

## **Do the Media Exacerbate the Effects of Terrorism?**

### ***Chechen Hostage Crises and the Media's Role in Achieving Terrorist Objectives***

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Scholars and policymakers assume that “all press is good press” in the case of terrorism. They base this assumption on the reasoning that the media effect sympathy among targeted international audiences; these international audiences then urge their own governments to pressure the target domestic government into enacting concessions for terrorist groups. However, no empirical evidence supports this assumption. This study examines the quantity and quality of media coverage following two hostage terrorist attacks occurring in Russia, the Moscow Dubrovka theater siege of 2002 and the Beslan school siege of 2004. Evidence from this study suggests that the conventional assumption that the media is beneficial for terrorist groups is false. Media coverage increased proximate to these two terrorist attacks. However, these two terrorist attacks did not sustain increases in coverage. In addition, reporting was variably favorable towards terrorist groups and their causes. Last, this study considered the statements of foreign leaders, finding that these statements had no correlation with media reporting in their respective countries. Rather, foreign leaders tended to heavily criticize terrorist groups while ignoring the terrorists’ causes. Hence, this study concludes that while media reporting may encourage fear, a short-term objective of terrorism, it does not necessarily result in pressure on governments and thus does not necessarily help to achieve long-term terrorist objectives.

*“Terrorism is theatre.”*

-Brian M. Jenkins<sup>1</sup>

Terrorist attacks are inherently graphic and shocking, capturing horrified audiences no matter how lethal the attack. They do not seek to kill just for the purpose of killing: the point is to brutally murder victims so as to purposefully create massive amounts of carnage. Terrorists target the innocent, those unconnected to the cause of the terrorist attack, and killing or maiming such innocent targets requires “creating a scene” that causes enough destruction to traumatize populaces (which sometimes is not very much destruction, depending on the situation). For the past two decades, separatists in the region Chechnya, located in North Caucasus of Russia, have used wicked tactics of terrorism, in particular hostage taking, to devastate Russian populations. Two terrorist events stand out as being markedly lethal: the October 2002 Moscow Dubrovka Theater Siege and the September 2004 Beslan School Siege.

But terrorism is not effective unless the political message behind the attack is appropriately transmitted to its audience. In the case of the Chechen terrorists behind the two hostage attacks, they targeted two audiences, broadly. They targeted the domestic Russian audience in hopes of instilling such fear that Russians would pressure their own government to enact policies favoring Chechen demands (primarily independence and autonomy). They targeted the international, chiefly Western, audience in hopes of instilling sympathy – sympathy for both separatists who are so desperate for their own homeland that they have no choice but to resort to terrorism, as well as for a domestic audience that must withstand such terrorism. Sympathy for the separatists encourages an international audience to then pressure their own

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<sup>1</sup> Brian M. Jenkins, "International Terrorism: A New Mode of Conflict," in *International Terrorism and World Security*, ed. David and Carlo Schaerf Carlton (London: Croom Helm, 1975)., 16.

governments, who then in turn can pressure the domestic Russian government into authorizing concessions to the terrorist group.

The media is the most apparent transmitter of the terrorists' message. Newspapers, broadcast television, and now the Internet all swiftly report on any hint of terrorism. Scholars, experts, and policymakers assume that "more is better" in regards to media coverage and terrorist goals. This reasoning stems from the idea that in the case of international audiences, it is unlikely these audiences will become aware of a terrorists' cause unless the media reports on the cause, and the most obvious way to gain this coverage is through shocking acts such as terrorism. However, the assumption of "more is better" has not yet been appropriately investigated. Scholars have not yet presented empirical evidence that answers two key questions: Does media coverage increase in the case of a terrorist event? If so, does such an increase in coverage improve the likelihood of achieving a terrorist group's long-term objective?

In fact, the relationship between media coverage and the achievement of long-term terrorist objectives cannot be assumed. Media coverage peaks in the case of a terrorist event, but this peak does not translate into lasting increased coverage of a terrorist group's cause. In addition, media coverage of a terrorist attack is not always favorable towards a terrorist group's long-term objective: it may be favorable, unfavorable, or neutral, or it may not adequately address the long-term objective. Thus, terrorist groups do not inevitably benefit from media coverage. Rather, the media disseminates many messages, so the relationship between the media, terrorist groups, and terrorist objectives is not directly correlated, but rather nuanced and above all variable.

## **A Review of the Literature**

### *Defining Terrorism*

Terrorism can be defined many ways, depending on the scholar or expert. Because of this variance, the scholar Bruce Hoffman analyzed the most common definitional elements of terrorism, which include “violence, force,” “political,” “fear, terror emphasized,” “threat,” and “(psychological) effects and (anticipated) reactions.”<sup>2</sup> Hoffman himself defines terrorism as “the deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence or the threat of violence in the pursuit of political change.”<sup>3</sup> Louise Richardson states that “Terrorism simply means deliberately and violently targeting civilians for political purposes.”<sup>4</sup> For this specific case study, the Moscow theater hostage crisis and the Beslan hostage crisis are accepted by many experts as terrorist events because they are referred to as such. This assumption is logical because both events contain Hoffman’s five top-cited elements: both were violent and involved force; both had the political motivations of Chechen independence/autonomy; both incited fear through the use of weaponry and the threat of explosives; and both had psychological effects and the presence of a reaction from the Russian government. Considering Richardson’s definition, both also targeted civilians. Although I may refer to the incidents as “hostage” events, any reference to these two incidents as “terrorist” in this paper refers only to their current acceptance as terrorist attacks.

### *Causes of Terrorism*

Terrorism may appear to be a tactic of the illogical or demonic, but there are identifiable causes for terrorism. The scholar Martha Crenshaw identifies causes of terrorism, to include specific grievances, a lack of opportunity for political participation, and elite disaffection.<sup>5</sup>

Andrew Kydd and Barbara Walter call terrorism a “costly form of signaling,” where relatively

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<sup>2</sup> Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006)., 34.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>4</sup> Louise Richardson, *What Terrorists Want* (New York: Random House, Inc., 2006)., 4.

<sup>5</sup> Martha Crenshaw, "The Causes of Terrorism," in *Terrorism Studies: A Reader*, ed. John Horgan and Kurt Braddock (London: Routledge)., 103.

weak terrorists must use violence to demonstrate their resolve to relatively strong governments.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, Crenshaw calls terrorism a “weapon of the weak,” where this weakness stems from either impatience with the traditional legal process of promoting their cause, distrust of the government, or an inability to generate support for their cause.<sup>7</sup> In the case of ethno-nationalist terrorism, the fundamental root cause is disagreement over a political status. In the case of Chechnya, some Chechens have resorted to terrorism because they believe it is a legitimate means to achieve their desired political status. In the case of hostage-taking, Crenshaw states that terrorists take hostages with the initial expectation that the government will comply.<sup>8</sup> Hence, terrorists resort to this tactic because they believe it will ultimately coerce governments into giving political concessions.

