
FEAR AND THE BALLOT BOX: HOW POLITICAL AND MEDIA RESPONSES TO TERRORISM INFLUENCE ELECTIONS

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FOREWORD

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The use of fear as a weapon in political campaigning is long established, and often highly effective for candidates who deploy it. More often than not, spreading fear means the demonizing of a section of society: immigrants, unions, African Americans, bankers—and in this year’s US presidential election, American Muslims.

Republican candidate Donald Trump’s racist language and xenophobic pledges are tapping into an electorate made fearful by the perceived threats of global terrorism. The violent attacks over the past year—in the US and France, in particular—have provided a highly charged backdrop for an already polarized campaign. In December 2015 Trump’s campaign released a statement on the mass shooting in San Bernardino by suspected ISIS sympathizers, saying, “Donald J. Trump is calling for a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country’s representatives can figure out what is going on.”

Trump’s alarmist rhetoric, far from undermining his candidacy, spurred him to a resounding victory over other Republican contenders. The initial success of Trump’s candidacy necessitates a widespread examination of the media’s role in amplifying the divisive extremism and falsehoods of his campaign.

Covering terrorism brings its own challenges for media organizations and increasingly for social media companies too. Journalists and the press have historically played a dual role of both amplifying and interrogating campaign messages and political statements. Reporting terrorist attacks fulfills the aims of the terrorism itself in spreading fear, but stifling or limiting coverage can fuel both distrust in the news media and undemocratic practices such as censorship.

In the past decade, the mainstream media has been joined by a plethora of social platforms in forming the public discussion around terror. This has allowed candidates, propagandists, activists, and all citizens to contribute to an often unmediated political debate. As technology companies expand into publishing territory, they occupy an increasingly important and sometimes conflicted position. At a White House summit on combating terrorism, Facebook, Google, and Twitter were key participants.

The Tow Center for Digital Journalism at the Columbia Graduate School for Journalism has partnered with Democracy Fund Voice as part of a project examining the links between terrorism, political rhetoric and media coverage with particular reference to the impact on American Muslims. We are releasing three white papers looking at how recent events inform the current political cycle, linking terrorism, political rhetoric, and media coverage with particular reference to the impact on American Muslims. The motivation is to improve the understanding of these relationships, and to engage journalists and social media companies in developing improved reporting of terrorism in a live, digital environment for the benefit of everyone in society.

Writer and lawyer Rafia Zakaria focuses on research of search and social media to show how the rhetoric and discussion of Muslims in relation to terrorism not only creates a skewed public discourse but also puts US Muslims in a special category of those tracked, surveilled, and discriminated against by law. Journalist Burhan Wazir examines case studies from the past twenty years to show how the links between terrorism, political messaging, and reporting have evolved. Charlie Beckett, director of the London School of Economics media policy think tank POLIS, examines what the standards and guidelines for reporting and editing during terrorist attacks might be developed and modified for a digital world.

Their initial reporting highlights both the lack of standardized best practices and the nature of the challenges a distributed news environment presents. The papers emphasize the need for robust protection of First Amendment rights in the US, and call upon the social platforms to enter into regular conversation with publishers on editorial decisions and content guidelines.

We are grateful to those who helped shape and deliver the project. The support of Democracy Fund Voice for commissioning the project, the editors Paul Harris and Nausicaa Renner for helping shape and deliver the papers against a tight deadline, Kathy Zhang at the Tow Center for orchestrating the ongoing activity and events in this area, and the staff at Columbia Journalism School, the Columbia Journalism Review, and the Tow Center for their tireless contributions.

We look forward to feedback and responses and continuing our work in this area over the coming weeks and months.

Emily Bell
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cities like New York, Madrid, London, Paris and Mumbai have long been home to protests, riots, and wars. As recent terrorist attacks have shown, cities can also turn into theaters of violence and high profile targets of terrorist actions. These events exert pressure on both the media—who must quickly report on the incidents while providing accuracy, context and analysis—and politicians, who are bound to enact new laws and security measures. And now, as social media has become pervasive, citizens across the world are active participants in the media when these acts occur, not just a passively consuming audience. The purpose of this paper is to examine how actions taken by politicians and members of the media have shaped recent elections in the wake of acts of terrorism and how the growth of social media platforms and web-based news has become part of the picture.

One disturbing aspect of the current fight against terrorism is the disintegration of previously defined margins separating times of war from times of peace and civilians from combatants. While civilians have previously been frequently killed in wars—the bombing of Dresden in 1945 is just one example—they are usually nominally protected. Terrorism, on the other hand, deliberately exhibits no prohibition against the intentional targeting of civilians. The evolving, real-time nature of a terrorist attack also has an undeniable effect on the media, which finds itself acting as both filter and participant in the face of such violence, especially in an era when social media platforms have become a dominant new source of information for audience and journalist alike – and indeed sometimes even the attackers themselves.

In the following report, I will examine four key elections—those which took place in Israel in 1996, the United States and Spain in 2004, and India in 2009—to explore the relationship between terrorism and how it is portrayed in the media. Three of these elections took place in the wake of unique terror incidents: the 2008 siege of Mumbai, carried out by terrorists from Lashkar-e-Taiba; the 2004 Madrid bombings, which bore the hallmarks of Al-Qaeda; and the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin

in 1995, which was conducted by an Israeli extremist disillusioned with the recently signed Oslo Agreement. The fourth case, the 2004 election in the United States, was fought around the theme of security—the first American presidential election held since the 9/11 terrorist attacks, in the midst of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The release of a videotaped statement directed at the American public by Al-Qaeda’s Osama bin Laden—known as an “October surprise” in U.S. political shorthand—left an indelible impression on the election.

As the 2016 U.S. election unfolds amid fears over terrorism and growing public expressions of Islamophobia, especially against American Muslims, it is also important to look at specific institutional responses by the media and politicians. In the four cases outlined below, both governments and media responded to the violence—or the fear of future violence—in unique ways. This report will examine these responses and discuss how those outcomes may have influenced subsequent elections and still resonate today.

Political responses ranged from the creation of new anti-terror legislation, funding for new agencies and, in certain cases, the swift resignation or political defeat of politicians and governments who were criticized for shortcomings in their responses. In the cases researched below, I have also examined instances where the mainstream media either moderated or echoed coverage in line with the prevailing political will of the day.

Typically, media coverage of terror attacks involves comprehensive reporting and often live broadcasting of the incident, even before the advent of social media. Recently, the growing use of social media has also led to considerable innovation: those directly affected by terror attacks are now able to broadcast safety checks, find areas of refuge through updates and keep abreast of attacks as they unfold. In 2008, at the height of the Mumbai attacks, seventy tweets per second were providing news updates, asking for blood donations and sharing information about official helplines. But, more importantly, the unfiltered nature of social media and the opportunity for citizen journalism has revolutionized news coverage: tens of thousands of informal correspondents are now reporting from the areas under attack.

We live in an era where the reactions to terrorist attacks are increasingly shaped online.

The media's coverage of terrorism, however, has often amplified fears over terrorism instead of analyzing or questioning them. This report will discuss such missteps by the media, such in the case of Spain in 2004, when sections of the media were accused of acting like an echo chamber for the ruling government's mistaken idea as to who carried out the attacks. During the U.S. election of 2004, parts of the media did not devote enough time to examining individual and important policy differences between incumbent President George W. Bush and John Kerry. The paper will also note instances where terrorism was given an outsized role in the media due to political partisanship.

For this report, I conducted over 50 interviews with journalists, academics, and politicians to determine why each instance of terrorism solicits unique responses which play an unconventional and often long lasting role in framing our democracies. The findings here make no attempt to recommend how politicians and the media should respond to terror incidents. Instead, my paper seeks to illustrate the evolving nature of news in the hopes of advancing a dialogue whereby politicians and the media discuss how institutional responses can avoid being manipulated by acts of terrorism.

We live in an era where the reactions to terrorist attacks are increasingly shaped online. As politicians and the media develop new ways of responding to acts of terrorism, videos released by ISIS exhibit the same multi-disciplinary approach to disseminating information. Recruitment videos posted online have helped to draw around 30,000 fighters from 104 countries to ISIS-held territory and inspired attacks abroad. Footage from the aftermath of ISIS actions has also radicalized new members. During the Mumbai attacks one terrorist called into a local broadcaster, greatly amplifying the sense of crisis and mass participation around the event.

A recent press conference given in Dhaka saw Secretary of State John Kerry speak about the possible impact of wall-to-wall coverage of terrorism. Kerry spoke about the challenges of countering ISIS's social media strategy. "We have made significant progress," he said. "More and more now, I'm beginning to read the stories of how Daesh is feeling the pressure, people are escaping to get out and go back home or wherever. Now, that helps us solve the problem in Syria and Iraq, but it leaves us with a problem in these other countries where people go back to, or where the social media and propaganda of the group reaches out to."

This paper aims to support a wider understanding of how each terrorist event and its aftermath carries a distinctive signature that shapes future events. Terrorism —and the responses it garners—have never placed such extraordinary pressures on both democracies and the media.

KEY FINDINGS

- As polls and studies repeatedly show, elections conducted against a backdrop of both terrorism and the fear of terrorism frequently drive voters to elect leaders who are seen to be tough on security. As both the U.S. election of 2004 and the Israeli election of 1996 demonstrate, an election campaign that places the importance of security front and center drowns out other salient issues such as the economy and social welfare. One key effect of terrorism on voters is to persuade voters that moderate political forces are unwilling or unable to stop terrorism.
- Allegations of political and media collusion in the aftermath of a terrorist attack lead to long lasting and institutional failures whose aftershocks can resonate years later. In the aftermath of the Madrid train bombings in 2004, an unpopular Spanish government sought to blame domestic terrorism to deflect criticism over its involvement in Iraq. Certain sections of the media helped them in this aim. The effect was seismic: the opposition party won a convincing election only days after the attacks and Spanish troops were withdrawn from Iraq. The Spanish public's dissatisfaction with both the media and the press in the wake of the incident contributed to a decline in trust in the country's public institutions.

