurring year in and year out. Years with relatively little terrorism received relatively large amounts of coverage, and years of great unrest often went practically unnoticed. Certain areas, like the Middle East, received undue attention year after year, while Latin America was systematically downplayed. Western Europe, North America, Africa and Asia were periodically ignored or put center stage. Similar inconsistencies were found in examining types of terrorism. Even when focusing solely on terrorism affecting U.S. citizens, the network coverage bore little relationship to actual events.

Our case study seems to bear out the findings of the events data analysis. The worldview of broadcast journalists makes it difficult for them to develop stories that illuminate terrorist events by analyzing political and social systems that are very different from American ones. Viewing other societies as if they were the United States makes it impossible to understand, justify, or even report on groups that mount violent challenges to an existing political order. Hence, terrorist groups are portrayed as, at best, inscrutable and, at worst, lunatics or common (i.e., apolitical) criminals. The bottom line is this: If people in the United States depend on the networks for information about international terrorism, and if they learn by exposure, then Americans have a sense of international terrorism that is seriously misguided.

Any discussion of the causes of the patterns uncovered or of their implications would be highly speculative, but certain things became apparent in the course of doing this analysis. Television is an event-centered medium. It is at its best when visually presenting the drama of world events. As a medium severely limited by time, however, most of what occurs in the world is simply never mentioned. Where television succeeds or fails as a mirror of reality, therefore, is in the mix of events it covers. If it cannot cover all the terrorism which occurs, it must cover specific events with an eye to achieving an overall picture which is consistent with world events both within years and across them. But there is no incentive in this type of self-monitoring. Sponsors look at ratings, not quality, and ratings are based on audience share, not accurate images. The end result is coverage which is erratic, oversimplified, morally unambiguous and misleading.

The implications of this kind of information source must be considered both specifically in terms of international terrorism and, more generally, in terms of political education. International terrorism is a response to domestic and international political, social,

economic, and cultural conditions. When one examines the events data or our case study, it is clear that there is a method to the madness. Terrorism's location, frequency, targets and reasons are not mysteries, nor are they random events which occur sporadically in unpredictable parts of the world. And yet this irrational view of terrorism is precisely the one which dominates the airwaves. One need not agree with terrorism as a political tool to see that it is a useful barometer of a political system's health. The events data present an image of a patient who is slowly but steadily being affected by a disease, the symptom of which is international terrorism. The network news coverage shows a patient which is, at different times, healthy, a hypochondriac, suffering from mysterious ailments, and/or the victim of a sudden, unexpected heart attack.

It is difficult to know how the public reacts to this kind of coverage. It is easy to imagine outrage, fear, anger, confusion, and even a sense of security at different points in time resulting from watching network news coverage of terrorism. What is hard to imagine resulting is an accurate understanding of where, why, how, and against whom terrorism occurs.

While we cannot say that the patterns of misinformation seen in network coverage of international terrorism exist for other kinds of political phenomena, the analysis presented here suggests that there is reason for concern. The information explosion begun with the development of mass-circulation newspapers and extending into the future with the expansion of cable has been viewed as a potential boon to democratic politics. The key is often seen as developing a population which cares enough about the political world to use newly available information to shape its attitudes and behaviors. If network coverage of international terrorism is any indication, such a system may have more shortcomings than one with a less attentive public.

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* Prepared for delivery at the 1982 Annual Meeting of The American Political Science Association, The Denver Hilton Hotel, September 2-5, 1982. Copyright by the American Political Science Association. With the permissions of the authors.

Footnotes

1. It is important to note that our usage of the term "terrorism" is a qualified one. The term has a pronounced negative connotation--a meaning we wish to avoid--that tends to downplay the political motivations and lack of other options available to many of those who plan and carry out such acts. We wish that a more neutral term was available, but general usage of the word terrorism--by scholars, the media and the general public--makes it the most economical means for referring to the phenomenon we are studying. See page 3 for a more careful definition of our use of the term.