#### *Objectives of Terrorism: Short-term Versus Long-term*

Scholars also characterize terrorism according to its objectives. The primary distinction of objectives is between short-term and long-term, which scholars refer to variably. Max Abrahms calls the objectives process versus outcome goals<sup>9</sup>; Crenshaw distinguishes proximate goals<sup>10</sup>; and Brian Jenkins identifies tactical objectives and strategic objectives.<sup>11</sup> Long-term objectives may be thought of as “the ultimate goals” or the objectives that would fulfill the root cause for the terrorism, while shorter-term objectives often include effects such as creating fear, gaining recognition and attention, building morale, sustaining the group, financing, discrediting

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<sup>6</sup> Andrew H. and Barbara F. Walter Kydd, "The Strategies of Terrorism," *International Security* 31, no. 1 (2006)., 51.

<sup>7</sup> Crenshaw, "The Causes of Terrorism.", 105.

<sup>8</sup> "Decisions to Use Terrorism: Psychological Constraints on Instrumental Reasoning.", 257.

<sup>9</sup> Max Abrahms, "The Political Effectiveness of Terrorism Revisited," *Comparative Political Studies* 45, no. 3 (2012)., 367.

<sup>10</sup> Crenshaw, "The Causes of Terrorism.", 104-105.

<sup>11</sup> Jenkins, "International Terrorism: A New Mode of Conflict.", 16.

the government, and potentially inciting an overreaction by the government through counterterrorist actions.<sup>12</sup>

Many scholars also distinguish between types of long-term or ultimate objectives. Michael Miklaucic identifies groups partially by ideology, which can be broken down according to “the nature of the outcome it seeks and its determination to achieve that outcome.” Groups can be categorized as “non-absolutist,” or groups “whose ideology and associated interests can be reconciled within the context of the rule-based system of democratic states,” and “absolutist,” or groups “whose interests challenge the basic premises of that system.”<sup>13</sup> Abrahms describes this as “limited” versus “maximalist,” where groups with limited objectives usually have demands centered around territory while maximalist groups’ objectives center on beliefs, values, or ideology.<sup>14</sup> The demands of maximalist groups – such as al-Qaeda – may be thought of as “transformational” – they wish to “transform” the system.<sup>15</sup> Groups with limited objectives – including ethno-nationalist terrorist groups such as those found in Chechnya – are satisfied with feasible results that do not challenge the basic state system, such as improved political representation, greater autonomy, or independence.

### *Effectiveness of Terrorism*

In examining terrorism, it is also crucial to consider how effective terrorism can be. Terrorism is often thoroughly analyzed on the front end, but the back-end discussion focuses heavily on responses to terrorism. The few scholars who do address the topic of whether terrorism actually works logically fall into the broad categories of those that do think it is

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<sup>12</sup> Abrahms, "The Political Effectiveness of Terrorism Revisited; Crenshaw, "The Causes of Terrorism; Jenkins, "International Terrorism: A New Mode of Conflict."

<sup>13</sup> Michael Miklaucic, "Contending with Illicit Power Structures: A Typology," in *Non-State Actors as Standard Setters*, ed. Lucy Koechlin Anne Peters, Till Förster, Gretta Fenner Zinkernagel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 192-195.

<sup>14</sup> Max Abrahms, "Why Terrorism Does Not Work," *International Security* 31, no. 2 (2006), 52-53.

<sup>15</sup> Richardson, *What Terrorists Want*, 13.

effective and those who do no. Alan Dershowitz, a believer of its effectiveness, points to the case of the Palestinian cause, beginning with the Munich Olympics hostage crisis in 1972, carried out by Black September, a Palestinian terrorist group. According to Dershowitz, subsequent terrorist incidents following Munich correlated with political achievements, such as Yasser Arafat's address at the UN General Assembly in 1974, the granting of UN observer status for the PLO in 1974, and in March 2002, a unanimous UN Security Council vote in favor of establishing a Palestinian state.<sup>16</sup> Dershowitz states, "The reason terrorism works... is precisely because its perpetrators believe that by murdering innocent civilians they will succeed in attracting the attention of the world to their perceived grievances and their demand that the world 'understand them' and 'eliminate their root causes.'"<sup>17</sup> He cites Zehdi Labib Terzi, former PLO chief observer at the UN, who stated, "The first several hijacking aroused the consciousness of the world and awakened the media and the world opinion much more—and more effectively—than twenty years of pleading at the United Nations."<sup>18</sup>

Other scholars argue that terrorism works at least in some cases. Citing Hoffman and Dershowitz, Gould and Klor also argue that terrorism works. They find that an increase in terrorist attacks increases Israelis' support for territorial concessions, up to a certain point, and that such an increase even shifts the entire political landscape towards the left.<sup>19</sup> However, like Dershowitz and Hoffman, Gould and Klor focus only on the Israeli-Palestinian case. In terms of hostage-taking specifically, Adam Dolnik and Keith Fitzgerald argue that specific characteristics of hostage terrorist events improve the probability of success, describing the "reality-show-like nature of the coverage" that acts as a means for terrorists to promote their propaganda and

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<sup>16</sup> Alan M. Dershowitz, *Why Terrorism Works* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002)., 21, 49-50, 82.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>19</sup> Eric D. and Esteban F. Klor Gould, "Does Terrorism Work?," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* (2010)., 1507-1508.

grievances and where the targeted government may end up being criticized. The nature of “barricade hostage attacks” allows terrorists to pressure governments without necessarily killing people, but rather by making their lives the responsibility of the targeted government and thereby gaining international sympathy.<sup>20</sup>

John Griffiths takes a more neutral approach, yet he still finds that hostage-taking generally does not effect political coercion. Concessions are mainly actions such as the release of some imprisoned members, modest ransoms, or the publication of some documents. However, what it does achieve is “much greater awareness of the causes on behalf of which it was undertaken.”<sup>21</sup> In terms of short-term and long-term objectives, then, Griffiths argues that some short-term objectives are achievable through hostage-taking, while long-term objectives have largely not been achieved.

Max Abrahms is one of the strongest critics of terrorism as a strategy for success. In particular, he addresses a study from Robert Pape arguing for the success of suicide terrorism<sup>22</sup>, highlighting the methodological flaws of considering a limited number of terrorist events.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, many scholars who argue that terrorism is effective point to the case of Israel-Palestine. Palestinian terrorists may have had greater success in achieving concessions; however, empirical evidence does not undeniably prove such success for other groups. Abrahms himself finds that although approximately 30% of terrorist campaigns at least partially coerced the target governments, the majority of these successes were attributed to guerilla groups, which generally

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<sup>20</sup> Adam Dolnik, and Keith M. Fitzgerald, *Negotiating Hostage Crises with the New Terrorists* (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2008), 9, 15.