- A disruptive event, such as the release of Osama bin Laden's videotaped warning to the American people in 2004, can raise awareness of a leader's stance on terrorism to potential political benefit. In the wake of bin Laden's intervention, only days ahead of the election, terrorism command centers throughout America were put on high alert and an initial poll from *Newsweek* magazine claimed that President George W. Bush jumped to a six-point lead as a result of bin Laden's message.
- Both the media and social platforms like Facebook and Twitter play an increasingly pivotal role in shaping how the public reacts to terrorism. As I show in my analysis of the Mumbai attacks of 2008, competition between segments of India's newly liberalized media witnessed a number of institutional failings as journalists raced to cover a multi-location terrorist attack. The wide use of unfiltered social media channels aided the attackers in maximizing media attention.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The media should work more closely with social media platforms to help build verification filters that correct or place less emphasis on promoting erroneous or deliberately misleading reports. During terrorist emergencies, as members of the public look for updates, it is vital they are the recipients of accurate information. Social media companies such as Facebook and Twitter must also do much more work to limit the opportunity given to members of Al-Qaeda and ISIS in broadcasting their messages.
- Media companies should work harder to ensure rigorous editorial process successfully separate news editorial from the political leanings or financial interests of their owners. Media regulators in both traditional and new, online media should be in regular dialogue with news organizations to ensure the editorial staff are trained in processes to institutionalize accuracy.
- Governments should resist the fear mongering of groups like Al-Qaeda and ISIS; enacting severe anti-terror legislation in the wake of attacks only plays into their aims. Laws such as the PATRIOT Act in the U.S. and legislation passed in India in the wake of Mumbai have been widely criticized by human rights organizations. Anti-terror legislation should not limit the democratic rights of citizens.
- As the election of 2016 in the U.S. has shown, media organizations globally have yet to adapt to the major challenges of coverage in the age of mass social media. While many news organizations continue to use social media to gauge and reflect public opinion, more work needs to be done in both acting like an independent filter and combatting errors and propaganda.

Section 1

The Assassination of Yitzhak Rabin and the Israeli Election of 1996

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated at a peace rally on November 4, 1995, in Tel Aviv's Kings of Israel Square. Rabin was walking to his car after the rally when he was shot by right-winger Yigal Amir. Rabin died in surgery at Ichilov Hospital in Tel Aviv. Amir confessed to the assassination and was reported to have told investigators, "I acted alone on God's orders and I have no regrets."

The Jerusalem Post reported the news the following day with the headline "Rabin Assassinated," while CNN said "Rabin Assassinated at peace rally." The Associated Press reported on the assassination with the headline "Rabin Killed by Assassin's Bullets." The shots which killed Rabin were captured on Channel 2, which was broadcasting live from the event. Speaking in the Rose Garden at the White House, President Bill Clinton said that the world had lost a great leader. He called Rabin a "martyr for his nation's peace." The assassination of the Prime Minister and the election that followed six months later were of profound significance to both Israeli politics and the media.

The election took place during a moment of acute national soul-searching over the peace process in Israel and it was also a litmus test for electoral reform. Under new rules, it marked the first time Israelis would vote directly for prime minister as well as for new members of Parliament. In previous elections, the prime minister was chosen by the party or coalition with the most votes. The effect of the 1996 vote was to personalize the race between candidates and introduce characteristics usually seen in American elections.

The Israeli election was held in an era prior to the existence of social media and showed how a relatively small media sector and negative campaigning from one side played on fears over national security. The tragedy of Rabin's death—instead of contributing to a campaign rooted in tolerance—influenced an acrimonious election period which came to frame the role of Israeli security in the minds of voters in subsequent election cycles.

In the two years before Rabin's assassination, there had been encouraging prospects for peace between Israel and Palestine. In September, 1993, Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization signed the Oslo Accords, the first stage in establishing a Palestinian state.¹ In September 1995, PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat and Rabin signed the Israeli-Palestine Interim Agreement. It allowed the PLO's leadership to return to the occupied territories—Arafat was living in Tunis, after his expulsion from both Jordan and Lebanon—and set out a framework for future talks about Palestinian final status. In return the PLO promised to abstain from employing terrorism and withdrew their call for the elimination of Israel and the expulsion of all Jews who migrated after 1917.²

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The Oslo Accords, however, prompted a wave of terrorist attacks by Palestinian groups like Hamas, which sought to inflame the Israeli public and jeopardize the agreements. Despite Rabin's reputation as a military hero, Israeli society was divided over Labor's negotiations with the Palestinian leadership and with Syria. When the second Oslo agreement was presented to the Knesset, in October 1995, it was approved by only one vote. Opinion polls showed Israeli society was split between those agreeing with Labor's policies and those who feared a withdrawal from

1 Steven R. David, "Fatal Choices: Israel's Policy of Targeted Killing", 2002, available at: <http://besacenter.org/mideast-security-and-policy-studies/fatal-choices-israels-policy-of-targeted-killing-2-2/>

2 Gerald M. Steinberg, "Peace, Security and Terror in the 1996 Elections," 1997, available at: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13537129708719458>

the West Bank or the Golan Heights would undermine security. The accords also ignited a groundswell of animosity from right-wing Israelis, who believed Rabin intended to give the Palestinians sovereignty and evacuate Israeli settlements.

As the debate around the Oslo Agreement grew acrimonious, the atmosphere in Israel became more charged: Rabin's most militant detractors called him a "traitor."³ Large protests in the summer of 1995 erupted in violence and hundreds of Jewish settlers in the West Bank were arrested for their role in a civil disobedience campaign against the withdrawal of Israeli troops from areas to be turned over to the Palestinian Authority. Around 1,000 reserve soldiers and officers pledged to ignore orders to remove Jewish settlements.

Rabin's death convulsed Israeli society. He was replaced by the newly nominated Shimon Peres who, as the country mourned, polled 30 percent ahead of his rival, Likud's relatively inexperienced Benjamin Netanyahu. Three months after the assassination, Peres called for a May election instead of waiting for Labor's term to expire in October.⁴ Peres calculated he would return to office with a mandate that would strengthen both Oslo and upcoming discussions with Syrian President Hafez al-Assad about the occupation of the Golan Heights.⁵

A number of factors, however, chipped away at Peres's lead: his age, the perception he was too accommodating of Palestinian demands, and Likud accusations that he was moving too quickly on peace negotiations steadily eroded his numbers. According to one poll, over 40 percent of undecided voters believed Peres put the State of Israel at risk, compared to 16 percent who believed the same of Netanyahu.

Israeli targeted killings of Palestinian figures also took their toll on the Peres campaign. The leader of Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Fathi Shikaki, had been killed in Malta in October 1995 in an operation conducted by Israeli intelligences. In January of 1996, Yahya Ayyash, a Hamas bomb maker known as "The Engineer," was assassinated.⁶ The death of Ayyash, a key figure from Hamas, would end a six-month lull and four bombings over the next two months killed more than 50 Israelis. The attacks began in February 1996 when suicide bombers exploded pipe bombs in Jerusalem and Ashkelon.⁷

News organizations were told the attacks were revenge for the death of Ayyash. While Netanyahu asked members of Likud to refrain from anti-government protests, dozens of demonstrators jeered Peres when he arrived at the site of the Jerusalem bombing. “With blood and fire we’ll get rid of Peres,” they chanted. The violence led to intense public criticism of Oslo, and of the ineffectiveness of the government’s responses. Headlines like “The Terror Returns” (*Jerusalem Post*, February 26, 1996) and “Peres: ‘Many people in Israel want to murder ministers’” (*Jerusalem Post*, February 21, 1996) were typical.⁸

The violence created a national mood of fear and uncertainty which successfully manipulated the responses of both the media and politicians. While Peres campaigned as a leader, Netanyahu electioneered as a right-wing critic. The most striking aspect of the campaign was Labor’s decision not to use the assassination of Rabin as both an endorsement of Peres and the peace process. Labor’s platform, instead, proposed a mature outlook on security and a commitment to Oslo, “aiming at the cessation of the Arab-Israeli conflict by the year 2000.” Peres also promised the vision of a “New Middle East” based on “a common market with regional irrigation, tourism, transport and communication systems, and cooperation in the fields of culture and science.”

In contrast, Likud’s right-wing platform played to security concerns: Jewish settlements would be strengthened and Labor’s settlement freeze would be scrapped. Negotiations with Arab states would be defined by security as “as a first condition in any peace agreement.”

3 S. Coleman, “Televised Election Debates,” 2000, available at: <http://www.palgrave.com/in/book/9780333732632>

4 Don Peretz and Gideon Doron, “Israel’s 1996 Elections: A Second Political Earthquake?”, 1996, available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4328988>

5 Ron Pundak, “From Oslo to Taba: What Went Wrong?”, 2008, available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/238401903_From_Oslo_to_Taba_What_went_wrong

6 “Killing of Bomb ‘Engineer’ Unites Palestinian Factions” New York Times, 1996, available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/1996/01/10/world/killing-of-bomb-engineer-unites-palestinian-factions.html>

7 Gerald M. Steinberg, “Peace, security and terror in the 1996 elections”, 1997, available at: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13537129708719458?journalCode=fisa20>

8 “Bombings in Israel: The Overview”, New York Times, 1996, available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/1996/02/26/world/bombings-israel-overview-2-suicide-bombings-israel-kill-25-hurt-77-highest-such.html?pagewanted=all>

The different political responses impacted both the media and opinion polls. Newspapers were full of shrill headlines of new threats and foiled terrorist plots, and TV news showed the bloody aftermaths of bombings. One study, “Agenda Building, Agenda Setting, Priming, Individual Voting Intentions and Aggregate Results: An Analysis of Four Israeli Elections” by Tamir Sheafer and Gabriel Weimann, shows news about security made up 79.5 percent of election coverage. Ahead of the election, Israel announced it would stop all Palestinians from leaving the West Bank or Gaza with the exception of a few officials and the seriously ill. The fears of violence chipped away at Peres and Labor. Polls published in February 1996 showed both Peres and Netanyahu at 48 percent; a month later, Netanyahu was leading by three percent.

