

WHAT GUIDELINES SHOULD THE MEDIA FOLLOW IN ITS COVERAGE OF TERRORIST ACTS?

#ThinkOutsideTheBox

POLICY SERIES

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NEXTGEN 5.0

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The year 2015, was marked for France by both the highest number of terrorist activity¹ and by the occurrence of attacks responsible for the ‘largest number of casualties since the second world war’.² Local media’s choices in the amount of time devoted to these attacks as well as in their way of presenting them, mirrored the country’s unpreparedness and lack of experience. Some journalists, forgetting about their civic duty, unwillingly assisted terrorists in endangering the lives of many hostages in crisis situations, as well as those of police forces during their interventions. Others, showed unforeseen terror, violating victims’ rights to human decency and paralyzing the public into fear and horror. All ultimately contributed, albeit involuntarily, into publicizing terrorists and their cause.

Based on some of the mistakes made by the media community during the 2015 attacks in France and building on the Superior Council on AudioVisual’s (CSA)³ conclusions of February 12, 2015,⁴ this paper⁵ aims at suggesting additional guidelines to journalists in order to guide their coverage of terrorist attacks in a productive yet mindful way. The prescribed policies rely on prior analysis of the relationship between media and terrorism and of previous policies implemented in the European Union and in France. Inspiration for these recommendations also stem from some Israeli media guidelines, as the country has had a broad experience in covering local terrorist acts and consequently

¹ Namely the attack on Charlie Hebdo’s editorial office on January 7th 2015, the hostage crisis at the printing industry of Dammarville-en-Goële and the one at the Vincennes Hyper Cacher supermarket on January 9th 2015, the attack on the French Stadium (“Stade de France”), the shootings at 6 terraces of cafes and restaurants in the 10th, 11th and 12th district of Paris and the hostage crisis of the Bataclan in Paris on November 13, 2015.

² According to Georges Fenech, President of the French National Assembly’s Investigation Committee Relative to the Means Set in Place to Fight Terrorism After the Attacks of January 7th 2015’ (Commission d’enquête relative aux moyens mis en œuvre par l’État pour lutter contre le terrorisme depuis le 7 janvier 2015’) in the commission report’s introductory note (“Avant-propos”), p.11 French National Assembly.

³ The Superior Council of Audiovisual (“Conseil Supérieur de l’Audiovisuel”) will from now on be referred to as the CSA.

⁴ CSA. Traitement des attentats par les télévisions et les radios: Le Conseil rend ses décisions / Communiqués de presse / Espace Presse / Accueil. (2015, February 12).

⁵ The views of the author do not necessarily represent those of NextGen 5.0

implemented noteworthy policies. This article concludes that media should be encouraged by their respective equivalents of the CSA to:

- **Avoid revealing critical information** about ongoing hostage situations unless either; the security of hostages is no longer at threat and the termination of the crisis has been confirmed by more than one official source, or said information is essential to the immediate security of the larger population;
- **Avoid broadcasting police operations** while they are still ongoing;
- **Avoid showing scenes** of tremendous horror and/or panic;
- **Prone a return to normal broadcasting programs** as soon as every critical information about the terror attack has been communicated;
- **Refrain from conducting and broadcasting** terrorists' interviews.

The policy prescriptions made in the following article are not meant to become legally binding and are aimed solely at avoiding renewing similar cases of information mishandling in future and similar circumstances.

STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE

This briefing aims at determining which guidelines should media follow in its coverage of terrorist acts to insure both the public's right to know and favour outlets' sustenance, without playing into terrorist's games. Since the question at hand highlights a broad and complex set of intertwined considerations whose impact can vary according to different local contexts, the selection of a case study appears necessary to the proper understanding of the dilemmas under analysis. Indeed, choosing a specific case study provides for tangible examples of mistakes made by media in their coverage of terrorist acts that are to be avoided, as well as their consequences. Two considerations enlightened this article's selection of a case study.

The first one concerns the impediment for the country whose media institution is to be scrutinized to have a policy protecting and fostering freedom of press; studying the media coverage of terrorist attacks in a country whose media is muzzled by a political party and nationally owned seems counterproductive as it would not enable this paper to account for the media's perpetual bid for self-survival and profit. Additionally, choosing to evaluate a nationalized media's coverage of terrorist acts would erroneously lead this article astray in evaluating the government's agency and communication mistakes rather than that of their media.

A second consideration driving case study selection is the importance for this briefing to be informative for and relevant to present time media concerns when covering terrorist acts while validly identifying previous mistakes; in order to have the hindsight necessary for one to be convinced that a media report of a terrorist attack constituted a clear case of mishandling relevant to the present analysis, this paper chooses to focus on media coverage of terrorist acts that are a couple of years old.

Hoping to address both considerations mentioned in this article's case study selection, this briefing has chosen to focus on the French media's coverage of the 2015 attacks that unravelled in France.

CASE STUDY

THE 2015 TERRORIST ATTACKS IN FRANCE AND THEIR MEDIA COVERAGE

When referring to the 2015 terrorist attacks in France, this article refers to a string of events whose impact was incommensurable on the general public and the international arena, namely the attack on Charlie Hebdo's editorial offices on January 7th 2015, the hostage crisis at the printing industry of Dammartin-en-Goële and the one at the Vincennes Hyper Cacher supermarket on January 9th 2015, the attack on the French Stadium ("Stade de France"), the shootings at 6 terrasses of cafes and restaurants in the 10th, 11th and 12th district of Paris and the hostage crisis of the Bataclan in Paris on November 13, 2015.

Said chain of attacks began on January 7th, when two men, Chérif and Saïd Kouachi, forced the entrance of the satirical French journal Charlie Hebdo's offices and proceeded to shooting ten people dead. The motive mentioned by the culprits was to "avenge the Prophet" from what they perceived as incessant mockeries from the satirical newspaper. Two other people, a maintenance agent and a policeman, were murdered while the terrorists forcibly entered and ran away from the scene. The attack that caused the death of 12 people and wounded 11 was claimed by Al-Qaeda Yemen.