<sup>21</sup> John C. Griffiths, *Hostage: The History, Facts & Reasoning Behind Hostage Taking* (London: André Deutsch Ltd, 2003), 202.

<sup>22</sup> Robert A. Pape, "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism," *The American Political Science Review* 97, no. 3 (2003).

<sup>23</sup> Abrahms, "Why Terrorism Does Not Work.", 46.



focus on military targets and not civilian targets and thus are not terrorists.<sup>24</sup> However, Abrahms focuses on the stated, explicit objectives of terrorist organizations to measure success, which do not always represent the entire range of objectives for terrorist organizations and also may not be the true objectives for every terrorist campaign.

Some scholars, including Abrahms, make the mistake of dismissing the achievement of shorter-term objectives with the view that longer-term objectives are what truly matter. Even if longer-term objectives are not fully or completely realized, the achievement of shorter-term objectives may represent intermediate steps towards an ultimate, long-term goal. Other scholars, like Dershowitz or Pape, take one or a few examples of “successful” terrorism – notably in the Palestinian case – and extrapolate that all terrorist acts are successful. “Success” for terrorists is a murky area that must consider the achievement of shorter-term as well as longer-term objectives. Indeed, the success of shorter-term objectives often may indicate steps towards longer-term objectives. For example, the upgrade in 2012 of Palestine from a non-member observer entity to non-member observer state, the same status as the Vatican, could be considered an achievement of a longer-term objective (i.e. statehood) with many intermediate steps behind it.<sup>25</sup>

### *Terrorism and the Media*

The three previous topics – causes, objectives, and effectiveness – come together through discussing the role of the media in terrorism. It would appear that the media provides the publicity that pressures the target government and gains sympathy for the cause. Jenkins argues that developments in news broadcasting have been a “boon to publicity seeking terrorists,” stating that extensive and dramatic coverage “enhances and may even encourage terrorism as an

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<sup>24</sup> "The Political Effectiveness of Terrorism Revisited.", 369, 374-375.

<sup>25</sup> David Ariosto, and Michael Pearson, "U.N. Approves Palestinian 'Observer State' Bid," *CNN*, Nov. 29, 2012.

effective means of propaganda.”<sup>26</sup> In contrast, Christoph Pfeiffer creates a game-theoretic model that suggests there is a finite amount of media coverage for terrorist events. Although the media may encourage terrorism, it also stabilizes it because an increase in terrorist events will decrease the probability that an individual terrorist event will receive coverage, effectively lowering the “shock value.”<sup>27</sup> However, neither Jenkins nor Pfeiffer present adequate empirical evidence that incontrovertibly proves the media’s ability to generate concessions for terrorists.

Although few scholars have presented empirical evidence of the media role in terrorism, a debate arises as to whether such media coverage is positive or negative for countering terrorism. Many scholars address the issue indirectly by debating the merits and downfalls of terrorism in democratic societies, which may be more susceptible to terrorism partially due a free press that can report on the incidents and incite the public to demand a reaction from its government.<sup>28</sup> Abraham Miller argues that while some contend the media has a negative effect on countering terrorism and thus controlling the media is a preferable option, “Such thinking, often the outgrowth of direct experience with press abuse, is highly simplistic.” Rather, Miller argues that the “competition of ideas” in the media will provide the appropriate solution. Miller, then, points out that media coverage of terrorist events may not necessarily present the events in a sympathetic light.<sup>29</sup> James W. Hoge, former publisher of the *Chicago Sun-Times*, cites the scholar Richard Clutterbuck: “The overwhelming majority of the public detest [*sic*] political

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<sup>26</sup> Jenkins, "International Terrorism: A New Mode of Conflict.", 28.

<sup>27</sup> Christoph P. Pfeiffer, "Terrorism and Its Oxygen: A Game-Theoretic Perspective on Terrorism and the Media," *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression* 4, no. 3 (2012)., 215, 219, 223.

<sup>28</sup> Kydd, "The Strategies of Terrorism.", 61; Pape, "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism.", 349; Dershowitz, *Why Terrorism Works.*, 23, 97.

<sup>29</sup> Abraham H. Miller, "Terrorism, the Media, and Law Enforcement: An Introduction," in *Terrorism, the Media, and the Law*, ed. Abraham H. Miller (Dobbs Ferry: Transnational Publishers, Inc., 1982)., 24, 36.

violence and terrorism and wish to help the police defeat them. So, given the chance, the media will reflect that feeling.”<sup>30</sup>

Also, because there is an overwhelming amount of media coverage in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, especially of dramatic and tragic events, any amount of media coverage of a terrorist attack does not guarantee favorable or even notable interest by domestic or international audiences. For terrorists, who *depend* on reaching an audience, inadequate or ineffective media coverage can be ruinous. In sum, although many scholars attempt to understand why or how terrorists carry out their acts, few examine the equally pertinent question of whether terrorism is effective and whether the media improves the effectiveness of a terrorist attack.

## **Research Plan**

This research paper will discuss the media coverage of two Russian hostage crises, the Moscow Dubrovka theater siege, October 23-26, 2002, and the Beslan School No. 1 siege, September 1-3, 2004. These two case studies were chosen, first, to examine the general media coverage, and second, to compare and contrast the two hostage sieges and to determine what effect media coverage has on the outcomes of each event. These two hostage events were chosen in particular because of their similarities:

- Both involved 30 or more hostage takers and over 1,000 hostages;
- Both were barricade situations, where the hostage-takers rigged the site with explosives
- Both occurred in the past approximate decade and within two years of each other, indicating media coverage following each event should be similar in terms of journalistic practices and protocols;

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<sup>30</sup> James W. Hoge, "The Media and Terrorism," *ibid.*, 95.

- The tactical responses to each event by the Russian authorities resulted in the death of many hostages;
- The responsibility for both events was linked to Shamil Basayev, though he was not present as a hostage-taker in either case;
- Both events occurred outside of Chechnya;
- Vladimir Putin was president of Russia at the time of both attacks.

The two events have differences, including:

- The choice of victims, with the Moscow theater siege involving as hostages people of many ages and nationalities, while the Beslan hostage siege involved as hostages children, parents, teachers, and friends;
- The Moscow siege included more international hostages, while the Beslan siege included hostages from North Ossetia, an area that is predominately Christian, that was more loyal to Tsarist and Soviet regimes, and that has been more loyal to the post-Soviet regimes;
- The Moscow theater siege occurred in an urban area, and the Beslan hostage siege occurred in a rural area.

The key questions to be examined are:

- Did media coverage of Chechnya and Chechen terrorism increase after a hostage crisis as compared to before the crisis? Do increases depend on the location of the hostage event?
- Did the media report more favorably or more unfavorably on the terrorists' ultimate long-term goal or goals in the cases of these two hostage events?
- Is media coverage during the hostage terrorist event correlated with statements of leaders in the international community in terms of sympathy towards a terrorist group's cause?

