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The Politics and Coverage of Terrorism: From Media Images to Public Consciousness

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Abstract

This article presents a typology that explains the variation in media coverage for different kinds of terrorism. The relation of a terrorist act to power is the focus of the typology. Grievance terrorism is fomented by groups seeking power or redress of grievance. It receives substantial media coverage. Perpetrators of such terrorism are portrayed negatively. Institutional terrorism is employed by powerful entities to maintain or preserve the status quo. Amount and tone of coverage of such terrorism are contingent on the intended targets of such terrorism and on whether the media rely on those institutions as sources. The article addresses the political implications (i.e., public consciousness about terrorism and compliance with government policies) of such differences in coverage.

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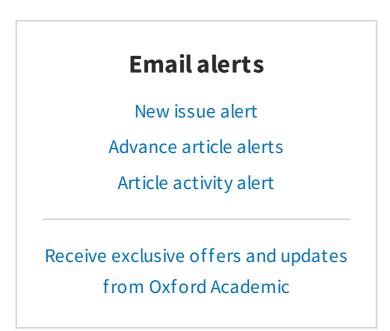
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