“When Rabin was assassinated, Peres had a twenty-point lead and Netanyahu was seen indirectly responsible for the assassination,” said Gadi Wolfsfeld, Head of Graduate Program at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, in an interview. “No one predicted that Netanyahu had a chance of winning. Terrorism came back into the agenda and Peres was seen as weak on terrorism. We always say that negative advertising is more effective than positive messaging. If you talk about peace like Peres did, there is nothing newsworthy there. If Netanyahu says Peres is soft on terrorism, then terrorism is more likely to get coverage.”

Unlike the elections analyzed below, the media landscape in Israel in 1996 was in its infancy and dominated by a handful of outlets. For years, the sole TV broadcaster, Channel 1 had operated under the state-owned Israel Broadcasting Authority. The station lost its monopoly in 1990 when the commercial Channel 2 was launched.⁹ Like the boom in satellite channels in India which impacted how the Mumbai attacks were covered, the launch of the more commercially and editorially aggressive Channel 2 was widely regarded as a foil to the staid Channel 1. The leading English language newspaper was The Jerusalem Post; Israel’s leading Hebrew newspapers included the two tabloids Yediot Aharonot and Maariv, and Haaretz.

“The election of 1996 was a unique media event,” said Claude Berrebi, Associate Professor of Public Policy at Hebrew University’s School of Public Policy, in an interview. “There were few channels and everyone saw the same thing. At that time, it was customary to show everything.

On the one hand, if you are a democracy, you want to be able for people to see what terrorism does. Yet clearly those pictures also have a traumatic effect on the nation.

Claude Berrebi
Associate Professor of Public Policy,
Hebrew University's School of Public Policy

If you look at the recent coverage of the attacks in France, you sense there was a conscious decision not to show too much blood. On the one hand, if you are a democracy, you want to be able for people to see what terrorism does. Yet clearly those pictures also have a traumatic effect on the nation. Going back to 1996, seeing all those people blown away on buses had an effect on the electorate. Nowadays, the media is more conservative.”

Israelis were avid news consumers—in a survey of Jewish adults before the 1996 election, eight percent said they read more than one newspaper every day; 45 percent said they read one paper every day and 20 percent said they read a newspaper two or three times a week. TV news was just as popular with around 50 percent and 60 percent saying they watched a news show every evening. Another study reveals that television devoted a great deal of airtime to the election in 1996. In one report, media analysis of TV coverage in April and May showed both Channel 1 and Channel 2 broadcast a total 627 stories on the election. Of those, 60 percent aired on Channel 1 and 40 percent were broadcast on Channel 2.¹⁰

9 Shoshana Blum-Kulka and Tamar Liebes, “Peres versus Netanyahu: Television Wins the Debate, Israel 1996”, 2000, available at: http://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057%2F9780230379602_4#page-1
10 Asher Arian, Gabriel Weimann, and Gadi Wolfsfeld, “Balance in Election Coverage”, 1999, available at: <http://www.sunypress.edu/p-3002-the-elections-in-israel-1996.aspx>

Unsurprisingly, the election also dominated newspaper coverage. The same study, an analysis of Yediot Aharonot, Maariv, and Haaretz over the same period shows Yediot Aharonot (50%) published more election-focused articles than Maariv (43%) and Haaretz (26%). The study also reveals the election of 1996 had an interesting effect on candidate criticism. The state owned Channel 1 generally avoided criticism of both parties: only 7.8 percent of its coverage was critical of Labor and 8.3 percent critical of the Likud. The commercial Channel 2 was both less balanced and more aggressive: 12.5 percent of its coverage was critical of Labor, compared with 20.7 percent for the Likud.

One key development in the election was the decision to hold a moderated television debate between Peres and Netanyahu on May 27, two days before polling.¹¹ While TV debates had been conducted before, the direct election of the Prime Minister's role in 1996 allowed for a more personalized and less controlled environment with moderator Dan Margalit posing questions to both candidates. It also conferred equal status between the experienced and statesmanlike Peres and the untested and aggressive Netanyahu.

The debate focused on security, Oslo, negotiations with Arafat and Syria. Peres reiterated the importance of ongoing negotiations with Israel's neighbors, but appeared ill at ease with the format, reluctant to engage with the event's combative nature, and interested only in putting forward long, explanatory policy visions. Netanyahu, on the other hand, firmly directed his accusations at his opponent and seemed to relish the gladiatorial environment.

Press coverage of the debate was substantial over the next few days and the Israeli press agreed that Netanyahu had won. In a long essay, a Jerusalem Post writer said, "It's the best television feud since J.R. squared off against Cliff Barnes in 'Dallas,' or Alexis took on Blake in 'Dynasty.'" The same piece also contrasted the differences between both campaigns. Likud focused on voters' fears of a divided Jerusalem. Labor ads emphasized Peres the statesman, showing him in the company of President Clinton.

Throughout the debate, Netanyahu doubled down on security. He said: "Mr Peres, you have brought our security situation to an unprecedented low. This is a direct result of your deplorable policy, which placed the war on terrorism and the security of our children in the hands of Arafat."

Peres was unconvincing in articulating his vision for what he described as “a new Middle East.” During the debate, he spoke of pride in hearing the Israeli national anthem being played in Oman and Qatar. But where he saw future economic ties, many Israelis saw only continuing danger. In an election already too close to call, Netanyahu’s win in the debate may have had a decisive impact.¹² Viewership was high at 59 percent.

On May 29, 1996, the evening of the election, TV news anchors on Israeli television initially announced Peres had won the election by a two percent margin. However, during the long night that followed, this advantage disappeared.

On the morning of May 30, it became clear that power had switched hands. Netanyahu won the election by only 14,900 votes.¹³ A *Los Angeles Times* piece summed up the election with the headline “Confidence and media savvy aided ‘Bibi.’” In a post-election analysis—headlined “What Went Wrong?”—a writer for *The Jerusalem Report* speculated the reasons for Labor’s defeat: “The terror attacks of late February and early March shattered public confidence in the peace process and destroyed his [Peres] lead.”

The Israeli election of 1996 presents a number of valuable insights into how governments and media react when terrorism and tragedy exerts extreme pressures on campaigning. As one influential study, “Are voters sensitive to terrorism? Direct evidence from the Israeli electorate,”¹⁴ written by Claude Berrebi and Esteban Klor, shows, the occurrence of a terrorist fatality within three months of elections corresponds to an increase in support for a right bloc of parties. They find that the Israeli electorate increased its support for right leaning parties after a terror attack because they were identified with placing a higher importance on deterrence. The authors, who studied elections from 1988 to 2003, also conclude that terrorism tends to persuade Israeli voters that moderate political factions are either unwilling or unable to stop terrorism.

11 Danny Ben-Moshe, “Elections 1996: The de-Zionization of Israeli politics”, 1997, available at: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/work/23426196?selectedversion=NBD13301847>

12 “Both sides claim to win Israeli election debate”, CNN, 1996, available at: <http://edition.cnn.com/WORLD/9605/26/israel.debate.am/index.html>

13 Tamar Liebe, “‘Look me straight in the eye’ the political discourse of authenticity, spontaneity, and sincerity”, 2001, available at: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10714420109359482>

14 Claude Berrebi and Esteban F. Klor, “Are Voters Sensitive to Terrorism? Direct Evidence from the Israeli Electorate”, 2008, available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27644521>

Section 2

The Madrid Attacks and the Election of 2004

On March 11, 2004, at 7:35 AM, ten explosions ripped through four commuter trains in Madrid. The blasts killed 191 people and wounded 1,841. Seven of the key suspects died in the attacks and 21 people, mostly Moroccans, were later convicted of involvement. In a videotaped message, a spokesperson for Al-Qaeda later took credit for the attacks. Hours after they were carried out, police found a van with detonators and a cassette tape with verses from the Qur'an at a train station through which all of the trains had passed.

News of the Madrid tragedy was broken first by Spanish radio and TV stations broadcasting live, including the BBC and CNN. Local stations including Telediario 1, Telediario 2, Antena 3, and Informativos Telecinco 1 also covered the attacks live. Headlines the next day included "Terrorist Hell" (*El País*) and "The politic response should be different depending on the identity of the perpetrators of the attacks" (*El Mundo*).

To understand the context in which a major terrorist attack in Madrid influenced an election between the days of March 11 and March 14, 2004, it is important to explain the political tensions that existed in Spain. This section will examine how erroneous political messaging from the ruling party, seen by many as working in concert with sections of the media, contributed to the government losing an election in the wake of a terrorist attack. The impact of this was a massive contribution to an already growing loss of faith by the Spanish public in their existing political and media institutions.

President José María Aznar's People's Party (PP) had won elections over the Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) in 1996 by a small margin but was re-elected in 2000 with an absolute majority. It returned to power largely because of its liberalizing economic policy, a pledge to fight terrorism committed by Basque armed group Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA), and a promise to defend Spanish unity against political secessionist movements in the Basque country.