Scholars assume that media coverage increases in the case of a terrorist event, and many assume that this coverage is favorable, or sympathetic to the ultimate long-term goal of the terrorist group, during terrorist events. However, if the terrorists' message is not properly conveyed by the media or by the specific terrorist event, publics and governments may not understand what policy concessions are necessary to prevent violence, or they may not sympathize with the terrorists and their cause. On the other hand, because many terrorist groups seek to induce an overreaction by the target government, media coverage may end up sympathizing with terrorist groups by criticizing government responses. In particular, media discourse may reflect to what extent the media sympathizes with terrorists, such as whether media sources refer to the non-state actors as "terrorists" or as a number of other words like "freedom fighters," "militants," "guerillas," "insurgents," or "secessionists." The use of alternate words to "terrorist" could suggest greater sympathy with the attackers' cause. In the case of Chechnya, the Russian government has attempted to capitalize on the influence of Islamist militants in the region by presenting Chechen separatists as Islamist international terrorists, which could be reflected by whether the media refers to Chechen militants as "Islamist," "Muslim," et al. Referring to Islamist extremism inaccurately represents the root cause of Chechen terrorism, which is not based on religion but ethno-nationalism (even if parts of the Chechen extremist movement have since become religiously-motivated).

To examine media coverage of these two terrorist events, I used the database *LexisNexis Academic* to examine primarily international media coverage of the two hostage crises. The database was used to quantitatively measure the amount of media coverage of the terrorist events and Chechen separatism in general. However, because quantitative measurements do not present a complete representation of the discourse, I also examined media coverage from three select

media sources, *The New York Times*, *The Economist*, and *Le Monde*. Because of research limitations, a select number of media sources were examined from a qualitative perspective. I chose these three sources because they are among the most influential media sources in the U.S., U.K., and France. In addition, I chose three sources that are very clearly “Western” not out of bias, but because terrorists aim to influence the international community, and they often include the West among their audiences. These three sources are based in three countries holding permanent seats on the U.N. Security Council, and the publics and governments of these three countries have a great amount of influence in the international community. This influence creates the potential for foreign government to persuade the domestic Russian government to enact favorable concessions for Chechnya.

The possible effects of this media coverage will be examined qualitatively through statements from four sources: the governments of the U.S., France, and the U.K., as well as U.N. Security Council resolutions. These four sources were chosen to correlate with the three news media sources chosen, and in the case of the Security Council, to account for a possible aggregate result of the three countries. Although the relationship is not direct, assumptions will be made that media coverage in democratic countries influences politicians and their policies, both directly and indirectly, by influencing the publics that elect such governments. The literature on media coverage of terrorist events suggests that media coverage influences policy in this manner, particularly through public pressure on politicians.<sup>31</sup>

I have limited my research to international coverage and statements for several reasons. First, research duration limits the extent of the research. In addition, the Russia media coverage as well as Russian politics are undoubtedly biased. Russia is not a fully democratic country, even

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<sup>31</sup> Jenkins, "International Terrorism: A New Mode of Conflict."; Miller, "Terrorism, the Media, and Law Enforcement: An Introduction; James W. Hoge, "The Media and Terrorism," *ibid*.

at the time of the two case studies. Therefore, effects of the media cannot be measured in the same way as international media. Also, it is widely accepted that the media in Russia is not fully free; hence, choosing Russian media sources would naturally introduce bias.

## **Hypotheses**

The assumption of terrorists is that greater media coverage benefits the cause for which terrorists carry out attacks. This assumption is analyzed and tested using the following hypotheses:

- If separatists carry out terrorist attacks, they will gain greater media coverage of their cause.
- If terrorist attacks generate more media coverage of their cause, this media coverage will be favorable towards the cause.
- If terrorist attacks occur in a heavily populated area, they will generate more media coverage of the attack and of the associated cause.
- If media coverage of a terrorist attack is sympathetic towards the attacking group's cause, statements from international leaders will be likewise sympathetic, and vice versa.

## **Background and Events of the Hostage Situations**

### *Chechnya*

The ethnically homogenous Chechnya is a Russian federal republic located in the North Caucasus, with a population of about 1.2 million.<sup>32</sup> The Chechens have been present in this mountainous republic for centuries, and they have a history of fighting for independence. Many Chechens draw inspiration from Shamil, a Chechen military commander who led the resistance

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<sup>32</sup> Chechnya, (Encyclopedia Britannica Online, 2013),  
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/108244/Chechnya>.

against the tsarist Russian forces in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>33</sup> During sovietization in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Chechnya was incorporated as an autonomous oblast (region) in 1920 and underwent the “Russification” that many other autonomous regions experienced. In the 1940s, Joseph Stalin deported many of the Chechens as well as other Caucasian groups, such as the Ingush, to Central Asia. Those exiled were able to return in the 1950s under Nikita Khrushchev. As Tony Wood states, “The deportation became the defining event in Chechen national consciousness.... It was a collective trauma that permeated the society.... the deportation provided proof, to the Chechen, that as a people they would not be safe within the borders of any state but their own.”<sup>34</sup>

Just before the collapse of the Soviet Union, Dzhokhar Dudaev was elected president of Chechnya, and he subsequently declared Chechnya independent in November 1991.<sup>35</sup> This de facto independence lasted until December 1994, when Russian troops invaded Chechnya to prevent secession. The first Chechen war, which resulted in anywhere from 35,000 to 100,000 civilian casualties, ended in 1996 with the Khasavyurt Accord, which recognized Chechnya as a “subject of international law,” but did not decide the ultimate fate of Chechen independence. In 1997, the relatively moderate Aslan Maskhadov was elected president of Chechnya in elections that the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) called “exemplary and free.”<sup>36</sup>

By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Islamic influences began appearing in Chechnya. Traditionally, Chechen are moderate Muslims, generally subscribing to the more mystical Sufi Islam. More extreme Islamic militants began appearing in Chechnya.<sup>37</sup> In 1999, then-Prime Minister Vladimir Putin sent Russian troops back to Chechnya after Basayev and the Saudi

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<sup>33</sup> Tony Wood, *Chechnya: The Case for Independence* (London: Verso, 2007), 23-25.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>35</sup> *Chechnya*.