2. The ITERATE data is available through the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research for only the years 1968-1977. A recent government report uses the ITERATE data to show patterns of international terrorism from 1968 to 1980 however

(Patterns of International Terrorism). Since the data provided in this report is broken down into the general categories we intended to examine (location, type of act, etc.), and since it was based on an expanded set of sources designed to counteract a U.S. bias, we opted for the longer time span and, therefore, use the ITERATE data as presented in this report as our source. It is important to note that the data is still the ITERATE data and the government report is not a position paper. The views presented in the report are those of the author, David Milbank, and not of the National Foreign Assessment Center, which publishes it.

3. It should be noted that the seizure of the Dominican embassy took place in the midst of the Iranian seizure of the American embassy in Tehran. The long-running Iranian situation no doubt affected, to some extent, the type of coverage that the Colombian seizure received. For two reasons, however, we believe in the generalizability of our analysis and conclusions. First, the results of our analysis conform quite closely to much that has already been written about network news coverage. We believe that our general findings would hold no matter when the Colombian seizure had taken place. Second, the degree to which the Iranian embassy seizure affected coverage of the Colombian event is an interesting question in and of itself. Notwithstanding the fact that both situations involved the seizure of an embassy, the countries, the groups that seized the embassies, the targets of the seizure and the motivations of those involved could hardly have been more different. Treating the incidents as if they were in some sense similar or related would indicate a serious bias in coverage of the events.

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| <u>YEAR</u> | <u>NUMBER OF EVENTS</u> | <u>AMOUNT OF COVERAGE (Minutes)</u> | | |
|-------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------|------------|
| | | <u>ABC</u> | <u>CBS</u> | <u>NBC</u> |
| 1969 | 214 | 211 | 205 | 217 |
| 1970 | 391 | 216 | 233 | 242 |
| 1971 | 324 | 74 | 81 | 66 |
| 1972 | 648 | 213 | 195 | 218 |
| 1973 | 564 | 118 | 143 | 128 |
| 1974 | 528 | 142 | 124 | 124 |
| 1975 | 475 | 215 | 210 | 220 |
| 1976 | 599 | 142 | 169 | 106 |
| 1977 | 562 | 220 | 219 | 183 |
| 1978 | 850 | 153 | 130 | 145 |
| 1979 | 657 | 672 | 640 | 535 |
| 1980 | 760 | 1040 | 988 | 730 |

TABLE 1: Patterns of Occurrence and Presentation of the Overall Amount of International Terrorism

* * * * *

| <u>YEAR</u> | <u>RATIO: MINUTES COVERAGE/# OF EVENTS</u> | | |
|-------------|--|------------|------------|
| | <u>ABC</u> | <u>NBC</u> | <u>CBS</u> |
| 1969 | .99 | .96 | 1.01 |
| 1970 | .55 | .60 | .62 |
| 1971 | .23 | .25 | .20 |
| 1972 | .33 | .30 | .34 |
| 1973 | .21 | .25 | .23 |
| 1974 | .27 | .23 | .23 |
| 1975 | .45 | .44 | .46 |
| 1976 | .24 | .28 | .18 |
| 1977 | .39 | .39 | .33 |
| 1978 | .18 | .15 | .17 |
| 1979 | 1.02 | .97 | .81 |
| 1980 | 1.37 | 1.30 | .96 |
| AVERAGE | .52 | .51 | .46 |