The government, however, began to lose support with the Spanish electorate halfway through its second term due to unpopular labor reforms and its handling of the sinking of the Prestige oil tanker, 250 kilometers off the coast of Spain.¹⁵ The country's worst environmental disaster contaminated thousands of kilometers of beaches. More provocative was the government's decision to support the U.S.-led war in Iraq. According to one poll, more than 80 percent of Spaniards over the age of eighteen were against Spanish intervention.¹⁶

One key election promise of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero of the PSOE was that he would withdraw the 1,300 Spanish troops in Iraq. While the war was unpopular with the electorate, it is important to recall that Spaniards had not been isolationists in conflicts past. Spain supported the first Gulf war in 1991, the intervention in Bosnia, and the wars in both Kosovo and Afghanistan.¹⁷ The war in Iraq was viewed, instead, as Aznar's support for U.S. President George W. Bush's international agenda.

It was in the wake of such political discontent that Al-Qaeda terrorists targeted Madrid's trains on March 11, 2004, during the morning rush hour. The bombings, occasionally referred to in shorthand as "11-M," were the worst terrorist attacks in Spanish history.

Immediately after the bombings, sections of the media and the government pointed blame at ETA. The group had carried out numerous attacks in Spain over recent decades, causing around 817 deaths since 1968. ETA sources denied any connection with the bombing, but the discovery of a plot to bomb Madrid's other main railway station the previous Christmas Eve, as well as the arrest of two ETA members on February 28 while transporting 500kg of explosives in a city south of Madrid, cultivated this interpretation.

15 Monica Méndez Lago, "Turning the Page: Crisis and Transformation of the Spanish Socialist Party", 2006, available at: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13608740600856447?journalCode=fses20>

16 Paddy Woodworth, "Spain Changes Course: Aznar's Legacy, Zapatero's Prospects", 2004, available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40209914>

17 "Spanish politics after 11 March: A Chatham House debate", 2004, available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/249918364_Open_Forum_on_Spanish_politics_after_11_March_a_Chatham_House_debate

On March 11, just a few hours after the attacks, Prime Minister Aznar called a number of newspaper editors to tell them of his conviction that ETA was responsible for the attack.¹⁸ One former editor who spoke with me for this research paper said the call was brief and Aznar assured him the government had evidence of ETA's role. "When the Prime Minister tells you that he has proof of ETA's involvement, you are inclined to believe what he says," said the editor. A press conference delivered the same day by the Minister of the Interior also implicated ETA. That afternoon, the Foreign Minister sent a note to Spanish embassies worldwide, asking ambassadors to lay the blame with ETA. Several Spanish reporters who covered the Madrid bombings told me the government sought to prove ETA's involvement as an attempt to curb criticism over Spain's role in Iraq. The government called on people to march across Spain the next evening with banners bearing the same slogan: "With the victims, with the Constitution and for the defeat of terrorism."

"Spain in 2004 had a wide choice of media," said José García-Montalvo, Professor of Economics at Pompeu Fabra University, in an interview. "There were all types of private TV stations, public television and the internet as well. People usually felt there was an incredible amount of information about most world events. But after the bombs exploded, there was no other information available. It all depended on rumors and leaks and contradiction. The government tried to project the idea of ETA being behind the attacks, but we had not had before a terrorist attack of this size. We felt the explanation was not truthful."

In 2004, before the advent of social media, Spaniards communicated primarily through Short Message Service (SMS) and turned to print newspapers and desktop websites for information. The Spanish media reacted quickly to the tragedy with special editions. Newspapers published on the day of the attacks ran headlines such as "Massacre in Madrid. ETA murders more than 130 people," "Murderers. Profound shock in Spain after the savage attacks by ETA in Madrid" and "Murder by ETA in Madrid."¹⁹ Some newspapers like *El País* made paid-for web sections free of charge. Others, like *El Mundo*, changed their websites to text only to allow for faster updates on slow internet connections. During March 2004 "atentado Madrid" (attack Madrid) was the third most searched term in Google Spain.²⁰

People usually felt there was an incredible amount of information about most world events. But after the bombs exploded, there was no other information available. It all depended on rumors and leaks and contradiction.

José García-Montalvo
Professor of Economics, Pompeu Fabra University

Yet from the outset, responses from other figures in government and sections of the media began to raise the suspicion that other terrorist groups could be involved in the attack. The government's case against ETA was called into doubt when the Minister of the Interior gave a press conference to announce the discovery of a stolen van with seven detonators and a Koran tutorial tape. The PP's foreign affairs spokesperson, Gustavo de Arístegui, later suggested the van may have been the work of the PP's enemies. Leaks from security forces also questioned the credibility of the ETA theory.

18 José A. Almedia, "Fear or Falsehood: The 3/11 terrorist attacks in Madrid and electoral accountability", 2005, available at: <http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/documentos/195/Olmeda195.pdf>

19 María-José Canel, "Communicating strategically in the face of terrorism: The Spanish government's response to the 2004 Madrid bombing attacks," 2012, available at: <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S036381111001937>

20 Montserrat Doval-Avendano, "Information sources in the Spanish social media during the 'Three Days of March,'" 2010.

The years since the bombings have seen seismic changes in Spanish politics and the media. The public's dissatisfaction with its existing institutions has been widespread.

By the next day, March 12, the Spanish media was divided in its editorials. In a report called “Fear or Falsehood? Framing the 3/11 Terrorist Attacks in Madrid and Electoral Accountability,” author José Olmeda examined the leading Spanish newspapers of March 12. The conservative daily *ABC* accepted ETA’s authorship of the attacks and praised the PP’s counter-terrorist policies. *El Mundo*, however, was more critical: its editorial cited a BBC report on a joint venture between ETA and Al-Qaeda, but said blame was as yet undetermined. Barcelona’s *La Vanguardia* said that if Al-Qaeda were found to be responsible, it would be a “punishment for supporting the Iraq war.” The left wing newspaper *El País* went further by drawing attention to “the eventuality of it being a job by Al-Qaeda and that had to do with the role played by Aznar’s government in the Iraq war.” The newspaper also speculated whether there existed a policy of concealment or manipulation by the government.

The next 48 hours would provide ordinary Spaniards a number of opportunities to voice their dissatisfaction. That evening, an estimated 11 million Spaniards took to the streets across the country to voice their grief and fury.²¹ They had organized through both SMS and appeals from opposition parties. In Madrid, they chanted, “No to terrorism!” and “Assassins! Assassins!” One banner read, “We were all on that train.” While there has never been any evidence that sections of the media colluded with politicians to protect Aznar’s government, the leading television channel TVE, owned by the state, showed few scenes from the anti-government demonstrations. A year earlier, it had given minimal coverage to the marches against the Iraq war.

The following evening, thousands gathered outside the PP offices in Madrid and in a dozen other cities in protests organized by phone calls and SMS. For several hours, demonstrators held banners saying, “Before the voting we want the truth.” Spaniards awoke the next morning, the day of the election, to learn that an Al-Qaeda spokesperson in Europe had claimed responsibility for the attack in a video message and police had arrested three Moroccans and two Indians in connection with the attacks.

Although the PP held a steady lead in the weeks before the bombings, its margin of victory had also begun to shrink. Yet, according to final opinion polls published on March 7, the PP was still expected to win a slim victory with 42 percent of the vote, while the PSOE share was projected to be 38 percent.²² Few expected what followed. The PSOE won 42.5 percent of the vote against the PP’s 37.6 percent.

21 “Millions protest Madrid attacks”, The Guardian, 2004, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/mar/12/spain>

22 Steven Woehrel, “March 11 Terrorist Attacks in Madrid and Spain’s Elections: Implications for U.S. Policy,” 2004, available at: <https://www.hsdl.org/?abstract&did=450390>

My interviews with Spanish policy experts and journalists led me to three conclusions about the legacy of the bombings. First, in taking responsibility for the attacks, Al-Qaeda was specific in its aim to punish Spain for its role in the “War on Terror” and manipulate the election. An Al-Qaeda spokesman said: “We declare our responsibility for what happened in Madrid exactly two-and-a-half years after the attacks on New York and Washington. This is an answer to the crimes in Afghanistan and Iraq. If your injustices do not stop there will be more if God wills it.” This was partly achieved when on April 14, when, a month after winning the election, Zapatero ordered the withdrawal of Spanish troops from Iraq.²³ The last Spanish troops left Iraq in May 2008. One result of Spain’s departure was the shift from a pro-U.S. foreign policy to a more pro-European footing on both security and trade.

Second, the years since the bombings have seen seismic changes in Spanish politics and the media. The public’s dissatisfaction with its existing institutions has been widespread. While the events of 2004 are not exclusively to blame, both media and political responses to the Madrid bombings quickened the decline in trust.

In the media, companies which began as family businesses have seen waves of consolidation and restructuring since 2008. The majority of Spain’s ten media conglomerates are now controlled by corporations or financial institutions. The Spanish media has also witnessed a decade of contractions. In 2013, *El País* laid off 129 employees and cut salaries by 8 percent. As Spaniards have become increasingly aware that their press is influenced by powerful financial and economic groups, trust in the media has fallen. In interviews for this paper, a number of Spanish journalists pointed to the media’s partisan approach to the Madrid bombings as one factor.

Spending cuts to regional public service channels have also eroded public faith. In one poll, 77 percent of Spanish journalists said their independence was poor or very poor; 50 percent reported being pressured to change their stories. A handful of new online publications—eldiario.es, public.es—while less beholden to the traditional business media model have gained loyal readerships, but struggled to establish financial security.

Third, the public's distrust with politicians is also visible in Spanish politics where the response to Madrid can be viewed as part of a sequential chain of events, exacerbated by a 2008 housing collapse, cuts to public services and unemployment figures of around 21 percent. Frustration at the two main political parties showed last December when the ruling conservative party, PP, lost its majority and only two years after it was founded, the new anti-austerity party Podemos²⁴ came third in the general election.