<sup>36</sup> *Chechnya: The Case for Independence*, 75-82.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 89-92.



militant Khattab launched an attack in neighboring Dagestan. In contrast to the first war, which the Russian government called a “secessionist conflict,” the government called the second war an “anti-terrorist operation.”<sup>38</sup> There are various accounts of brutality during this campaign, with reports of the use of fire bombs, “filtration camps,” and massacres by Russian troops.<sup>39</sup>

### *Moscow Dubrovka Theater Siege*

On October 23, 2002, approximately 30-50 militants interrupted a performance of *Nord-Ost* at the Dubrovka Theater in Moscow, taking some 900 individuals hostage. The militants demanded the cessation of military activities in Chechnya and the withdrawal of all Russian troops, clearly one of the major objectives of Chechen separatists. However, in the short-term the militants also intended to gain attention. Reportedly, the hostage takers told the hostages to call their families and friends and tell them they had been taken hostage. They also had intentions of allowing foreigners to leave the theater, under the condition that diplomatic representatives had to come to the theater to meet the hostages from their respective countries (this offer failed because Russian forces would not allow the representatives to approach the theater). The hostage takers also prerecorded a video that was aired on Al-Jazeera, indicating their criticisms of the Russian government and their willingness to die.<sup>40</sup> No negotiations were successfully carried out during the hostage siege. The siege lasted around 58 hours, until Russian Spetsnaz commandos used fentanyl gas to incapacitate the hostage-takers while the Russian commandos entered the theater. Of the 129 hostages that died, 126 were killed due to the effects of the gas used; there are disputed reasons for why local emergency medical authorities were not prepared to treat the

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<sup>38</sup> Aglaya Smetkov, "The Image of the Terrorist Threat in the Official Russian Press: The Moscow Theatre Crisis (2002) and the Beslan Hostage Crisis (2004)," *Europe-Asia Studies* 59, no. 8 (2007), 1351.

<sup>39</sup> Wood, *Chechnya: The Case for Independence*, 99-102.

<sup>40</sup> Dolnik, *Negotiating Hostage Crises with the New Terrorists*, 61-71.

hostages with the correct antidote. The international community as well as the Russian population criticized the Russian government for the results of the siege.<sup>41</sup>

### *The Beslan School Siege*

On September 1, 2004, the first day of school at School No. 1 in Beslan, North Ossetia, Russia, approximately 30 militants took more than 1,000 hostages in the school gymnasium. Similar to the Moscow theater siege, the militants herded the hostages into one area and rigged the gymnasium with explosives. The militants were of an undetermined ethnic composition, but witness accounts suggest mostly Ingush and Chechen. For three days the hostages – North Ossetian children, teachers, parents, and relatives – were kept inside the school without food or water, proving detrimental particularly to the health of the children. Various attempts were made at negotiations, one by a pediatrician, others by the former Ingushetian president Ruslan Aushev and President Maskhadov. Of the few successes during the crisis, twenty-six nursing mothers and children were released after negotiations by Aushev.<sup>42</sup>

During the crisis, journalists began to make their way to Beslan, a relatively remote area of Russia approximately 950 miles south of Moscow and located in the North Caucasus near the border between North Ossetia and Chechnya. Despite the distant location, journalists began arriving; however, allegations repeatedly surfaced of attempts by the Russian government to prevent journalists from covering the event, including poisoning the well-known journalist Anna Politkovskaya, who had hoped to also serve as a negotiator (which she also did during the

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<sup>41</sup> Smetkov, "The Image of the Terrorist Threat in the Official Russian Press: The Moscow Theatre Crisis (2002) and the Beslan Hostage Crisis (2004).", 1352; Julian Schofield, "Kidnapping and Extortion," in *World Terrorism: An Encyclopedia of Political Violence from Ancient Times to the Post-9/11 Era*, ed. James Ciment (Armonk: Sharpe Reference, 2011), 691.; Dolnik, *Negotiating Hostage Crises with the New Terrorists.*, 71.

<sup>42</sup> Beslan School Attack, (Encyclopedia Britannica Online, 2013), <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1700061/Beslan-school-attack>.; *Negotiating Hostage Crises with the New Terrorists.*, 116-117.

Moscow theater siege).<sup>43</sup> The Russian government also initially drastically underreported the number of hostages at around 300 instead of over 1,000.<sup>44</sup>

The North Ossetian location was possibly chosen due to the relatively stable relationship between the Ossetians and the central Russian government; compared to other North Caucasian ethnic groups, the Ossetians are more loyal to the central government, and they are ethnically and culturally dissimilar; it has been suggested that this may have been among the motivations for the attack.<sup>45</sup>

On September 3, Aslan Maskhadov was reportedly on his way to Beslan to engage in negotiations. Around 1pm local time, an explosion occurred in the school, followed by a second explosion. Russian forces assembling outside the school then began an assault that included tanks, grenade launchers, and thermobaric weapons.<sup>46</sup> By the end of the rescue attempt, more than 330 had died, the majority of them children.<sup>47</sup> John Dunlop, an expert on Chechnya and on Russian politics at Stanford University, concluded that the two explosions may have been caused by Russian forces, though this claim is extremely contentious.<sup>48</sup> Like following the Moscow siege, the international community and Russian population criticized the Russian government response, with groups such as Voices of Beslan and Mothers of Beslan pressuring the government to investigate the attack and take responsibility for deaths due to the firefight.<sup>49</sup>

Currently, Chechnya is still part of Russian territory. In 2005, Aslan Maskhadov was assassinated, and in 2006, Shamil Basayev was killed, possibly by accident or possibly by

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<sup>43</sup> John B. Dunlop, "The September 2004 Beslan Terrorist Incident: New Findings," *Center on Democracy, Development, and the Rule of Law Working Papers* (2009)., 11-12

<sup>44</sup> Anna Politkovskaya, *A Russian Diary* (London: Vintage Books, 2008)., 154.

<sup>45</sup> Wood, *Chechnya: The Case for Independence.*, 16.

<sup>46</sup> Dunlop, "The September 2004 Beslan Terrorist Incident: New Findings.", 1, 8, 10.

<sup>47</sup> *Beslan School Attack.*

<sup>48</sup> "The September 2004 Beslan Terrorist Incident: New Findings."

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 10-11.

assassination.<sup>50</sup> With their deaths, the Chechen movement lost momentum. After Beslan, President Putin ended elections of regional governors in favor of appointments by the president. In 2007, the Putin-supported Ramzan Kadyrov, considered by many scholars, members of the international community, and Chechens themselves to be corrupt and malicious, became president of Chechnya. By 2009, President Dmitry Medvedev announced the end of counterterrorist and counterinsurgency operations in Chechnya.<sup>51</sup> Although Chechen terrorism has continued through the last decade, conflict has declined in the region.