On January 9th 2015, the Kouachi brothers robbed a driver of her car in Nanteuil-le-Haudoin (Oise) and started driving towards Paris. Yet they were quickly intercepted by local police patrols in the Dammartin-en-goële area. Law enforcement and the terrorists exchanged shots which wind up wounding one of the two brothers, who then proceeded into using a nearby printing industry as a hideout. Quite rapidly, the brothers agreed to let the owner of the industry leave the building, oblivious to the fact that one of his employee, Lilian Lepère, was still hiding under a sink. Eight hours later, the intervention squad raided the industry and neutralized both terrorists, exfiltrated the unharmed albeit shocked hostage.

This crisis happened simultaneously to that of the hostage crisis of the Kosher Supermarket in Vincennes. On January 8th, Amédy Coulibaly, an acquaintance of one of the Kouachi brothers, murdered a police officer in Montrouge. On January 9th, while the Kouachi brothers were hiding in the printing industry, he took a kosher Supermarket of the Vincennes area, along with fifteen to twenty of its clients, hostage. The culprit mentioned his affiliation with ISIS and demanded, as a prerequisite to his hostages' safety, that the Kouachi brothers be permitted to leave their hideout unharmed.⁶

Ten months later, on November 13 2015, France is shocked anew by six simultaneous and coordinated attacks perpetrated by three different commandos of terrorists in Paris and the nearby Saint-Denis area; three bombs were successively detonated in the 'Stade de France' within forty minutes, two establishment's terraces in Paris' 10th district and two more in the 11th district were aimed at by shooters and the Bataclan night club was invaded, its attendance held hostage and murdered by a third commando.⁷

In the midst of this succession of terrorist attacks, journalists covering the traumatizing events added fuel to the fire by unwillingly assisting terrorists in endangering the lives of both hostages and law enforcement forces. Indeed, as they documented the Kouachi brothers' hideout from the police at the printing industry of Dammartin- en-Goële on January 9th 2015, TF1 and France 2, two prominent Tv channels, revealed the location of Lilian Lepère, an employee of the printing industry who hid under a sink for eight hours before law enforcement intervened. Both tv channels broadcasted live his sister's interview before she could even be interrogated by the police; an interview in which she suggested her brother might still be in the industry. Similarly, The radio station RMC was made guilty of the same imprudence by airing UMP deputy of Seine-et-Marne, Yves Albarello's

⁶ For detailed information regarding the chronology of the events of January 7th and 9th 2015, refer to pages 32-39 of the French National Assembly Investigation Committee Relative to the Means Set in Place to Fight Terrorism After the Attacks of January 7th 2015's report: French National Assembly.

⁷ For a detailed chronology of the 13th of November 2015's attacks refer to pages 42-53 of the same document: French National Assembly.

intervention; one that confirmed the hostage's location in the industry⁸ in which the terrorists were.

Similarly, BFM TV journalist Dominique Rizet revealed live that a woman hid in the kosher supermarket of Vincennes' cold room while Coulibaly was still holding the premises and its clients hostage; "There is someone, a woman, that would have hid since the beginning - since the arrival of this man inside de supermarket - who hid in a cold room, used the cold room as a refuge and would still be there. Inside the cold room then, at the back of the shop."⁹ By mentioning the exact location of the cold room while hostages were still at threat, BFM could have condemned all of the six people, including a young infant, that were using the room as a hideout from Coulibaly. Six hostages of the Hypercasher Supermarket crisis sued the BFM outlet for endangering their lives by revealing critical information.¹⁰ The channel's director, Hervé Bérout, first argued the intervention forces advised the channel that the situation was over, an information denied by the RAID. His journalist Dominique Rizet showed remorse and Bérout himself later recognized the channel's error.¹¹ Rendering this information public while the hostage crisis was still ongoing could have dramatically jeopardized Lilian Lepère's safety had the terrorists seen it.¹² BFM-TV

⁸ The decision number 2015-49 of January 11th 2015 on the formal notice addressed to the company SAM Radio Monte-Carlo (Décision n° 2015-49 du 11 février 2015 portant mise en demeure de la société SAM Radio Monte-Carlo) confirms that "(...) on January 9 2015, around 11:20 am, RMC radio service broadcasted, during a news show dedicated to the events linked to the hiding in a printing industry of the perpetrators of the Charlie Hebdo attack that happened 2 days prior, the interview of a deputy declaring that a person was inside that same building without the terrorists' knowledge" (2015, February 17).

⁹ (2015, July 13). Hyper Cacher: Dominique Rizet "s'en veut" d'avoir dévoiler la cachette d'une otage en direct sur BFMTV.

¹⁰ For more information regarding the hostages's legal complaint, refer to: lexpress.fr. (2015, April 3). Attentats: Six otages de l'hyper Cacher portent plainte contre les médias. Medias.

¹¹ To view the segment of Dominique Rizet's admission of their mistake in broadcasting the information relative to the hostage's location: Hyper Cacher: Dominique Rizet "s'en veut" d'avoir dévoiler la cachette d'une otage en direct sur BFMTV.

To view the segment of Hervé Bérout, Director of BFM TV on Canal+ 's show "Le Petit Journal" recognizing as an error the publication of this information: lexpress.fr. (2015, March 28). VIDEO. Otage caché dans l'hyper Cacher: BFMTV reconnaît son "erreur" sur le plateau du petit journal. Medias.