“The protests against the Iraq war were a formative moment,” said Sebastiaan Faber, director of the Oberlin Center for Language and Cultures, in an interview. “There has been a mobilization of cultural life with activists, movie directors, authors, actors and ordinary people vocalizing their dissatisfaction with government. You can draw a line between the Iraq protests, the election of 2004 and the anti-austerity protests of 2011.”

23 G. Donnar “A support withdrawn: ‘Spain’s 9/11’ and Australian newspaper framing,” 2009.

24 “Spanish Upstart Party Said It Could, and Did. Now the Hard Part Begins”, New York Times, 2014.

Section 3

The United States and the 2004 Election

On the evening of October 29, 2004—just a few days before Americans went to the polls in that year’s presidential election— the Qatari-owned broadcaster Al Jazeera aired segments from a videotape of Osama bin Laden. In the film, bin Laden addressed the people of the U.S. and condemned American involvement in wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. It was widely speculated at the time that the release of the video was timed to influence how Americans would vote.

The following day, the speech was reported as “In Video Message, Bin Laden Issues Warning to US” (The New York Times), “Bush Wins Boost From Terror Tape” (The Guardian), “Bin Laden on Tape, Reveals Sept. 11 Motive” (LA Times) and “Bin Laden Video Threatens America” (BBC).

The events of September 11, 2001, had already ensured that national security would play a central role during the 2004 election. Although the U.S. had not seen a successful attack on home soil since 9/11, the abuses at Abu Ghraib, revealed a year earlier, were fresh in the minds of American voters and the specter of Al-Qaeda terrorism loomed over the 2004 primaries and presidential campaign.

This section argues that security and terrorism was the predominant issue throughout the election cycle of 2004. For both media and politicians, it was manifest in two distinct forms: fears of another attack like 9/11 and unease over the war in Iraq. Both President George W. Bush and his Democratic challenger John Kerry pledged to make America safer. The election focused on persuading voters which candidate had the most suitable traits and the experience necessary to accomplish this goal. There emerged a clear pattern in in 2004 that voters threw their support behind Bush in light of his hard line on terrorism against a backdrop of external threats. This contradicts the approach of Peres in Israel in

1996, who campaigned on a platform of peace and trade deals with neighboring states—and lost. One examination of terror warnings issued by the U.S. government between February 1, 2004, and May 9, 2004, shows there was statistical evidence that warnings led to an increase support for Bush. In one mathematical model, each terror warning from the previous week corresponded to a 2.75-point increase in the percentage of Americans expressing approval for Bush. The warnings even had a similar effect on voter evaluation of Bush’s handling of the economy.

The years after 9/11 had seen a gradual and steady erosion of Bush’s poll ratings. For example, the percentage of Americans reporting approval of the president’s job performance climbed from 51 percent in the Gallup poll of September 10, 2001, to 86 percent in the next poll released on September 15.²⁵ In contrast, in the week before the election in 2004, his approval ratings stood at 48 percent. The rising death toll in Iraq was also an anxiety. According to *The Lancet*, over 100,000 Iraqi civilians—half of them women and children—had died since the war began. By Election Day, around 1,100 U.S. soldiers had been killed in Iraq and 8,500 wounded.

25 Rob Willer, “The effects of government-issued terror warning on Presidential approval ratings”, 2004, available at: <https://sociology.stanford.edu/publications/effects-government-issued-terror-warnings-presidential-approval-ratings>

Campaigning was dominated by the security credentials of Bush and Kerry. Bush had responded to 9/11 with two wars, the opening of a detention facility on Guantanamo Bay,²⁶ the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, the PATRIOT Act,²⁷ and the National Security Agency's surveillance program.²⁸ Kerry, a decorated Vietnam veteran, had voted for the war in Iraq in 2003. But by 2004, he was highly critical of how the war had been executed and accused the President of mismanagement. During the first presidential debate, Kerry said: "And he rushed the war in Iraq without a plan to win the peace. Now, that is not the judgement that a president of the United States ought to make. You don't take America to war unless you have the plan to win the peace."²⁹ The election cycle was marked by a renewal of media interest in the so-called "War on Terror." In the days after the events of 9/11, CNN called the ongoing crisis "America's New War" and MSNBC described it as "America on Alert." Fox News, which had already seen considerable gains in its audience share since 9/11, was the first to adopt "War on Terror," picking up the phrase from the Bush administration.

One study, "Framing the War on Terror: the internalization of policy in the U.S. press,"³⁰ examining the appearance of "War on Terror" in both USA Today and the Associated Press shows that while the occurrence of the phrase dramatically declined throughout 2002, it had significant prominence during the 2004 election. While neither Bush nor Kerry offered majorly conflicting visions for a post-9/11 world, Kerry stressed the administration's pre and post-war planning failures in Iraq and said he would restore America's standing by building international coalitions. Bush pledged to continue the course against Al-Qaeda. Kerry, meanwhile, found himself criticized by Bush over his changing stance on Iraq and attacked by the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth group about his war record in Vietnam.³¹ In the end, Bush won the election by a margin of 3.5 million votes.³²

The election of 2004 had multiple disruptive events. The most significant of these was bin Laden's video.³³ In his speech, bin Laden outlined the failures of the "War on Terror," condemned two decades of interventionism in the Middle East and U.S. support for Israel. Issued just four days before polls opened, Bin Laden's video was intended to hold up... other recent events like the terrorist bombings in Madrid and violence in Iraq as warnings of what might happen in America.

Overnight, terrorism command centers throughout America were put on high alert. An initial poll from *Newsweek* magazine claimed that Bush jumped to a six-point lead as a result of the reaction to bin Laden's message.

The effect was immediate: the video raised awareness of Bush's signature campaign issue of the threat posed to America by terrorism, especially on home soil. Overnight, terrorism command centers throughout America were put on high alert. An initial poll from *Newsweek* magazine claimed that Bush jumped to a six-point lead as a result of the reaction to bin Laden's message.³⁴

Coverage of the video differed across the media. *The New York Times* analyzed the speech in "In Video Message, Bin Laden Issues Warning to U.S." *The Washington Post* additionally provided a full transcript of the message. Fox News, meanwhile, reminded viewers of Al-Qaeda's role in the attacks of September 11, 2001 with a more emotional "Bin Laden Claims Responsibility of 9/11."

26 Ted Conover, "In the Land of Guantanamo", *New York Times*, 2002, available at:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/06/29/magazine/29GUANTANAMO.html?pagewanted=all>

27 Mike Ahlers and Kelly Wallace, "Bush outlines homeland security strategy", *CNN*, 2002, available at: <http://edition.cnn.com/2002/ALLPOLITICS/07/16/homeland.security/index.html>

28 James Risen and Eric Lichtblau, "Spying program snared US calls", *New York Times*, 2005, available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/21/politics/spying-program-snared-us-calls.html>

29 "Kerry, Bush clash over Iraq war", *BBC*, 2004, available at:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/3703756.stm>

30 Stephen D. Reese and Seth C. Lewis. "Framing the War on Terror: The internalization of policy in the US press," 2009, available at: <https://journalism.utexas.edu/sites/journalism.utexas.edu/files/attachments/reese/framing-war-on-terror-sagepub.pdf>

31 6 Michael Dobbs, "Swift Boat Accounts Incomplete", *Washington Post*, 2004, available at: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A21239-2004Aug21.html>

32 "Bush declares US election victory", *BBC*, 2004, available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/3980553.stm>

33 "Bin Laden video threatens America", *BBC*, 2004, available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3966741.stm

34 John A. Tures, "Do Terrorists "Win" Elections?", 2009,

available at: <https://www.hsaj.org/articles/99>

“The tenor of the press coverage in 2004 during the campaign was heavily influenced by the administration’s implied message that if you weren’t supporting their approach, you verged on being unpatriotic.”

Philip Seib

Co-author of *Global Terrorism and New Media: The Post-Al Qaeda Generation*

“The election became a one issue election about security,” said Sarah Oates, professor and senior scholar at the Philip Merrill College of Journalism at the University of Maryland, in an interview. “In that sense, the election of 2004 stands very much alone. Say what you will about Americans, we are a practical people in that most of our elections are about economics. There was a sense that people were being manipulated into constantly thinking about security.”

A backdrop of terror warnings and the coverage of the bin Laden speech, continued Oates, persuaded many voters to be more sympathetic to Bush’s harder line, despite warnings from some critics that they were accepting the move from an open liberal democracy to a more securitized state. “I think those years deepened the trauma for everyone. There were administrators and bureaucrats who were concerned in that they didn’t want another attack to happen. We were already traumatized by Guantanamo Bay. So we accepted the erosion of our rights as citizens.”

In the same report, one examination of a sample of news during the campaign—ABC’s World News Tonight with Peter Jennings, CBS’s Evening News with Dan Rather, and NBC’s The Nightly News with Tom Brokaw—43 percent of all news stories were related to the election and 22 percent of them addressed terrorism.³⁵ After Iraq, terrorism was the most often mentioned subject.

Oates's study, "Comparing the Politics of Fear: The Role of Television News in Election Campaigns in Russia, the United States and Britain," also shows that despite the frequent appearance of terrorism in news stories, TV channels failed to explain the difference in policy proposals from the candidates. While Bush and Kerry often mentioned terrorism, the candidates held opposing views on a number of issues like the death penalty, abortion, tax cuts, healthcare, and job creation.

The same study also reveals that around half of the news stories in the sample mentioning terrorism included negative statements from both Bush and Kerry. In several instances, Bush criticized his opponent for being too "soft" and lacking a coherent plan. Kerry usually responded with a pledge to "not waiver" and "hunt down the terrorists wherever they are."