## **Data and Analysis**

### *Quantitative Data and Analysis*

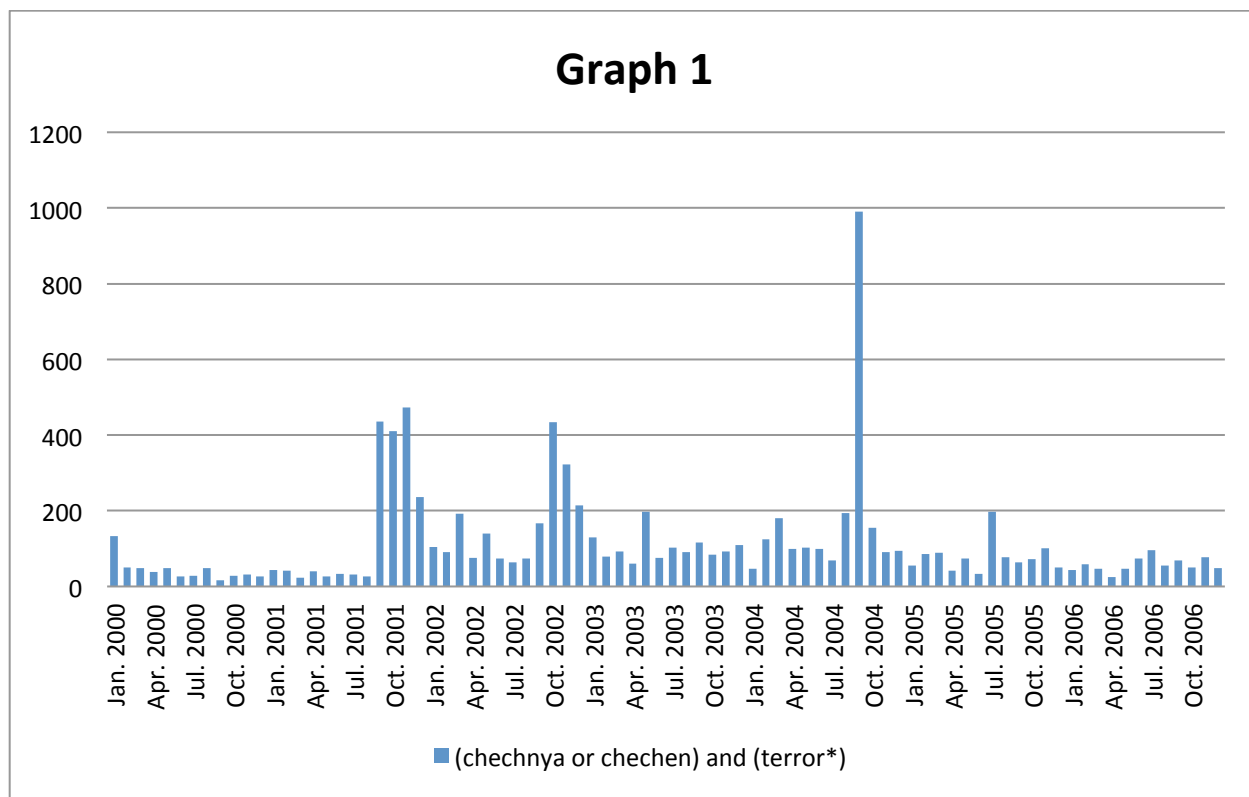
Using *LexisNexis Academic* and searching in “Major World Publications,”<sup>52</sup> several search strings were compared to determine the potential impact of the two Chechen hostage events on media coverage of the events and of idea associated with Chechen independence. Table 1 in the Appendix outlines search terms investigating associations between “Chechnya” and terror, secession, freedom fighter, independence, Islam, Al Qaeda, and negotiations from 1 January 2000 to 31 December 2006, based on three month intervals. Table 2 investigates more deeply the media coverage of “Chechnya” and terror as well as simply of “Chechnya” by breaking down the number of results for search strings by month. The numbers of results for these two particular search strings are displayed in Graphs 1 and 2 below. Graphs 3-10 in the appendix represent other search strings investigating associations with “Chechnya.”

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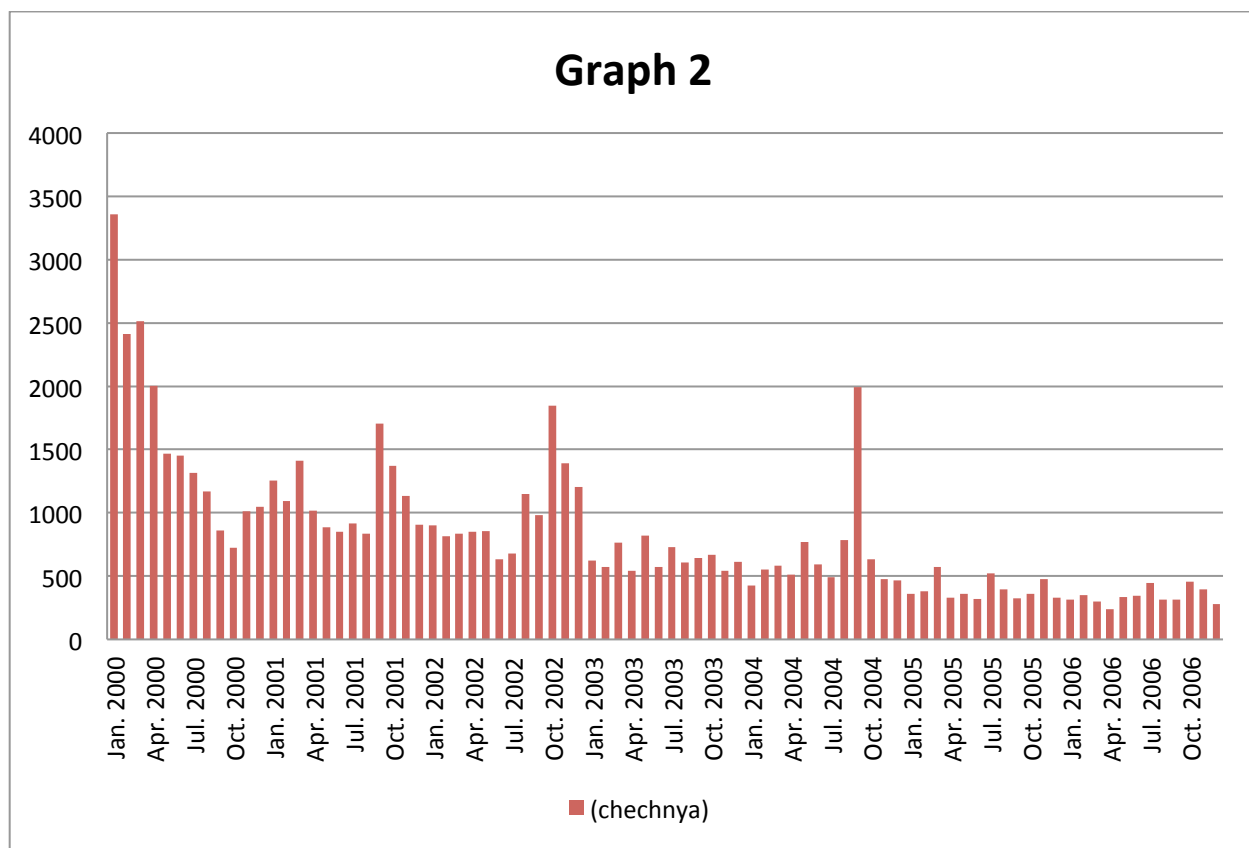
<sup>50</sup> Wood, *Chechnya: The Case for Independence.*, 156

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 156, 167; *Chechnya*.