¹² To view the interview of Lilian Lepère's sister broadcasted by France 2, TF1 and shared on Francetvinfo's website: franceinfo.fr. (2015, January 9). VIDEO. Prise d'otages en Seine-et-Marne: La sœur d'un employé de l'entreprise témoigne.

was indeed recognized as responsible for endangering hostages in its coverage of the hostage situation in the Vincennes area by the CSA:

“(...) that during that same edition, an information relative to the probable presence of a woman hiding inside the cold room of the Hyper Cacher supermarket was also announced by a journalist on air (...) that by broadcasting these informations, before the hostage taker had been neutralized and this despite the fact that their nature could have threatened the security and life of hostages, the service BFM TV ignored the elementary rules of prudence enabling to insure the maintenance of public security.”¹³

In an unforeseen turn of events, some channels did not hesitate to directly contact terrorists and broadcast live their intervention, acting not only as impediments to police forces and their work, but also as vectors of promotion of the terrorists's message:

BFM-TV and RTL provoked a debate by narrating, after the assault, their contact with the killers (...): ‘The journalist Igor Sahiri called (...) the industry in which the Kouachi Brothers were hiding, to check the information, tells Hervé Beroud. To his surprise, it's Chérif Kouachi that answered him.’ Their conversation lasted a few minutes during which he claimed he was mandated by the Yemeni Branch of Al-Qaeda and took on the responsibility for the attack against Charlie Hebdo. Around 3pm, it is Coulibaly himself that calls BFM-TV. We put him on the line with Alexis Delahousse, deputy director of BFM-TV's redaction, says the channel. (...) Coulibaly explains he ‘synchronized’ with the Kouachi brothers and says he killed four and holds seventeen hostages.(...) At RTL, no one considers having relayed propaganda by broadcasting on Saturday morning a segment of Amedy Coulibaly registered Friday by calling the supermarket: ‘We asked ourselves the question, explains Phillipe Baille, editor in chief of the radio. But this is not a segment giving Amedy Coulibaly a voice, rather a document.’ A ‘controlled

¹³ Excerpt from the decision number 2015-48 of the 11th of february 2015 regarding the formal notice addressed to BFM TV: Décision n° 2015-48 du 11 février 2015 portant mise en demeure de la société BFM TV.

document', added Mr. Baille with explanations and the intervention of Gilles Kepel, specialist of Islam.¹⁴

Outlets further communicated in real time the forces' position, as well as their strategies for intervention, hence threatening law enforcement's operational success and consequently the lives of all parties involved. By broadcasting police's intervention on the printing industry of Dammartin-en-Goële as the crisis in the kosher supermarket was still ongoing, journalists forgot about their civic duties. Indeed, as Amédy Coulibaly had previously warned that the safety of the Vincennes hostages depended upon the safe release of the Kouachi brothers themselves, the armed intrusion's live broadcasting could have undermined the rescue operation of Lilian Lepère and that of hostages in the kosher supermarket.¹⁵ Mathias Barrois alike, a journalist of France 2 Tv channel was accused of filming police forces up too close, endangering his life, that of the intervention forces and the success of the operation.¹⁶ The live documenting of the RAID's intervention in the Hypercacher could have had equally disastrous consequences for both intervention forces personnel and the people held inside.¹⁷

If live broadcasting during hostage crisis situations undeniably pose a threat to those involved, delayed reporting can also, if executed primarily under the objective of generating profit from public shock, have drastic consequences. The coverage of the Paris attacks of January 7th 2015 showed gruesome images of panic and horror

¹⁴ LeMonde.fr. Attentats à Paris: 4 questions sur une couverture médiatique hors normes. (2015, January 14).

¹⁵ "(...) broadcasted the information relative to the ongoing intervention of police forces against the terrorists who took refuge in Dammartin-en-Goële; that this announcement, accompanied of images of the setting letting smoke appear from the roof of the building, intervened while, according to informations emanating from authorities and relayed by medias, the terrorist holding hostages in the supermarket threatened to execute the hostages he held captive shall the other terrorists not be free (...)" Excerpt from the decision number 2015-48 of the 11th of february 2015 regarding the formal notice addressed to BFM TV: Décision n° 2015-48 du 11 février 2015 portant mise en demeure de la société BFM TV.

¹⁶ To view France 2's inappropriate proximity with the RAID forces prior to their intervention on the Hyper Cacher Supermarket.

¹⁷ LeMonde.fr. Attentats à Paris: 4 questions sur une couverture médiatique hors normes. (2015, January 14).

responsible for increasing public intimidation and paralysis. Le Point¹⁸ for example, published a non-blurred picture of Ahmed Merabet lying on the floor, just seconds prior to his execution, as its first page illustration of its January 8th edition; a clear infringement to the public's right not to know and to the victims' right to decency.¹⁹ The channel France 24 took this offence farther by broadcasting sequences of a video that depicts the Ahmed Merabet's assassination by the terrorists, letting viewers both see the panicked face of the public agent and hear its trembling voice in the seconds leading to his death.²⁰ In a similar fashion, an amateur video published by LeMonde's online version showed victims running away from gunmen during the hostage crisis of the November 13 2015's attack on the Bataclan, depicting insufferable images of wounded people dragging themselves away from the scene and calling for help and of panicked people hanging from windows in attempt to get away from the shooters. Relaying such material constituted a clear infringement to the public's right not to know and to the victims' right to decency.²¹ The release of inside surveillance camera's footage from the Casa Nostra, first published by the Daily mail then shared by the Huffington post's french version,²² Le Monde,²³ LaDepeche.fr,²⁴ and ParisMatch.fr²⁵ among others, presented equally unsustainable images of horror and fear. These contributed to instil a wave of panic amongst the population and proved completely

¹⁸ To view Le Point's cover page of January 8 2015: ArretSurImage.fr (2009, April 9). Arrêt sur images on Twitter.

¹⁹ ArretSurImage.fr (2009, April 9). Arrêt sur images on Twitter.

²⁰ Delcambre, A. (2015, February 13). Couverture des attentats: " que fait-on ? On met un écran noir ? ."

"The Council examined the sequence of the police officer Ahmed Merabet's murder by terrorists, broadcasted by the channel France 24. Even if the instant of his death was not shown, this sequence would make the sounds of the detonations of a gun and of the voice of the victim clear and exposed his face and distressed situation" Excerpt from the Press Release dated of February 12 2015: Traitement des attentats par les télévisions et les radios: Le Conseil rend ses décisions / Communiqués de presse / Espace Presse / Accueil. (2015, February 12)

²¹ LeMonde.fr (2015, November 14). Vidéo: Pendant le carnage au Bataclan, la fuite des victimes.

²² HuffingtonPost.fr

²³ Piquard, A. (2015, November 26). Qui a payé pour les images de vidéosurveillance du Casa Nostra le soir des attentats?