TABLE 2: Ratio of Minutes of Coverage Over Number of Events

| | 69 | 70 | 71 | 72 | YEAR | | 75 | 76 | 77 | 78 | 79 | 80 |
|-------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| | | | | | 73 | 74 | | | | | | |
| <u>NORTH AMERICA</u> | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ABC | 24 | 49 | 10 | 21 | 7 | 1 | -6 | 18 | 17 | -6 | -8 | -10 |
| CBS | 34 | 46 | 7 | 23 | 10 | 5 | -6 | 8 | 17 | -7 | -8 | -10 |
| NBC | 37 | 57 | 12 | 17 | 8 | -2 | -9 | 28 | 17 | -3 | -9 | -6 |
| <u>LATIN AMERICA</u> | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ABC | -27 | -28 | -21 | -14 | -6 | -20 | -15 | -22 | -9 | -6 | -12 | -20 |
| CBS | -30 | -36 | -23 | -12 | -9 | -16 | -14 | -20 | -8 | -8 | -13 | -19 |
| NBC | -31 | -33 | -12 | -11 | -9 | -13 | -12 | -15 | -12 | -7 | -12 | -15 |
| <u>WESTERN EUROPE</u> | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ABC | -5 | 25 | 17 | 15 | 0 | -9 | -9 | -23 | 10 | 4 | -23 | -24 |
| CBS | -10 | 32 | 24 | 21 | 4 | -15 | -6 | -21 | -4 | -9 | -23 | -25 |
| NBC | -17 | 30 | 11 | 18 | 6 | -17 | -2 | -18 | 9 | -14 | -22 | -25 |
| <u>USSR/EAST EUROPE</u> | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ABC | 0 | 3 | 0 | 1 | -1 | 0 | -1 | 3 | 0 | 1 | -1 | -1 |
| CBS | 1 | 6 | -1 | 0 | -1 | 0 | -1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | -1 |
| NBC | 0 | 4 | 3 | 1 | -1 | 0 | -1 | 0 | -1 | 0 | -1 | -1 |
| <u>AFRICA</u> | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ABC | -3 | -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 | -3 | -3 | 19 | -2 | -3 | -4 | -4 |
| CBS | -3 | -4 | -2 | -1 | -2 | -3 | -2 | 13 | -2 | 0 | -3 | -4 |
| NBC | -3 | -4 | -2 | -1 | -2 | -3 | -2 | 14 | -3 | -2 | -4 | -4 |
| <u>MIDDLE EAST</u> | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ABC | 3 | 44 | 10 | 7 | 20 | 44 | 0 | 14 | 15 | 25 | 59 | 52 |
| CBS | -5 | 41 | 11 | 8 | 13 | 41 | 6 | 13 | 13 | 35 | 54 | 66 |
| NBC | -2 | 47 | 7 | 10 | 17 | 45 | -2 | 21 | 7 | 30 | 57 | 59 |
| <u>ASIA</u> | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ABC | 18 | -1 | -7 | -20 | -5 | -4 | 35 | 7 | -1 | -4 | -9 | -6 |
| CBS | 24 | 0 | -9 | -20 | -5 | -1 | 25 | 0 | 1 | -4 | -9 | -6 |
| NBC | 30 | -2 | -3 | -20 | -5 | -2 | 33 | 0 | -1 | -4 | -8 | -6 |
| <u>PACIFIC</u> | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ABC | -3 | 0 | -1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | -1 | 5 | -1 | -2 | 0 | 0 |
| CBS | -3 | 1 | -1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | -1 | -2 | 0 | 0 |
| NBC | -3 | -1 | -1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | -1 | 1 | -2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

TABLE 3: Percentage Under or Over Coverage of Where International Terrorism Occurs (Within Each Year)