<sup>52</sup> This source information from *LexisNexis Academic* for this grouping states that it “contains full-text news sources from around the world which are held in high esteem for their content reliability. This includes the world’s major newspaper, magazines and trade publications which are relied upon for the accuracy and integrity of their reporting.” A listing of all sources can be found through *LexisNexis Academic*.



Source: LexisNexis Academic

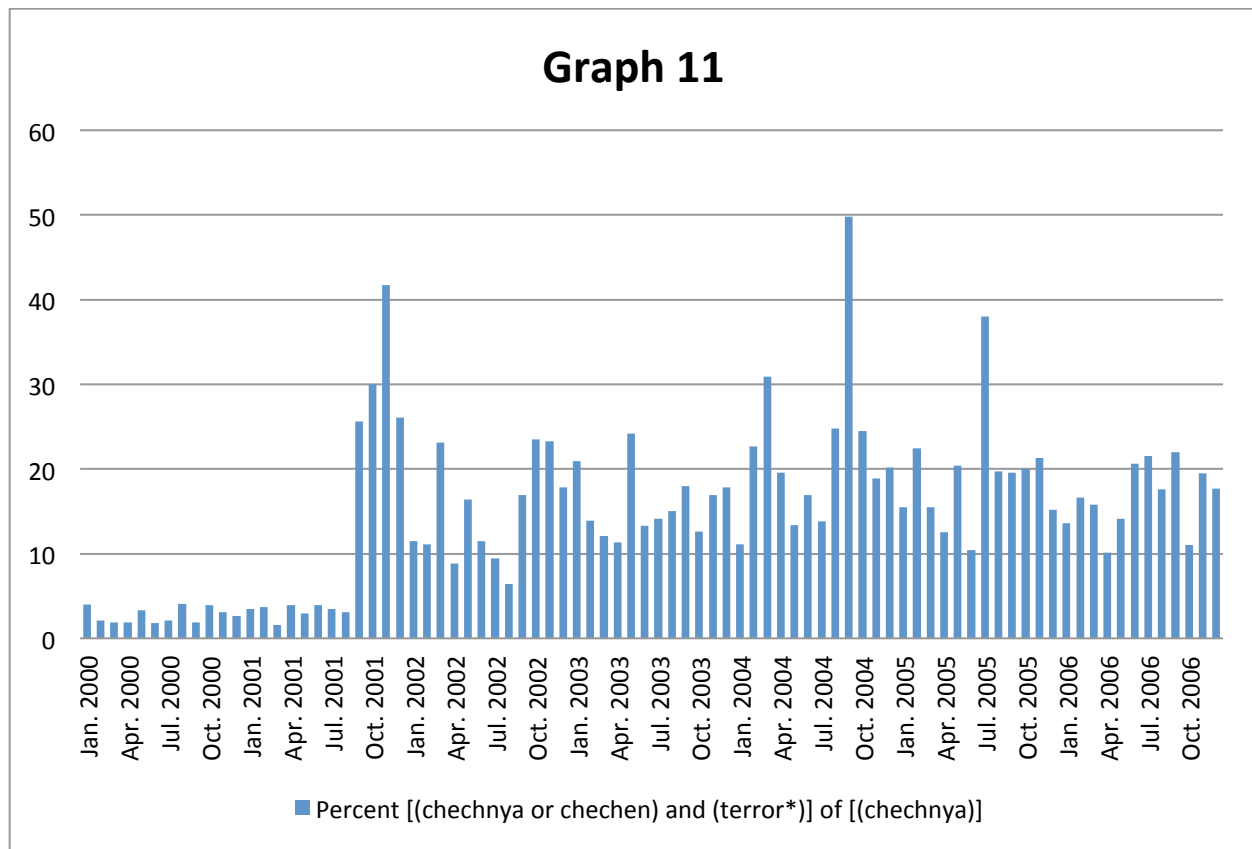


Source: LexisNexis Academic

Based on Graphs 1 and 2, in addition to considering Graphs 3 through 10, several trends emerge. In Graph 1, media coverage relating to Chechnya and terror spikes at three points: in September 2001, around the Moscow siege in October 2002, and around the Beslan siege in September 2004. The 2001 spike is likely due to the terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>. However, the spike associated with the Moscow siege appears to be smaller than or at least close to the increase associated with September 11<sup>th</sup>. The large increase during the Beslan siege also returns to the same level (in fact, to a lower level) only one month after the siege, with the average number of results during the six months before the crisis being 124.2 and the average in the six months after being 94.8. In terms of coverage simply of “Chechnya,” the five highest points according to Graph 2 are in January 2000, March 2001, September 2001, October 2002, and September 2004. The first two peaks may be related to hostilities in Chechnya, considering that the Second Chechen War began in 1999. The peak in September 2001 is likely a result of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, and the final two peaks are likely a result of the Moscow siege and Beslan siege, respectively. In most of the graphs 3-10, there are increases in the number of results around the dates of the Moscow and Beslan sieges. However, none of the graphs demonstrate a long-term sustained increase in media coverage, regardless of the words associated. Indeed, if one of the terrorists’ goals was to gain increased media coverage of Chechnya and Chechen causes, according to Graph 2, they were largely unsuccessful with the Moscow siege, with only approximately three months of a sustained increase in media coverage, and they were also unsuccessful with the Beslan siege. Although there is considerable increase in September 2004 (a 60.7% increase in results from the previous month), the levels drop in the month following September 2004 to 633, which is below August 2004’s 783 level. In sum, during the year before the Moscow siege (October 2001-September 2002), the average number

of results was 174.8, and during the year after the siege (November 2002-October 2003), the average number was 130.75. During the year before the Beslan siege (September 2003-August 2004), the average number of results was 109.8, and during the year after (October 2004-September 2005), the average number of results was 87.9. Although the media results for the Moscow siege may have been affected residually by the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks because it was only a year prior, it is unlikely media coverage of the Beslan siege was affected by the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks or any similar large terrorist attack. In fact, the number of results in the year following the Beslan siege was low even though the London subway bombings occurred in July 2005.

Graph 11 compares the first two search strings, *(Chechnya or Chechen)* and *(terror\*)* and *(Chechnya)*. The graph represents the percent *(Chechnya or Chechen)* and *(terror\*)* of *(Chechnya)*, or in other words, what percent of the media coverage related to “Chechnya” is terror-related. The graph shows that this percentage drastically increased at the time of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks. The graph shows several noticeable peaks, with the greatest peak being in September 2004 at the time of the Beslan school siege. However, at the time of the Moscow theater siege in October 2002, there was only a small peak; the peaks at May 2003 and March 2004 were greater (and not associated with any such significant terrorist attacks). This suggests that even significant terrorist attacks are not always the most significant drivers of media coverage of “terrorism.”