²⁴ Ladepeche.fr (2015, November 19). La terrible vidéo de l'attaque contre la pizzeria Casa Nostra.

²⁵ Ramasseul, D. (2015, November 19). Vidéo: 13 novembre, rue de la Fontaine-au-Roi - et la terreur s'abat sur la Casa Nostra. Paris Match.

disrespectful of both the victims' right to their own image and of the grief of their respective closed ones, who had no choice but to learn the ongoing situation from the TV.

Finally, continuous 'special editions' of a variety of channels during and after the events that took place that year entertained this climate of terror, rendering the return to normal life even more excruciatingly difficult than it already was for many of the people involved, as well as for the french society as a whole. Francetvinfo.fr, for example, featured a link that offered its viewers to come back on the 'more than 48 hours of special edition show' regarding the attacks.²⁶

As jeanmarcmorandini.com revealed the ratings of TF1 and France 2,²⁷ two Tv channels that held a 24hour special edition on the attacks, the website insidiously reveals the economic considerations between such programs. Yet these 'special editions' permeated the trauma and rendered it impossible for the public and the government to move on from this collective disaster.

²⁶ Berlu, S. (2015, January 12). Attentats meurtriers à Paris, le film des événements.

²⁷ jeanmarcmorandini.com. (2015, January 10).

BACKGROUND

According to Alexander Spencer ‘(...) the central aim of terrorism is not so much the act of violence or the killing of a target, but rather the dissemination of terror and uncertainty among a population as well as the spread of the group’s message through the newsworthiness of the violent act’.²⁸ Spencer thus belongs to a first school of thought regarding the relationship between media and terrorism that views media coverage as an inherent part of a terrorist group’s communication strategy aimed at fulfilling three goals:²⁹ captivating the attention, disseminating the terrorist group’s message³⁰ in order to attract public’s sympathy for their cause³¹ and spreading fear and terror among the population. This intimidation of the public is expected to result in increasing public pressure on decision makers to affect policy³² in ways that favour the terrorist organization’s interests.³³ To these advantages gained through media coverage, Weimann adds the possibility for the terrorists to attribute a positive spin on their actions, shaping their image to gain the public’s sympathy and enhancing their

²⁸ Spencer, A. (2012). *Lessons Learnt: Terrorism and the Media* (Ser. 4). Swindon, Wiltshire: Arts & Humanities Research Council, p.8

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ "It cannot be denied that although terrorism has proved remarkably ineffective as the major weapon for taking down governments and capturing political power, it has been a remarkably successful means of publicizing a political cause and relaying the terrorist threat to a wider audience, particularly in the open and pluralistic countries of the West. When one says 'terrorism' in a democratic society, one also says 'media'" -Wilkinson, P. (1997). The media and terrorism: A reassessment. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 9(2), 51–64.

³¹ Some consider the aim of promoting a cause through violence originated with the Narodnaya Volya who coined the idea of "propaganda by deed": "(...) the symbiotic relationship between terrorism and the media was forged during this era by both the Russian constitutionalists in the Narodnaya Volya and their anarchist contemporaries who, through "propaganda by deed", deliberately sought to communicate their revolutionary message to a wide audience" Hoffman, B. (2006). The old media and terrorism. In *Inside Terrorism* (pp. 173-196). New York: Columbia University Press, p.178.

³² "(...) when the media prepares for coverage and the attack doesn't take place it is sometimes forced to justify the money spent by bringing background coverage with a "human interest angle. Thus, there is a distorted focus on the human aspect instead of the overall picture, and the large networks in fact become agents that influence the shaping of policy rather than agents that merely report" Ganor, B. (2011). Dilemmas Concerning Media Coverage of Terrorist Attacks. In *The counter-terrorism puzzle: A guide for decision makers* (pp. 229–246). Transaction Publishers, p.231.

³³ Ganor, B. (2011). Dilemmas Concerning Media Coverage of Terrorist Attacks. In *The counter-terrorism puzzle: A guide for decision makers* (pp. 229–246). Transaction Publishers, p.229.

influence. He further argues that media provides terrorists with the opportunity to gather vital information regarding the operational strategies of the offensive side and that of other terrorist acts.³⁴ Terrorists can thus use media to further their propaganda schemes, fund raising and recruiting but also their operational efficiency, through imitation of past successful attacks and intelligence collection regarding counter-terrorism measures.³⁵

In the same way media serves terrorism, this school argues covering terrorist acts also serves the purpose of the media. For the latter, constantly competing to acquire information worthy of captivating their audiences' attention³⁶ for reasons of self-preservation,³⁷ covering terrorist acts insure both their continued existence and huge financial profits.³⁸ This mutual interest between media and terrorism results in the description of their relation as a symbiotic one; for example, Schmidt would refer to the media as 'terrorists' accomplice',³⁹ Hoffman describes the press as their 'best friend',⁴⁰ while Wilson views the media

³⁴ Weimann, G., & Winn, C. (1993). *The theater of terror: Mass media and international terrorism*. New York: Addison-Wesley Longman.

³⁵ Nacos, B. (2006). Terrorism/Counterterrorism and Media in the Age of Global Communication. United Nations University Global Seminar Second Shimame-Yamaguchi Session, Terrorism—A Global Challenge. Retrieved December 14, 2016.

³⁶ Human tragedy, shocking footage, and action appeal to the public and makes terrorist attacks particularly interesting for medias. Whether they report on the hard information which includes blood and danger, or on the human interest angle and other 'soft' information, information regarding terrorist acts is always greatly sought after by consumers of the audio-visual media. Transnational Terrorism Security & the Rule of Law. (2016). Retrieved December 14, 2016.

³⁷ This tension is two-faceted: journalists need to consider financial gains and yet provide responsible reporting of events that won't play into terrorist hands. They also have to balance between their duty to inform the public, and their civic duty not to show images the public cannot stand or does not want to watch. Joseph Draznin, News Coverage of Terrorism: The Media Perspective, doctoral dissertation, University of Maryland at College Park, 1997, UMI Microform 9816453, pp. 182-185. In Ganor, B. (2011). Dilemmas Concerning Media Coverage of Terrorist Attacks. In *The counter-terrorism puzzle: A guide for decision makers* (pp. 229–246). Transaction Publishers.