| | 69 | 70 | 71 | 72 | YEAR | | 74 | 75 | 76 | 77 | 78 | 79 | 80 |
|----------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| | | | | | 73 | | | | | | | | |
| BOMBINGS | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ABC | -45 | -36 | -32 | -6 | -27 | -37 | -41 | -32 | -43 | -32 | -38 | -35 | -35 |
| CBS | -54 | -40 | -29 | -15 | -24 | -42 | -41 | -32 | -38 | -35 | -36 | -35 | -35 |
| NBC | -58 | -39 | -27 | -9 | -20 | -46 | -41 | -25 | -50 | -38 | -35 | -35 | -35 |
| KIDNAPINGS | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ABC | 2 | 15 | 9 | 18 | 0 | -3 | 4 | -5 | 11 | 2 | -5 | -2 | -2 |
| CBS | 1 | 4 | 8 | 22 | -2 | -1 | 6 | -3 | 5 | 0 | -5 | -2 | -2 |
| NBC | 1 | 13 | 16 | 25 | -4 | 4 | 4 | -4 | 8 | -1 | -5 | -2 | -2 |
| HOSTAGES | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ABC | 0 | -2 | 0 | 20 | 22 | 21 | 18 | -1 | 32 | 7 | 76 | 88 | 88 |
| CBS | 0 | -2 | 0 | 29 | 22 | 22 | 16 | 2 | 31 | 5 | 70 | 89 | 89 |
| NBC | 0 | -2 | 1 | 29 | 14 | 32 | 17 | 2 | 42 | 10 | 74 | 83 | 83 |
| HIJACKINGS | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ABC | 29 | 48 | 15 | 26 | 21 | 1 | 36 | 39 | 43 | 11 | -3 | -3 | -3 |
| CBS | 31 | 61 | 7 | 29 | 24 | 3 | 30 | 27 | 38 | 17 | -2 | -4 | -4 |
| NBC | 39 | 57 | 14 | 26 | 29 | 6 | 33 | 24 | 40 | 7 | -3 | -3 | -3 |
| ASSASSINATION | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ABC | 23 | 10 | -1 | -1 | 12 | 5 | 0 | 12 | 17 | 2 | -2 | -11 | -11 |
| CBS | 35 | 3 | 7 | -1 | 5 | 10 | 0 | 15 | 13 | -2 | -1 | -12 | -12 |
| NBC | 33 | 8 | 18 | -2 | 16 | 10 | 3 | 19 | 18 | 2 | -1 | -10 | -10 |
| THREAT | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ABC | -5 | -16 | -16 | -7 | -14 | -6 | -7 | -12 | -11 | -24 | -15 | -15 | -15 |
| CBS | -6 | -15 | -12 | -5 | -15 | 4 | -7 | -14 | -10 | -28 | -14 | -14 | -14 |
| NBC | -6 | -15 | -16 | -6 | -19 | -1 | -7 | -13 | -11 | -26 | -15 | -14 | -14 |
| ARMED ATTACKS | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ABC | -1 | 4 | 1 | 32 | 21 | 24 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 43 | 3 | -6 | -6 |
| CBS | -2 | 1 | 0 | 29 | 25 | 17 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 54 | 5 | -5 | -5 |
| NBC | -3 | 2 | 6 | 31 | 20 | 24 | 2 | 8 | -4 | 40 | 4 | -6 | -6 |

TABLE 4: Percentage Under or Over Coverage of Types of International Terrorism (Within Each Year)

| <u>YEAR</u> | <u>Percent Over or Under Coverage</u> | | |
|-------------|---------------------------------------|------------|------------|
| | <u>ABC</u> | <u>CBS</u> | <u>NBC</u> |
| 1969 | 9 | 23 | 30 |
| 1970 | -12 | -10 | 0 |
| 1971 | -54 | -52 | -44 |
| 1972 | -18 | -14 | -15 |
| 1973 | 3 | -1 | -4 |
| 1974 | -19 | -15 | -11 |
| 1975 | 28 | 27 | 18 |
| 1976 | 30 | 7 | 28 |
| 1977 | 0 | -1 | -7 |
| 1978 | -37 | -40 | -35 |
| 1979 | 49 | 41 | 42 |
| 1980 | 57 | 46 | 52 |

TABLE 5: Percentage Under or Over Coverage of International Terrorism Against U.S. Terrorism (Within Each Year)

* * * * *

| <u>YEAR</u> | <u>NUMBER OF EVENTS</u> | <u>AMOUNT OF COVERAGE (Minutes)</u> | | |
|-------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------|------------|
| | | <u>ABC</u> | <u>CBS</u> | <u>NBC</u> |
| 1969 | 124 | 142 | 165 | 191 |
| 1970 | 262 | 118 | 133 | 162 |
| 1971 | 243 | 15 | 19 | 20 |
| 1972 | 248 | 44 | 46 | 50 |
| 1973 | 225 | 50 | 56 | 46 |
| 1974 | 197 | 25 | 27 | 32 |
| 1975 | 179 | 142 | 137 | 123 |
| 1976 | 227 | 97 | 76 | 70 |
| 1977 | 193 | 75 | 72 | 49 |
| 1978 | 386 | 8 | 6 | 15 |
| 1979 | 241 | 578 | 503 | 424 |
| 1980 | 271 | 962 | 934 | 644 |