"The tenor of the press coverage in 2004 during the campaign was heavily influenced by the administration's implied message that if you weren't supporting their approach, you verged on being unpatriotic," said Philip Seib, co-author of *Global Terrorism and New Media: The Post-Al Qaeda Generation*,³⁶ in an interview. Seib is Professor of Journalism and Public Diplomacy and Professor of International Relations at the University of Southern California's School for Communication and Journalism. "That period from 2001 to 2004 is marked by the tone taken by Fox News. I think that helped foster the idea of patriotic news coverage."

35 Sarah Oates, "Comparing the Politics of Fear: The Role of Television News in Election Campaigns in Russia, the United States and Britain", 2006, available at: <http://ire.sagepub.com/content/20/4/425.abstract>

36 Philip Seib, Dana M. Janbek, *Global Terrorism and New Media: The Post-Al Qaeda Generation*, 2011, available at: <https://www.routledge.com/Global-Terrorism-and-New-Media-The-Post-Al-Qaeda-Generation/Seib-Janbek/p/book/9780415779623>

“Whenever terrorism is primed, the incumbent does better,” said Jennifer Merolla, author of *Democracy at Risk: How Terrorist Threats Affect the Public*, in an interview. “There was a concerted effort to put terrorism front and center of the 2004 campaign. Terrorism was the one issue which was a salient factor for voters. I’d describe it as pointing to the pack of wolves in the forest. Anything dealing with national security is a challenge for Democrats. We are seeing the same thing in 2016, where Trump is both assertive and bombastic on security.”

The evidence of an increasingly partisan media was a hallmark of the 2004 race. In one study, “Unbalanced media coverage and the 2004 Presidential election: New York Times vs. The Washington Times,”³⁷ researchers evaluated 173 news articles, columns and editorials covering the last two weeks of the election. *The New York Times* published 96 election articles during this period, *The Washington Times* printed 77. When analyzed, *The Washington Times* favored Bush by 64.9 percent, *The New York Times* tilted favorably towards Kerry 56.3 percent of the time.

Analysis of editorial content from both newspapers shows the main topics were the election and the “War on Terror.” *The Washington Times* discussed the election in 66.6 percent of its coverage with 25 percent devoted to the “War on Terror.” In contrast, *The New York Times* covered the election in 33.3 percent of its coverage, while the “War on Terror” featured in 50 percent of its editorial.

Previous statistical analyses of media partisanship indicate the problem is worsening. Negative commentary regarding the biased agendas of news organizations has been documented since the mid-1960s. A survey released in June 2005 by The Pew Research Center found that 60 percent of Americans viewed news organizations as politically biased, an increase of seven percent from 2003.

The same study also examined the tone of stories placed on the front pages of both newspapers. In the case of *The Washington Times*, 70 percent of the stories published on the front page, regarding the election, were in favor of Bush. In *The New York Times*, researchers found that 50 percent of its front page stories supported Kerry. Both the election and the “War on Terror” were the two most popular topics in the two weeks studied.

The media's focus on terrorism is not warranted by the facts. While future incidents of terrorism remain likely, other forms of violence kill more Americans each year.

In one notable instance, the media spent the better part of a month analyzing the errors contained in a CBS 60 Minutes Wednesday report, broadcast in September 2004, which charged that Bush received favorable treatment from the Texas Air National Guard. The investigation centered around memos from 1972 and 1973, suspected to be inauthentic. While host Dan Rather apologized for the report and CBS defended the story for ten days, coverage lasted weeks. That time could likely have been used more relevantly in many voters' minds to cover the policies of the campaigns in their closing months.

The same media dissonance is on display during the current election. After terrorist attacks like Nice and Paris, Donald Trump has repeatedly criticized President Obama for being weak in fighting ISIS. Using little more than a Twitter account, Trump has received, according to *The New York Times*, the equivalent of \$1.9 billion in free television coverage. He has spent only \$10 million on paid advertising and received 62 percent off all coverage during the Republican race.

TV stations have, for the most part, reacted to Trump's social media statements with opinionated discussion panels and polls. The candidate's evolving ban on all Muslims entering the U.S. is a strong case in point. From *Time's* "Donald Trump Pushes for Muslim Ban After Orlando Shooting"³⁸ to the Vox explainer, "Donald Trump's 'new' Muslim ban is just as scary as the old one," each iteration of the policy has been given its due analysis. The consequence of this has been to formalize terrorism as a key election issue as well as to stigmatize a vulnerable American minority.

37 "Unbalanced Media Coverage and the 2004 Presidential Election: The New York Times Vs. The Washington Times" by Jimmie E. Cummings, 2006, available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/277839715_Unbalanced_Media_Coverage_and_the_2004_Presidential_Election_The_New_York_Times_Vs_the_Washington_Times

38 "\$2 Billion Worth of Free Media for Donald Trump", *The New York Times*, 2016, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/16/upshot/measuring-donald-trumps-mammoth-advantage-in-free-media.html>

The media's focus on terrorism is not warranted by the facts. While future incidents of terrorism remain likely, other forms of violence kill more Americans each year. According to figures from the U.S. Department of Justice and the Council on Foreign Affairs, 11,385 people died in firearm incidents on average annually in the U.S. between 2001 and 2011. In the same period, on average 517 people were killed annually in terrorism related incidents. Accounting for 2001, the annual average drops to 31. But Trump's tactic of creating a media response to his warning of terror attacks has largely proved successful. While his more outlandish accusations—that President Obama created ISIS, for example—have been widely dismissed and mocked, they have still dominated news cycles and forced terrorism to the top of the news agenda.

Trump's campaign benefits from this in terms of forcing the election to be fought on territory it deems favorable—just as the Bush campaign did in 2004. A recent Pew Research Center survey showed if voters were moderating a 100-minute debate between Trump and Hillary Clinton, across ten issues, they would allocate fifteen minutes to hearing the candidates' plans for keeping the U.S. safe. Economic growth, healthcare, the budget deficit and immigration all polled behind terrorism.

Brigitte Nacos, journalist, author, and adjunct professor of political science at Columbia University, said security is playing a similar role this year to the one that it did in 2004—in contrast to the elections of 2008 and 2012 where the economy occupied a central space. “I am worried that a major attack in the election would benefit Donald Trump,” she said, in an interview. “There are already about 40 percent of the public who consistently believe that Trump can cure all of the problems the U.S. has. He speaks at nearly all his appearances that he has a plan to wipe out ISIS. Torture for him is not enough. He says he is going to wipe out the ISIS people and kill their families. In the larger picture, Clinton might be more willing to get involved in foreign wars. But Trump tells his crowd that ISIS is a Clinton creation.”

This research finds two vital differences between the media coverage of terrorism during the 2004 and 2016 presidential races. Most obviously, the widespread use of digital journalism and social media has quickly attached human narratives to recent hate crimes like Orlando or terror attacks such as Nice and Paris. Hashtags such as #MuslimsAreNotTerrorists and #NotInMyName have highlighted human stories with long online contrails which have proved effective in correcting both erroneous reporting and Islamophobia. Much coverage was given to the Union of Muslims of the Alpes-Maritimes' findings that a third of the people killed in Nice were Muslim.

More significantly, the American media has also had to adapt to the major challenges of real time coverage of the presidential race. Fact-checking websites such as PolitiFact and FactCheck, as well as instant fact checking departments at newspapers like *The Washington Post*, have all had an impact on the election process. Studies have also highlighted its success: more than eight in ten Americans having a favorable view of fact checking.

As an unconventional Republican candidate, Trump's aggressive nature has had a profound effect on the pace of news coverage in 2016. Media organizations have seen the 24-hour news cycle turn into a minute-by-minute sprint. News isn't dependent on editors or experts as filters. It exists in the full glare of millions of social media accounts, broadcasting on the nation's mobile devices.

Section 4

The Mumbai Attacks of 2008 and the Indian Election of 2009

On Wednesday, November 26, 2008, at 9:40 PM, ten Pakistani men associated with Lashkar-e-Taiba stormed buildings in the tourism center of Mumbai, armed with automatic weapons and grenades. The gunmen had arrived by boat from Karachi, Pakistan. The locations targeted were Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus railway station, Leopold Cafe, Taj Mahal Palace & Tower Hotel, Oberoi Trident Hotel, Metro Cinema, Cama and Albless Hospital, and Nariman House.

The multiple, coordinated attacks hit Mumbai's tourism, transport and financial districts. There were also shootings in the streets and strikes on other locations. The attacks ended early Saturday morning, November 29, after nine of the gunmen were killed. One surviving attacker, Mohammed Ajmal Kasab, was executed after his trial in November 2012. In total, 172 people died in the attacks.

Around seventy Indian news channels covered the events live for over 60 hours, alongside CNN and the BBC. Mumbai residents began tweeting within minutes of the attacks. "Hospital update. Shots still being fired. Also, Metro cinema next door," tweeted @Mumbaiattack. "Mumbai terrorists are asking hotel reception for room #'s of American citizens and holding them hostage on one floor," tweeted @Dupreee. Headlines the next morning included "Terrorists strike Mumbai" (Times of India) and "Who is to blame for Mumbai Attacks?" (CNN).

The Indian election of 2009, which was conducted over the months of April and May, took place against this backdrop of a major terrorist attack. In the U.S., Senator John McCain borrowed an American metaphor to describe the atrocity as "India's 9/11." In Indian media shorthand, the attacks have occasionally come to be known as 11/26.

In the case of Mumbai, this paper finds a number of concerns about transparency, responsibility and accuracy in how Indian news outlets covered the violence. My interviews with Indian journalists and media

analysts show that the recently liberalized media, with hundreds of private satellite channels in the hands of private owners, sought to exert its independence from government watchdogs. As the attacks in Mumbai unfolded in real time, hundreds of journalists working for dozens of commercial networks rushed to cover the dramatic story. The pace of the coverage meant that fair and accurate reporting practices suffered.