³⁸ (...)terrorist attacks make viewer ratings surge and profits increase" Bilgen, A. (2012, July 22). Terrorism and the media: A dangerous Symbiosis. Retrieved December 14, 2016.

³⁹ Schmid, A. P. (1989). Terrorism and the media: The ethics of publicity. In *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 1(4), 539–565.

⁴⁰ Hoffman, B. (2006). The old media and terrorism. In *Inside Terrorism* (pp. 173-196). New York: Columbia University Press, p.183.

as the provider of the ‘oxygen of publicity’⁴¹ to terrorist groups. Regardless of the terminology adopted, all would agree with Hoffman’s argument positing the importance of media coverage, without which any terrorist act fails to reach its broader “target audience”;⁴² “media, national and foreign publics, and decision-makers”.⁴³ Without the media, the actors of the “terrorism theatre”⁴⁴ has no scene on which to play and no way to reach its audiences.⁴⁵ Since the 1960’s, with the launch of the first american TV satellite,⁴⁶ the appearance of live broadcasts and the first few airplane hijackings, media has been used extensively by terrorists culminating in the Munich attacks of 1972.⁴⁷

⁴¹ ‘To summarize briefly on the symbiotic nature of the relationship between terrorists and the media, the recent history of terrorism in many democratic countries vividly demonstrates that terrorists do thrive on the oxygen of publicity, and it is foolish to deny this. This does not mean that the established democratic media share the values of the terrorists. It does demonstrate, however, that the free media in an open society are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and manipulation by ruthless terrorist organizations’ Wilkinson, P. (1997). The media and terrorism: A reassessment. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 9(2), 51–64.

⁴² ‘(...) without the media’s coverage the act’s impact is arguably wasted, remaining narrowly confined to the immediate victim(s) of the attack rather than reaching the wider “target audience” at whom the terrorists’ violence is actually aimed. Only by spreading the terror and outrage to a much larger audience can the terrorists gain the maximum potential leverage that they need to effect fundamental political change’ Hoffman, B. (2006). The old media and terrorism. In *Inside Terrorism* (pp. 173-196). New York: Columbia University Press, p.174.

⁴³ Bilgen, A. (2012, July 22). Terrorism and the media: A dangerous Symbiosis. Retrieved December 14, 2016.

⁴⁴ Phrase coined by: Jenkins, Brian M. *International Terrorism: A new kind of warfare*. 1974. p. 4.

⁴⁵ “Terrorism is a spectacle produced for viewers, many of whom live apart from the violent staged events.” Cowen, T. (2006). Terrorism as Theater: Analysis and Policy Implications. *Public Choice*, 128(1/2), 233-244, p. 233.

⁴⁶ “(...) 1968. That year marked, not only (...) the birth of international terrorism (...) but also the launching by the United states of the first television satellite. (...) By the early 1970s, the effect of this technological leap was further enhanced by the availability of three critical pieces of television equipment that made possible the reporting of evens in ‘real time’. (...) live television transmissions could now be made directly from remote locations throughout the world and beamed instantaneously into the homes of viewers everywhere.” Hoffman, B. (2006). The old media and terrorism. In *Inside Terrorism* (pp. 173-196). New York: Columbia University Press.

⁴⁷ “The dramatic potential of this breakthrough was, as previously described, spectacularly demonstrated at the 1972 Munich Olympics when Palestinian terrorists were able to monopolize the attention of a global television audience who had tuned in expecting to watch the Games. (...) The ability to transmit a breaking story live spawned intense competition among rival networks to ‘scoop’ one another.” Hoffman, B. (2006). The old media and terrorism. In *Inside Terrorism* (pp. 173-196). New York: Columbia University Press, p.179.

Nowadays, the advent of internet⁴⁸ and social media platforms constitute a revolution that poses an increased danger of misuse by terrorists.⁴⁹

An alternative school of thought argues that the media's treatment of terrorist attacks is not always beneficial to the perpetrators nor successful in shaping public opinion⁵⁰ and that even when it is, public opinion's influence on decision-makers remains both unsure⁵¹ and unpredictable.⁵² These assumptions rely on the fact that most terrorist leaders have undermined if not attacked media's importance, disproving the idea according to which media coverage is part of their groups' communication strategy. Indeed, terrorists often publicly claimed the media apparatus was biased and ill-disposed against them, voluntarily damaging their groups' image by recounting events through the prism of the status-quo and that of the exact policies terrorists

⁴⁸ "The internet is a home that hosts a plethora of capabilities that facilitate groups' causes; they include capabilities such as hosting websites, videos, video games, literature and music used to leverage propaganda to draw in its targeted audiences." Gray, D. & Lumbaca, S. (2011). The Media as an Enabler for Acts of Terrorism. *Global Security Studies*, 2(1), 47.

⁴⁹ Hoffman, B. (2006). The New Media, Terrorism and the Shaping of Global Opinion. In *Inside Terrorism* (pp. 196-228). New York: Columbia University Press.

⁵⁰ Although Bruce Hoffman argues there is no evidence that the media coverage of terrorism actually leads to the public's increase in sympathy towards the cause advocated or the perpetrators of the acts. Hoffman, B. (2006). The old media and terrorism. In *Inside Terrorism* (pp. 173-196). New York: Columbia University Press, p. 184.

A 1980s RAND Corporation study enlightened the fact that public approval was quasi null despite the extensive amount of terrorist hijackings' media coverage at the time. Guin, T. D.-L., & Hoffmann, B. (1940). The impact of terrorism on public opinion, 1988 to 1989. Santa Monica, CA: RAND. Retrieved December 14, 2016, from http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/2006/MR225.pdf[15.11.2011]. According to spencer, media coverage thus fulfills only two of terrorists' goals to the exception of the one just mentioned. Spencer, A. (2012). *Lessons Learnt: Terrorism and the Media* (Ser. 4). Swindon, Wiltshire: Arts & Humanities Research Council, p.8-9

⁵¹ "Those supporting this theory claim that not only do the media not serve the true goals of the terrorist organization, but even if terrorism also influences the political attitudes of the public through media coverage, it is not at all clear whether public opinion ultimately has any effect on decision-makers (...) because alongside the influence of public opinion decision markers are exposed to additional influences from other sources." Ganor, B. (2011). Dilemmas Concerning Media Coverage of Terrorist Attacks. In *The counter-terrorism puzzle: A guide for decision makers* (pp. 229-246). Transaction Publishers, p.233.