TABLE 6: Patterns of Occurrence and Presentation of the Amount of International Terrorism Against U.S. Citizens and Property

| <u>YEAR</u> | <u>RATIO: MINUTES COVERAGE/# OF EVENTS</u> | | |
|-------------|--|------------|------------|
| | <u>ABC</u> | <u>NBC</u> | <u>CBS</u> |
| 1969 | 1.15 | 1.33 | 1.54 |
| 1970 | .45 | .51 | .62 |
| 1971 | .06 | .08 | .08 |
| 1972 | .18 | .19 | .20 |
| 1973 | .22 | .25 | .20 |
| 1974 | .13 | .14 | .16 |
| 1975 | .79 | .77 | .69 |
| 1976 | .43 | .33 | .31 |
| 1977 | .39 | .37 | .25 |
| 1978 | .02 | .02 | .04 |
| 1979 | 2.40 | 2.09 | 1.76 |
| 1980 | 3.55 | 3.45 | 2.38 |
| AVERAGE | .81 | .79 | .69 |

TABLE 7: Ratio of Minutes of Coverage Over Number of Events Involving U.S. Targets

| | 69 | 70 | 71 | 72 | YEAR | | 74 | 75 | 76 | 77 | 78 | 79 | 80 |
|----------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|----|
| | | | | | 73 | | | | | | | | |
| BOMBINGS | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ABC | -71 | -45 | -43 | -35 | -40 | -62 | -45 | -37 | -49 | -38 | -48 | -34 | |
| CBS | -70 | -48 | -55 | -30 | -43 | -63 | -44 | -40 | -59 | -44 | -47 | -34 | |
| NBC | -73 | -48 | -58 | -22 | -42 | -73 | -47 | -38 | -59 | -44 | -47 | -34 | |
| KIDNAPINGS | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ABC | 5 | 2 | 39 | -2 | 1 | 20 | 1 | -1 | -4 | -2 | -3 | -4 | |
| CBS | 2 | -3 | 36 | -2 | 1 | 14 | 2 | -1 | -4 | -2 | -3 | -4 | |
| NBC | 3 | -1 | 35 | -2 | -2 | 28 | -1 | -1 | -4 | -2 | -2 | -4 | |
| HOSTAGES | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ABC | 0 | -2 | 0 | 0 | 30 | 29 | 12 | -1 | 39 | 0 | 87 | 95 | |
| CBS | 0 | -2 | 0 | 0 | 29 | 18 | 9 | -1 | 54 | 0 | 86 | 93 | |
| NBC | 0 | -2 | 0 | 0 | 33 | 19 | 15 | -1 | 66 | 0 | 91 | 92 | |
| HIJACKINGS | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ABC | 42 | 76 | 31 | 86 | 14 | 6 | 47 | 47 | 22 | 15 | -5 | -5 | |
| CBS | 36 | 84 | 30 | 81 | 26 | 3 | 32 | 47 | 20 | 38 | -5 | -6 | |
| NBC | 44 | 71 | 35 | 74 | 20 | 9 | 50 | 33 | 12 | 14 | -5 | -4 | |
| ASSASSINATION | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ABC | 39 | -2 | 1 | -2 | 0 | 41 | 3 | 15 | -3 | -2 | 0 | -7 | |
| CBS | 47 | -2 | 0 | -2 | -12 | 33 | 2 | 19 | -3 | 24 | -1 | -7 | |
| NBC | 42 | 1 | 8 | -2 | 8 | 43 | 1 | 29 | 7 | -2 | 0 | -7 | |
| THREAT | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ABC | -10 | -19 | -21 | -28 | -23 | -9 | -10 | -23 | -11 | -41 | -18 | -18 | |
| CBS | -10 | -19 | -6 | -27 | -32 | -7 | -10 | -23 | -8 | -41 | -18 | -17 | |
| NBC | -10 | -19 | -21 | -28 | -30 | -9 | -10 | -22 | -11 | -41 | -18 | -17 | |
| ARMED ATTACK | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ABC | -3 | 1 | 0 | -4 | 6 | -3 | -4 | 2 | 11 | 18 | 1 | -4 | |
| CBS | -3 | -1 | -2 | -4 | 21 | -3 | -4 | 0 | 8 | 35 | 1 | -3 | |
| NBC | -1 | 1 | -2 | -4 | 25 | -3 | -4 | 3 | -3 | -3 | 0 | -3 | |