In the days, weeks, and months following the attacks, there was sustained criticism that the media response, while comprehensive, was at times confusing and caused on-the-ground operational difficulties, as ambitious reporters jostled with soldiers and members of the police force trying to re-establish order. In one case, the prominent NDTV journalist Barkha Dutt was criticized for identifying on live television where guests might be staying at the Taj Mahal Hotel and the Oberio Trident.

Mumbai was also unique as it was one of the first major terrorist attacks to unfold in the era of widespread use of social media. Over one million unique users posted more than 2.7 million tweets over the course of three days. The dissemination of rumors added to the confusion. Users on Twitter erroneously reported blood banks running low on supplies. In the months following the attacks, the government and media would collaborate to enact a new media law to prevent future disruption. Charges from readers and viewers about media sensationalism and repetition have remained to this day.

The attackers also appeared to be adhering to a scripted plan in a deliberate effort to maximize media attention. One of the terrorists, Imran Babar, even called India TV from Nariman House, a Jewish outreach center, to explain his motivations.

Years before the attacks in Paris and Nice, the Mumbai attacks of 2008 heralded a new dimension in the evolution of terrorism as an on-going, multi-hour operation.³⁹ The attackers also appeared to be adhering to a scripted plan in a deliberate effort to maximize media attention. One of the terrorists, Imran Babar, even called India TV from Nariman House, a Jewish outreach center, to explain his motivations. The call, broadcast live, lasted seven minutes.⁴⁰ Babar listed a number of grievances, including the 2002 riots in Gujarat where 1,000 people, mostly Muslims, were killed, as well as Muslim deaths in the Indian controlled territory of Kashmir. “Are you aware how many people have been killed in Kashmir?” asked Babar. Later, he said, “We die every day. It is better to win one day as a lion than die this way.” Babar’s interview crossed a new line in broadcasting: India TV was no longer acting as a filter, but a platform. For viewers, temporarily at least, it ceded control to one of the attackers. It is worth noting that were the attacks to be repeated in 2016, Babar would not need to call a TV station to broadcast his statements—social media services like Facebook Live could duplicate the event and bypass traditional media entirely.

As Mumbai showed, terrorist-induced violence is neither irrational nor indiscriminate. It is part of a strategy that uses violence to make terrorists visible in public spheres. Terrorists and terrorism seek the ubiquity that can only be granted to them by extensive media coverage. News organizations risk being manipulated as a tool to erode public faith in the state or the state’s policies.

By the time of the attacks in Mumbai, India was already witnessing an increase in terrorist bombings. Over 800 people had been killed in two dozen attacks across the country since mid-2006. Mumbai, a city of 20 million residents, had always been a prime target. In March, 1993,³⁹ 257 Indians were killed and 717 injured when thirteen car bombs coordinated by the underworld criminal Dawood Ibrahim exploded at the Mumbai stock exchange, hotels, and shopping centers. In July 2006, a series of seven bomb blasts across the city’s rail network, planned by a group linked to Lashkar-e-Taiba, left 209 people dead and over 700 injured.⁴¹

The Mumbai attacks struck at the heart of the city's elite landmarks. They also occurred at a time when India, like many other developing nations, had seen a large increase in the number of citizens embracing the Internet, mobile technology and social media. As the violence began, on sites like Facebook and Twitter, the hashtags #mumbai, #mumbaiterrorattacks and #mumbaiattacks cataloged every new iteration of fact and hearsay. Mumbai residents and citizen journalists uploaded images to Flickr.

The attacks also highlighted the competitive nature of the Indian media market with hundreds of local TV channels broadcasting in dozens of languages. As Rajdeep Sardesai, then the editor-in-chief of CNN-IBN said in an interview: "The media (beast) has to be constantly fed with sensational stories and dramatic scenes to attract the readership and the audience. The information flow from the government sources was terrible and excessively politicized which does not cater to the tastes of today's audience."

Other editors and journalists interviewed were more forthcoming about the media's failures. "It's high time we realize and accept that we are at fault," said Shishir Joshi, editor director of a Mumbai newspaper called *Mid-Day*. "We did well getting into the line of fire, but from an ethical point of view, we screwed up big time." Barkha Dutt agreed the media should be cognizant of ongoing security operations and show restraint: "If there is even a shadow of doubt of security being compromised, the industry should be willing to delay-telecast so that we can once and for all end this argument."

39 "India's Reckless Road to Washington," Counterpunch, 2008, available at:<http://www.counterpunch.org/2008/12/23/india-s-reckless-road-to-washington/>
40 "Victims await Mumbai 1993 blasts justice," BBC, 2006, available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4777323.stm
41 "Indian PM vows to defeat terrorism," CBS, 2006, available at: <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/indian-pm-vows-to-defeat-terrorism/>

“In a way, it wasn’t just people being held hostage; it was the city being held hostage for media consumption.”

Faisal Devji

Director, St. Antony’s College Asian Studies Center

“The coverage of Mumbai reflects global trends in some ways which point to a dangerous mix of nationalism and profit driven motive,” said Rohit Chopra, author of *The 26/11 Network-Archive: Public Memory, History, and the Global in an Age of Terror*, in an interview. “The Indian media has integrated into the global media, as has the Indian economy. The journalists have a tendency to make themselves as heroes of the show. I think what you lack in India, as opposed to America, are the kind of advocacy groups you come across in the U.S. who might campaign on broadcasting standards. With social media there is a democratization for no democratic ends. It is a different kind of notion of credibility. Not to say the experts always get it right, but on social media you do see a battle waged between government voices, the media, experts and day users who all compliment and contradict each other in all kind of ways.”

The boom in media production is echoed in other industries. India’s buoyant newspaper industry will see print circulation grow by 8 percent per annum over the next three years. And even though the number of web users in India is relatively small, around 17 percent—compared with 46 percent in its northern neighbor, China, and more than 80 percent in the U.S. and Japan—India has seen a leap in the number of connected citizens. The number of Internet users doubled from 50 million in 2007 to 100 million in 2010. Web users had tripled to 300 million by 2014.⁴² As Mumbai illustrates, Facebook, Twitter, and Flickr proved to be more adaptable than traditional 24-hour news channels, which anchored themselves and their coverage in front of large stationary backdrops. Ordinary Mumbaikars used digital cameras and smart phones to post first-hand information to a Google map of Mumbai’s metropolitan area.

A Wikipedia page kept track of new developments in the affected areas. “In a way, it wasn’t just people being held hostage, it was the city being held hostage for media consumption,” said Dr. Faisal Devji, director, St Antony’s College Asian Studies Center, the author of *The Terrorist in Search of Humanity: Militant Islam and Global Politics*.⁴³ In an interview, he added: “Bombay is a city defined by its film industry and television. It was the perfect site for this form of spectacle and set into motion two kinds of media. One was the official news media, and the other was social media, which was far less controlled. Interaction between those two forms was very new at the time. The official reaction was quite conventional—shock, horror, and human interest. As the siege continued, though, both were accused of pushing into the narrative and showing parts of the city to terrorists and their handlers. Both became part of the action and the terror.”

Another report, “The print media coverage of the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks: A study on the coverage of leading Indian newspapers and its impact on people,” examines how four leading English newspaper covered the attacks.⁴⁴ The study also looks at how readers reacted to the coverage and how the public was impacted by the media. The research analyzed *The Hindu*, *Times of India*, *New Indian Express*, and the *Deccan Chronicle*. Newspapers from November 27 to November 30 were studied. In a survey of 90 respondents, 32 percent said coverage was sufficient, while 41 percent complained of overdose. At 46 percent, TV was considered to be the most effective way to cover the attacks, to 24 percent for newspapers. While 64 percent said the newspaper coverage was unbiased, 68 percent said newspapers sensationalized the issue. Among those who said newspapers had sensationalized the violence, 38 percent of them felt India was less secure as a result of the coverage and 21 percent said the reporting resulted in feelings of fear.

42 “Get Ready for India’s Internet Boom,” Morgan Stanley, 2015, available at: <http://www.morganstanley.com/ideas/rise-of-internet-in-india.html>

43 Dr Faisal Devji, “The Terrorist in Search of Humanity: Militant Islam and Global Politics”, 2009, available at: <http://www.hurstpublishers.com/book/the-terrorist-in-search-of-humanity/>

44 M. Neelamalar, P. Chitra and Arun Darwin, “The print media coverage of the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks: A study on the coverage of leading Indian newspapers and its impact on people,” 2009, available at: <http://www.academicjournals.org/journal/JMCS/article-full-text-pdf/O946F6610258>

The coverage had an impact on public responses to terrorism. One study showed coverage not only multiplied public panic, but also negatively affected viewers. Around 70 percent of respondents were noted to have felt an increase of acute insomnia, paranoia, and severe panic attacks.

In the days after Mumbai, Indians first turned on the government's lack of preparedness by calling in to TV shows and joining hosts in their criticism of the government for overlooking a prior warning of the attack, the poor coordination between security agencies, and failing to act on increased "chatter." Three prominent police officers, including the leader of the Anti-Terrorism Squad, Hemant Karkare, were killed during the attacks. Escalating criticism over security failures saw the resignations of India's Home Minister Shivraj Patil, Vilasrao Deshmukh, the State Chief Minister of Maharashtra, and Deputy Chief Minister Raosaheb Ramrao Patil.