⁵² Gadarian, S. (2014, October 9). How sensationalist TV stories on terrorism make Americans more hawkish. *Washington Post*.

contest within the target society.⁵³ Some even argue media coverage of terrorist acts can also work as a powerful coping mechanism for the target audience of terrorist acts.⁵⁴

Despite the clear danger the manipulation of media by terrorists poses to society, it seems imposing a media blackout regarding terrorist acts could pose some more.⁵⁵ The restriction and/or censoring of media by the government would strongly undermine its democratic nature,⁵⁶ especially in a country such as France that has built its collective identity on notions of free speech, human rights and free press.⁵⁷ Moreover, the broad spectrum of media outlets, channels and mediums available nowadays,⁵⁸ makes it impossible to control them all, rendering a media blackout not only theoretically problematic but

⁵³ Crenshaw, M. (1996). "The Counter-Terrorism and Terrorism Dynamic," in Alan Thompson (Ed.), *Terrorism and the 2000 Olympics*, Australian Defence Studies Center, p. 128

⁵⁴ Bruce Hoffman explained how the media coverage of hostage situation of hijacked flight TWA in 1985 helped families feel like the fate of their loved ones was at the top of the American decision makers' priorities and how most of them believe the media's obsession with the story led to their beloved ones' release. Hoffman, B. (2006). *Inside Terrorism* New York: Columbia University Press, p. 147, p. 154. Quoted in: Ganor, B. (2011). *Dilemmas Concerning Media Coverage of Terrorist Attacks*. In *The counter-terrorism puzzle: A guide for decision makers* (pp. 229–246). Transaction Publishers.

⁵⁵ That is unless hiding sensitive information from the public serves public security; in that case, most states can require for said information to be withheld under specific legislations. "The state can, using appropriate legislation, prevent media coverage that risks jeopardizing the safety of the nation and its inhabitants" Ganor, B. (2011). *Dilemmas Concerning Media Coverage of Terrorist Attacks*. In *The counter-terrorism puzzle: A guide for decision makers* (pp. 229–246). Transaction Publishers, p. 246.

⁵⁶ "Terrorism should not affect the importance of freedom of expression and information in the media as one of the essential foundations of democratic society. This freedom carries with it the right of the public to be informed on matters of public concern, including terrorist acts and threats, as well as the response by the state and international organizations to them." European Parliamentary Assembly. Retrieved December 3, 2016.

⁵⁷ "4. Referring to the Committee of Ministers' Declaration of 2 March 2005 on freedom of expression and information in the media in the context of the fight against terrorism, the Assembly emphasizes that Article 15 of the European Convention on Human Rights cannot be invoked in cases of terrorism in order to restrict freedom of expression and information beyond the existing limitations of Article 10, paragraph 2 of the Convention, because terrorist action can neither be regarded as war in a legal sense, nor can it threaten the life of a democratic nation." European Parliamentary Assembly. Retrieved December 3, 2016.

⁵⁸ Here we refer to the printing press, the audiovisual one, but also the internet platform out of which social media platforms have been the ones gaining the most tremendous importance in terrorist groups' communication strategies in the recent decades. For Gabriel Weimann, close to 90% of organized terrorism that happens online is taking place on diverse social media platforms. Weimann, G. In CBC (January 10, 2012). "Terrorist groups recruiting through social media". CBC News. Retrieved December 3 2016.

practically impossible to sustain. Avoiding treating subjects pertaining to terrorist acts could further rumours and conspiracy theories as well as damage the public's trust allocated to medias and to the government.⁵⁹ Medias should thus be encouraged to follow precautionary guidelines but by no means should these be legally enforced by the government⁶⁰ as it would undermine both the media and the government's "raison d'être", trustworthiness and legitimacy at home and internationally.⁶¹

⁵⁹ "In conclusion, in response to the censorship dilemma, it is best if government leaders do not impose censorship on the media with regard to their coverage of terrorism, but when necessary, when the media ignore their civic obligation, it is possible to appeal to the public and initiate public pressure to demand that the media maintain the balance between civic duty and professional obligation." Ganor, B. (2011). Dilemmas Concerning Media Coverage of Terrorist Attacks. In *The counter-terrorism puzzle: A guide for decision makers* (pp. 229–246). Transaction Publishers, p. 248.

⁶⁰ "They must voluntarily adopt rules (...) that do not impede the free and ongoing operation of the media, that do not jeopardize the public's right to know, and which take into consideration the impact of competition between the various media networks on ratings." Ganor, B. (2011). Dilemmas Concerning Media Coverage of Terrorist Attacks. In *The counter-terrorism puzzle: A guide for decision makers* (pp. 229–246). Transaction Publishers, 248.

⁶¹ "If there is one thing that fosters anxiety, it is terrorism. But journalism in democracy has the duty to talk about it" ("S'il y a un truc qui est anxiogène, c'est bien le terrorisme. Mais le journalisme en démocratie se doit d'en parler") Hervé Brusini, director of information strategy at France Télévisions. franceinfo.fr. (2016, September 28). VIDEO. Comment parler du terrorisme dans les médias?

PREVIOUS POLICIES

The tension between the public's "right to know" and its "right not to know"⁶² and the journalistic considerations of financial gains call for a balanced reporting of events. In that perspective, the Commission of Culture, Science and Education of the European Union led a project of recommendations regarding media coverage of terrorism adopted unanimously on May 11th 2005.⁶³ Two of their recommendations seem of particular importance:

- iv. Avoid serving the interests of terrorists by exacerbating the feeling of generalized fear resulting from their actions or by offering them a platform of choice to express themselves.
- v. Forbidding themselves from publishing shocking pictures or to broadcast images of terrorist acts that violate the right to privacy and to human dignity of the victims or that contribute to emphasize the terror that these acts install within the public, the victims and their families.