TABLE 8: Percentage Under or Over Coverage of Types of International Terrorism Against U.S. Targets (Within Each Year)

| | 69 | 70 | 71 | 72 | YEAR | | 74 | 75 | 76 | 77 | 78 | 79 | 80 |
|-----------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|----|
| | | | | | 73 | | | | | | | | |
| <u>GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS</u> | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ABC | -4 | -49 | -29 | -49 | -6 | 62 | 0 | 7 | -12 | -13 | 50 | 44 | |
| CBS | 3 | -53 | -29 | -48 | 0 | 40 | -4 | 4 | -20 | -22 | 48 | 44 | |
| NBC | -2 | -45 | -17 | -28 | 7 | 67 | 0 | 17 | -21 | -22 | 52 | 42 | |
| <u>MILITARY</u> | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ABC | 30 | -11 | 24 | -6 | -5 | -11 | 44 | -15 | -30 | -12 | -13 | -11 | |
| CBS | 28 | -11 | 23 | -3 | -13 | 6 | 37 | -24 | -25 | -12 | -11 | -11 | |
| NBC | 33 | -15 | 9 | 7 | -13 | -11 | 42 | -19 | -29 | -12 | -12 | -11 | |
| <u>BUSINESS</u> | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ABC | -30 | -13 | -16 | -19 | -23 | -46 | -37 | -31 | -7 | 37 | -28 | -24 | |
| CBS | -27 | -15 | -6 | -16 | -28 | -46 | -28 | -35 | -23 | 5 | -27 | -24 | |
| NBC | -29 | -15 | 2 | -18 | -31 | -54 | -39 | -35 | -31 | 5 | -27 | -24 | |
| <u>PRIVATE CITIZENS</u> | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ABC | 5 | 71 | 29 | 78 | 24 | -11 | 3 | 44 | 65 | 41 | -8 | -8 | |
| CBS | -4 | 76 | 13 | 77 | 37 | 4 | 13 | 57 | 75 | 18 | -9 | -8 | |
| NBC | -1 | 69 | 43 | 69 | 28 | -2 | 3 | 37 | 81 | 48 | -9 | -7 | |

TABLE 9: Percentage Over or Under Coverage of Types of Victims of International Terrorism Against U.S. Targets (Within Each Year)

| <u>PLACE</u> | <u>NETWORK</u> | | |
|-------------------------|----------------|------------|------------|
| | <u>ABC</u> | <u>CBS</u> | <u>NBC</u> |
| <u>NORTH AMERICA</u> | 2 | 3 | 6 |
| <u>LATIN AMERICA</u> | -17 | -17 | -15 |
| <u>WESTERN EUROPE</u> | -13 | -13 | -11 |
| <u>USSR/EAST EUROPE</u> | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| <u>AFRICA</u> | -1 | -1 | -2 |
| <u>MIDDLE EAST</u> | 38 | 40 | 36 |
| <u>ASIA</u> | -2 | -2 | 0 |
| <u>PACIFIC</u> | -1 | -1 | -1 |

TABLE 10: Percentage Under or Over Coverage of Where International Terrorism Occurs: 1969-1980

* * * * *

| | <u>NETWORK</u> | | |
|-----------------------|----------------|------------|------------|
| | <u>ABC</u> | <u>CBS</u> | <u>NBC</u> |
| <u>KIDNAPING</u> | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| <u>HOSTAGES</u> | 48 | 47 | 43 |
| <u>BOMBINGS</u> | -38 | -38 | -38 |
| <u>ARMED ATTACKS</u> | 5 | 6 | 4 |
| <u>HIJACKS</u> | 14 | 14 | 17 |
| <u>ASSASSINATIONS</u> | 2 | 2 | 5 |
| <u>THREATS</u> | -14 | -13 | -15 |