Social and traditional media also diverged in impact. While users primarily used Twitter to get updates, Indian news coverage adopted a tone of aggressive commentary which served to amplify criticism of the government. The print coverage of the attacks centered on the slow responses of India's security apparatus. In "The 2008 Mumbai Attack and Press Nationalism: A Content Analysis of Coverage in The New York Times, Times of London, Dawn, and The Hindu,"⁴⁵ the authors find that the government's failures received the most focus. In newspapers published between November 27 and December 13, it was mentioned on twelve occasions in *The Times of London*, twenty-eight times in *The Hindu*, on eleven occasions in *The New York Times* and fourteen times in *Dawn*. These failures would have immediate and long term consequences.

Mumbai prompted a number of far reaching anti-terrorism measures.⁴⁶ The Indian government, the Congress Party-led United Progressive Alliance, introduced two new laws: the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Act of 2008 (UAPA) and the National Investigation Agency Act of 2008 (NIA) were in line with laws enacted in the U.S. and the UK to expand surveillance, police powers, surveillance, and the scope of detention for suspected terrorists. The new legislation followed 2002's Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA), passed in response to terrorist attacks on the Indian Parliament and the bombing of other landmark buildings in 2001 and 2002.

Like the U.S. PATRIOT Act, the Indian legislative response to the Mumbai attacks was marked by governmental overreach that impinged on civil liberties. The UAPA extended the police detention and custody period for terror suspects without any charge detention to 180 days without bail. The law also denied bail to foreigners and reversed the burden of proof for the accused. The NIA established a new central police organization, the National Investigation Agency, which was tasked with investigating acts of terrorism and offences committed under the UAPA.

Both the UAPA amendment and the NIA were subject to stiff criticism from human rights groups. Amnesty International said the laws would “violate international human rights standards.” Amnesty’s criticism focused on a number of new features of the Act: the “sweeping and overbroad” definitions of “acts of terrorism” and the maximum period of detention. Amnesty also argued existing detention laws were “already far beyond international standards.”

The rolling media coverage also led to criticisms over sensitivity. Senior politicians said the militants were able to avert counter-terrorism measures by watching Indian TV. A month after the attacks, the News Broadcasters Association (NBA) agreed to ban live phone-ins with terrorists and refrain from broadcasting live security operations. The NBA also agreed to stop broadcasts of graphic shots of crime scenes in the future.⁴⁷

“The Mumbai attacks seemed to hit a unique narrative in India,” said Pamposh Raina, the author of “Framing of The Mumbai Terror Attacks by the Indian and the Pakistani Print Media,”⁴⁸ in an interview. “There is a defined history between India and Pakistan which stretches back to partition. It covers terrorism, Kashmir, Afghanistan and security. At the same time, in the years before 2008, the Indian media market had

45 Hariwardhan Reddy Jannepally, “The 2008 Mumbai Attack and Press Nationalism: A Content Analysis of Coverage in the New York Times, Times of London, Dawn and the Hindu,” 2010, available at: https://etd.ohiolink.edu/!etd.send_file?accession=ohiou1283534128&disposition=inline

46 Ted Svensson, “Frontiers of blame: India’s ‘War on Terror,’” 2009, available at: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17539150902752606>

47 “Turning terrorism into a soap opera,” *British Journalism Review*, 2009, available at: <http://bjr.sagepub.com/content/20/1/13.short>

48 Pamposh Raina, “Framing of The Mumbai Terror Attacks by the Indian and the Pakistani Print Media,” 2004, available at: <http://pqdtopen.proquest.com/doc/854985391.html?FMT=AI>

become more competitive with new television stations. You had reporters on the scene for what seemed like twenty-four hours and every time the scene [quieted], there were endless updates on social media.”

Beyond the mounting death toll, the media focus of the violence rested on criticism of the government’s inability to secure the scene. Politically, there were immediate attempts by the opposition to criticize Congress for its lack of readiness. According to “The 2008 Mumbai terror attacks: (re-)constructing Indian (counter-terrorism),” the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party published an advertisement on the front pages of major daily newspapers on November 28th. The ad featured a large red drop of blood framed by a black background. The text read “Brutal Terror Strikes at Will. Weak Government, Unwilling and Incapable. Fight Terror. Vote BJP.”

In its manifesto for the 2009 elections, the BJP described the preceding five years as a “macabre dance of death and destruction.” The party promised to modernize India’s intelligence agencies, set up a “Digital Security Agency” and equip state governments and police forces with the latest weaponry and communications technology. The BJP also pledged to set up special terrorism courts that would fast-track prosecutions.

The election of 2009, saw both major parties, Congress and the BJP, campaign on diverging platforms with differing political priorities. Congress highlighted the UPA’s achievements since 2004; strong economic growth and providing rural development. The BJP campaigned on security, development, and the UPA’s failure to provide a muscular foreign policy. In one campaign ad, the BJP showed its eighty-one-year-old leader, Lal Krishna Advani, pumping iron at the gym, a reference to the party’s promise to be tough on Muslims. The criticism backfired. In a country where corruption often prompts more scrutiny than security, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was viewed as above suspicion.

The BJP’s own record on fighting terror was also less than exemplary. In 1999, the BJP-led government of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee conceded to the demands of Pakistani terrorists who had hijacked an Indian Airlines plane, land it in Kandahar, Afghanistan. Vajpayee freed three terrorists from Indian jails to overwhelming criticism.

India's electorate was mostly concerned with traditional anxieties such as the price of flour, water, and electricity. As 2015 figures show, nearly 70 percent of all Indians are rural; urban terrorism in the tourist center of Mumbai would be an unlikely influence on their politics.

Held over five stages and over the course of a month with around 714 million people eligible, India's electorate was mostly concerned with traditional anxieties such as the price of flour, water, and electricity. As 2015 figures show, nearly 70 percent of all Indians are rural; urban terrorism in the tourist center of Mumbai would be an unlikely influence on their politics. Prime Minister Singh was returned to power and became the first leader since Jawaharlal Nehru in 1962 to be re-elected after completing a full five-year term.⁴⁹

Although Congress improved its share of the vote by only 2.1 percent over its 2004 victory, it was enough to gain 61 additional seats in Parliament and a 262-seat majority as the head of the UPA coalition. The BJP dropped from 138 to 116 seats and saw its share of votes fall from 22.2 percent in 2004 to 18.8 percent in 2009.

The findings demonstrate that the fear of the frailty of Indian secularism over nationalism was misplaced. The Indian electorate appears to have voted for the party offering them the politics of moderation, and Singh resisted the BJP's attempt to manipulate the election. "The achievement of Congress was to make sure Mumbai wasn't seen as a cliché of terrorism," said Vijay Prashad, Professor of South Asian Studies International Studies at Trinity College, Connecticut, in an interview. He continued: "That paid off dividends in the polls. Singh reacted to Mumbai as a technocrat, not in an emotional sense. He said India's reaction should be to find out who did it and bring them to justice."

49 Sumit Ganguly, "A Vote to stay the course," 2009, *Journal of Democracy*, available at: <http://www.journalofdemocracy.org/india%E2%80%99s-2009-elections-vote-stay-course>

CONCLUSION

The intense and often spectacular nature of terrorism can render it difficult to make sense of each incident beyond the immediate horror of the event. The pace and shocking violence of attacks on civilian targets and their consequences for human liberties provide valuable lessons in how both new and established media react. Each example demonstrates how different responses from politicians can shape both the minds of the electorate and a subsequent election.

As many of the experts I interviewed note, the aftershocks of terrorism are felt for years in both established and emerging democracies. While terrorism poses few direct challenges to the existence of a modern state, it does raise serious questions about how new security laws are written in their aftermath, the political atmosphere which allows them swift passage, and their effects on our civil liberties. In our hyper-connected world, the media seeks to act as a filter and narrator of each act of horror, holding those in power responsible where they are perceived to have failed. Governments see it as their duty to respond with new agencies and legislation in an effort to better protect their citizens. Failings occur when politicians and the media use public vulnerability to appear decisive or further a political agenda or to sensationalize in a quest for audience share.

There are considerable lessons to be drawn from the four cases analyzed above. As the aftermath of Madrid shows, a mismanaged and opaque response by an unpopular government eager to draw attention away from its role in Iraq led to the removal of its mandate. In the following years, as the economy has tightened, Spanish opinion has ossified into disillusionment with both mainstream politics and the established media.

The U.S. election of 2004 shows that the lack of a serious public debate about the legitimacy of the “War on Terror” served the interest of an incumbent but unpopular president. This took place despite misgivings over how the conflict in Iraq was being prosecuted. Twelve years later, Trump is also attempting to use the fear of terrorism, specifically ISIS, as a motivating tool for voters worried about security.

The atrocities committed in Mumbai saw an emergent powerhouse respond to violence in a manner that garnered immediate sympathy from a global audience. While the Indian media's response to the tragedy was the subject of much criticism, the political lessons of Mumbai can be found in India's vast multiculturalism, the technocratic response of Manmohan Singh and the unique needs of its enormous and diverse electorate. The Israeli election of 1996 serves as an example of how the coverage of terrorism and tragedy can contribute to panic and overshadow all discussion of peace and economic growth.

Media, politicians, and social platforms will all have to adapt to new challenges in the years ahead. Platforms like Facebook and Twitter which, in the hands of victims and perpetrators of terrorism, can bypass traditional media, will continue to face scrutiny over the accuracy, neutrality, and intent of users. One issue currently being tackled by online platforms is how to combat online hate speech. In May, Facebook along with Twitter, YouTube, and Microsoft reached an agreement with the European Union to take down offensive speech within twenty-four hours. The networks must now all work to introduce successful anti-terror or counter-terror measures.

Politicians and journalists will continue to have their decisions tested by how they respond to terrorism and will have to encourage discussion of how terrorism can manipulate the political process. The first priority of governments and the media should be to protect the traditions and objectives of democracy while informing the public.

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