⁶² "The call for the media to perform their civic duty is reflected in statements made by Weimann, who declared that along with the public's right to receive precise, genuine and up-to-date information as far as possible, that is, the public's "right to know", the public also has a "right not to know", that is the victim's right to privacy; the right of the public not to be exposed to the personal and intimate details of the terror victims through media coverage in that infringes upon their dignity; the right of the public to uphold the state's security secrets that preserve their safety, etc..." Gabriel Weimann and Conrad Winn, *The Theater of Terror: The Mass Media and International Terrorism*, Longman Publishing/Addison-Wesley, New York, 1993, p. 295.

Ganor, Boaz. *The Counter-Terrorism Puzzle : A Guide for Decision Makers* (1). Piscataway, US: Transaction Publishers, 2011. ProQuest ebrary. Web. 6 December 2016.

Hervé Brusini, director of Information strategy of France Télévisions would tend to agree: "No, the image of tragedy has to be respected, because it is about life and death (...)" – ("Non, l'image de la tragédie, ça se respecte, parce que c'est de la vie et de la mort.") franceinfo.fr. (2016, September 28). VIDEO. Comment parler du terrorisme dans les médias ?

⁶³ To read the full report on the European Union Parliamentary Assembly regarding media and terrorism dated of the 20th of May 2005: European Parliamentary Assembly. Retrieved December 3, 2016.

Similarly, the CSA, in its recommendation n. 2013-04 of the November 20 2013⁶⁴ asks editors to respect human dignity,⁶⁵ the public order and honesty of information⁶⁶ as well as the protection of the public.⁶⁷ This includes signalling the broadcasting of images of violence and terror as sensitive ones and respecting the dignity of

⁶⁴ We are referring here to the recommendation adopted by the CSA on November 20th 2013 relative to the treatment of international conflicts, of civil wars and of terrorist acts by the services of audiovisual communication. CSA. Recommandation n° 2013-04 du 20 novembre 2013 relative au traitement des conflits internationaux, des guerres civiles et des actes terroristes par les services de communication audiovisuelle / Recommandations et délibérations du CSA relatives à d'autres sujets / Délibérations et recommandations du CSA / Espace juridique / Accueil. (2016, December 13).

⁶⁵ “— By abstaining to present in sympathetic manners violence or human suffering when images of people killed or wounded and reactions of their closed ones are broadcasted;
— By preserving the dignity of people held hostage, notably when their image of any other element enabling their identification is used by the hostage-takers;
— By scrupulously respecting the Geneva convention's stipulations and its additional protocoles relative to the protection of war prisoners and civilians in war conditions.”

CSA. Précautions relatives à la couverture audiovisuelle d'actes terroristes / codes de bonne conduite et textes de précautions relatives à la couverture audiovisuelle / Espace juridique / Accueil. (2016, October 25).

⁶⁶ “— By treating with moderation and indispensable rigour international conflicts susceptible of inciting tensions and antagonisms within the population or to generate, towards certain communities or certain countries, attitudes of reject or xenophobia;
— By verifying the exactness of broadcasted information or, in case of uncertainty, by accompanying said information of reserves, by presenting them at the conditional tense and by quoting the source and date, so long as it insures the protection of sources guaranteed notably by the law n.2010-1 of January 4th 2010 relative to the protection of the sources' secret by journalists;
— By proceeding in case of broadcasting of erroneous informations, to their rectification in the briefest delays and in comparable conditions of expositions;
— By accompanying the broadcasting of archive images with a mention to signal their origin.”

For more information, refer to: CSA. Précautions relatives à la couverture audiovisuelle d'actes terroristes / codes de bonne conduite et textes de précautions relatives à la couverture audiovisuelle / Espace juridique / Accueil. (2016, October 25).

⁶⁷ — By making sure the broadcasting of sounds and/or images hardly sustainable be systematically preceded of an explicit warning to the public destined to protect the most vulnerable people of their potential impact;
— By insuring, with constant vigilance, the respect of the rules dictated by the recommendation of June 7th 2005 to the editors of television services concerning the youth signage system and the classification of programs and to that of the 20th of December 2011's deliberation relative to the protection of the young public, deontology and accessibility of programs on audiovisual media services on demand.”

For more information, refer to: CSA. Précautions relatives à la couverture audiovisuelle d'actes terroristes / codes de bonne conduite et textes de précautions relatives à la couverture audiovisuelle / Espace juridique / Accueil. (2016, October 25).

hostages. We would add to that point that the concern for hostages' safety should always dictate whether or not to divulge information.

In addition to these laws specifying the general conduct expected from medias in this situation, some outlets in France communicated their consensus not to broadcast terrorists' pictures by fear of humanizing them or promoting their actions.⁶⁸ Similarly, other outlets announced they would renounce to broadcasting the names and identities of the perpetrators of terrorist acts.⁶⁹ Yet these measures are far from being unanimous and concerns have been raised regarding the spreading of rumours and that of conspiracy theories⁷⁰ it might encourage. It should be reminded that this solely represents the tacit agreements of a few outlets and is not legally binding.

Another noteworthy set of policies are those adopted at the Shefayim conference in Israel⁷¹ recommending to avoid the broadcasting of terrorists' propaganda and that of the procedures/

⁶⁸ "This debate concerns the risk of glorifying jihadis or to participate to the terror they seek to provoke. (...) Le Monde, BFM-TV, Europe 1 and France Médias Monde (RFI, France 24 and Monte Carlo Doualiya) announced they would no longer publish the portraits of perpetrators of terrorist acts." (...) View the full article: Piquard, A. (2016, July 27). Médias: Faut-il divulguer l'identité et la photo des terroristes?

⁶⁹ "Europe 1, decides not to name jihadis anymore. Is it not hiding information to the public? « No, not if we don't prohibit anything regarding giving a portrait of the person concerned: where is she from, what is her link to religion?», answers Nicolas Escoulan, writing director at Europe 1. For more information, refer to: Piquard, A. (2016, July 27). Médias: Faut-il divulguer l'identité et la photo des terroristes ? Retrieved December 14, 2016.