TABLE 11: Percentage Under and Over Coverage of Type of International Terrorist Attack: 1969-1980

| <u>ACT</u> | <u>NETWORK</u> | | |
|-----------------------|----------------|------------|------------|
| | <u>ABC</u> | <u>CBS</u> | <u>NBC</u> |
| <u>KIDNAPING</u> | -3 | -2 | -5 |
| <u>HOSTAGES</u> | 67 | 68 | -59 |
| <u>BOMBINGS</u> | -49 | -49 | -49 |
| <u>ARMED ATTACKS</u> | 0 | 0 | -1 |
| <u>HIJACKINGS</u> | 14 | 15 | 18 |
| <u>ASSASSINATIONS</u> | 3 | 4 | 7 |
| <u>THREATS</u> | -22 | -21 | -22 |

TABLE 12: Percentage Under and Over Coverage of Types of International Terrorist Acts Against U.S. Targets: 1969-1980

* * * * *

| <u>TYPE OF VICTIM</u> | <u>NETWORK</u> | | |
|-------------------------|----------------|------------|------------|
| | <u>ABC</u> | <u>CBS</u> | <u>NBC</u> |
| <u>GOVERNMENT</u> | 35 | 30 | 29 |
| <u>MILITARY</u> | -7 | -7 | -5 |
| <u>BUSINESS</u> | -30 | -30 | -30 |
| <u>PRIVATE CITIZENS</u> | 3 | 6 | 6 |

TABLE 13: Percentage Under and Over Coverage of Types of U.S. Victims of International Terrorist Attacks: 1969-1980

| <u>SOURCE</u> | <u>1</u> <u>NUMBER OF</u> <u>BROADCASTS</u> <u>STORIES</u> | <u>2</u> <u>BROADCASTS/</u> <u>STORIES IN</u> <u>FIRST MINUTE/</u> <u>ON FIRST PAGE</u> | <u>3</u> <u>TOTAL TIME</u> <u>OF</u> <u>BROADCASTS</u> | <u>4</u> <u>TIME DEVOTED</u> <u>TO COLOMBIAN</u> <u>GOVERNMENT &</u> <u>SOCIETY</u> | <u>5</u> <u>TIME</u> <u>DEVOTED</u> <u>TO M19</u> | <u>6</u> <u>TIME</u> <u>DEVOTED</u> <u>TO DEMANDS</u> <u>OF M19</u> | <u>7</u> <u>TIME</u> <u>DEVOTED</u> <u>TO U.S.</u> <u>AMBASSADOR</u> |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|--|---|--|
| <u>ABC</u> | 20 | 4 | 17:30 | :24 | 1:32 | 1:38 | 1:48 |
| <u>CBS</u> | 20 | 4 | 21:40 | :15 | :15 | 1:18 | 4:22 |
| <u>NBC</u> | 21 | 1 | 24:00 | :42 | :42 | 1:24 | 3:04 |
| <u>N.Y. Times</u> | 52 | 9 | ----- | --- | --- | ----- | ----- |

TABLE 14: Summary of Amount and Content of Media Coverage of Embassy Seizure

* * * * *

| <u>SOURCE</u> | <u>M19</u> | <u>TERRORISTS</u> | <u>LEFTISTS</u> | <u>MILITANTS</u> | <u>GUERRILLAS</u> | <u>GUNMEN</u> | <u>REBELS</u> |
|---|------------|-------------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|---------------|---------------|
| <u>ABC</u> | 8* | 17 | 10 | 1 | 21 | 0 | 0 |
| <u>CBS</u> | 5 | 1 | 20 | 21 | 29 | 4 | 0 |
| <u>NBC</u> | 2 | 31 | 6 | 0 | 46 | 0 | 0 |
| <u>New York</u> <u>Times</u> <u>(headlines)</u> | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 17 | 0 | 5 |

TABLE 15: Frequency of Terms Used to Describe Embassy Captors

* Seven of these uses came in one segment broadcast February 28, 1980.