⁷⁰ "It is important to name and identify those that fight us" (...) "All is a matter of measure, prudence and good sense." juged Alexis Brézet, director of Le Figaro. Learn more regarding Le Figaro's position on the muting of terrorits' names in the media: Blavignat, Y. (2016, July 27). Alexis Brézet: "Il est important de nommer et d'identifier ceux qui nous combattent."

"Conspiracy theories are already well on their way. If we hide pictures or refuse to identify of perpetrators of attacks, it would just enable them to run wider." regrets Wassim Nasr, journalist at France 24 and specialist of jihadism. According to him, thinking that terrorists act in order to have their pictures published in the papers is "focusing too much on their psychological profile. (...) It is interesting, but they commit, primarily, political acts in the name of an organization (...)". For more information: http://www.lemonde.fr/actualite-medias/article/2016/07/27/des-medias-decident-de-ne-plus-publier-les-portraits-des-auteurs-d-attentats_4975341_3236.html#iFzLrZaol05A8eEH.99

⁷¹ The Shefayim conference held by the International Institute of Counter Terrorism (ICT) of the Inter-disciplinary school of Herzliya (IDC) on June 26th 1997 was attended by professionals in the field of counterterrorism, psychology, education and media. It addressed the challenges posed by terrorism and its reporting. For more information regarding the Shafayim Conference of 1997 and its recommendations refer to The Shefayim conference. (1997, June 27).

operational strategies of the security forces on the scene of the attack. It further recommends to avoid repeated/frequent broadcasts aimed at “recycling the trauma” of the attacks and the broadcasting images of extreme horror and terror from the scene.

POLICY PRESCRIPTIONS

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

Based on our analysis of the coverage of terrorist attacks of the 7th and 9th of January 2015 in Paris, as well as on those of the 13th of November 2015, we suggest 5 main guidelines:

1. **Avoid revealing critical information** about ongoing hostage situations unless either; the security of hostages is no longer at threat & the termination of the crisis has been confirmed by official sources or said information is essential to the immediate security of the larger population.

ADVANTAGES

- Preserves the safety of hostages;
- Insures reliability to the information.

DISADVANTAGES

- Implies delaying broadcasting until after the events are over — not always realistic;
- Delaying the information can contribute to a channel being ‘scooped’ by another or by amateur videos— plurality of sources makes this prescription hardly achievable and difficultly conciliable with media’s competitive nature;
- Delaying the information can also be perceived as an impediment to the public’s immediate information regarding ongoing events — infringement of public’s “right to know”;
- Delaying the information can increase public fear & encourage rumours/conspiracy theories;
- Official sources can be difficult to reach in times of crisis.

- 2. Avoid broadcasting police interventions** while they are still ongoing.

ADVANTAGES

- Respects human's dignity and public's right "not to know" as defined by Weimann;
- Limits the psychological impact of the trauma;
- Protects sensitive viewers;
- Might retain consumers who would otherwise change channels or turn the TV off → good for fiducial concerns of the medias;
- Prevents medias from being instrumented to spread fear + helps media's reputation by making them appear as sympathizing with people's grief.

DISADVANTAGES

- Might call into question media's reliability regarding casualties;
- Might be published by amateurs online → difficult to control.

3. Avoid showing scenes of great horror and/or panic.

ADVANTAGES

- Preserves the safety of the hostages by letting the security forces to their work;
- Preserves the safety of intervention forces by preserving their anonymity and location;
- Preserves public safety by insuring untampered security interventions;
- Avoids the potential distribution of intelligence to terrorists regarding the operational strategies, capabilities and positions of the opposing side's security forces.

DISADVANTAGES

- Implies delaying broadcasting until after the events are over — not always realistic;
- Delaying the information can contribute to a channel being 'scooped' by another or by amateur videos— plurality of sources makes this prescription hardly achievable and difficultly conciliable with media's competitive nature;
- Delaying the information can also be perceived as an impediment to the public's immediate information regarding ongoing events — infringement of public's "right to know";
- Delaying the information can increase public fear & encourage rumours/conspiracy theories.

- 4. Prone a return to normal broadcasting programs** as soon as every critical information about the terror attack has been communicated.

ADVANTAGES

- Might retain consumers who would otherwise change channels or turn the TV off — good for medias;
- Limits the psychological impact that the trauma of the attack and that of the “human interests” angles could generate;
- Prevents medias from being instrumented to spread fear.

DISADVANTAGES

- The public could argue the event is not given enough attention by the media — be offended;
- Abandoning special editions would prevent journalists from covering “human interest” angles that are appreciated of the public and serve as justifications of the financial means deployed to cover said story;
- Some viewers might turn to continuous information channels for more information — potential ratings loss;

5. Avoid conducting and broadcasting terrorists' interviews

(especially while the crisis is ongoing).

ADVANTAGES

- Avoids giving the terrorist a platform from which to express themselves__ no glorification of terrorist;
- Avoids giving the terrorist an opportunity to spin their image/that of their cause in a positive light__ no propaganda nor recruiting;
- Avoids tempering with police interventions & negotiations & endangering hostages __ no intelligence collection for terrorists;
- Avoids spreading fear and panic __ minimized effect on public pressure of decision-maker & thus minimized interference in political process.

DISADVANTAGES

- The public could argue the event is not given enough attention;
- The public could argue first hand information is kept from them .

RECOMMENDATION

In conclusion, admitting the contentious aspects of the mutually beneficial relationship between media and terrorism requires us to ponder on applicable guidelines aimed at promoting journalists' responsible reporting of terrorist acts. In light of the problematic nature of delaying information in regard to preserving the "public's right to know", we recognize that the application of policies 1 & 2 as is, is unfeasible. Policy 4 offers certain advantages but competition between outlets might hamper its application. Yet it seems that the benefits of policies 3 & 5 far outweigh their costs and would actively contribute to moderating terrorists' use of our media outlets. We thus highly recommend their application as well as regular reassessments of these guidelines' potential for application as terrorism develops.

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