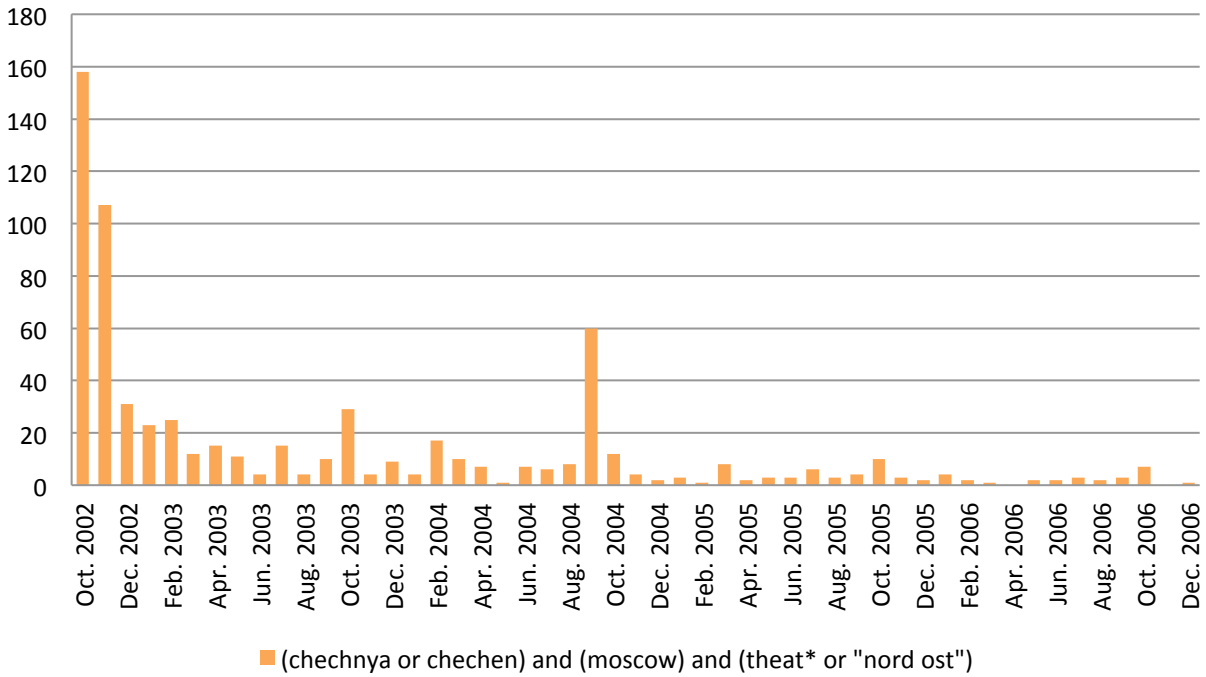


Source: LexisNexis Academic

Media coverage of the two hostage events more specifically was investigated using specific search strings, represented by Tables 3 and 4 in the Appendix. The search string for Moscow, *(chechnya or chechen) and (moscow) and (theat\* or “nord ost”)*, was designed to focus on any coverage of the Moscow theater siege but not any other related events, and it was run from 1 October 2002 to 31 December 2006. The avoidance of the use of “hostage” or “terrorist” or any other similar word was an attempt to be as general as possible. The search string for the Beslan siege, *(chechnya or chechen) and (beslan) and (hostage)*, included the word hostage, which could introduce bias, but in the case of both events, “hostage” can be considered a largely neutral word since both events are frequently recognized as being hostage sieges regardless. Graphs 12 and 13 display the number of results from these search strings.

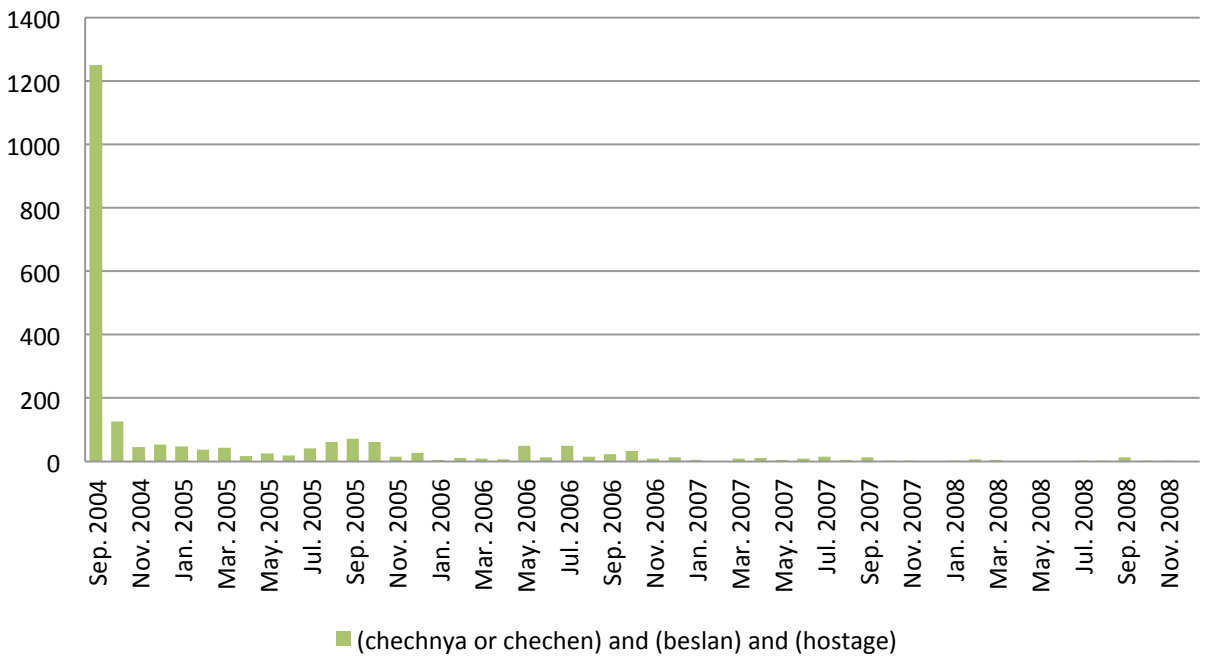


### Graph 12



Source: LexisNexis Academic

### Graph 13



Source: LexisNexis Academic

In Graphs 12 and 13, the lack of sustained coverage of the hostage events themselves is clear. In Graph 12 representing the Moscow siege, the three clearest spikes can be seen at the time of the event, in October 2003 (one year after the event), and in September 2004 (at the time of the Beslan siege). In Graph 13, representing the Beslan siege, no spikes are seen following the initial large amount of media coverage, and in the years 2007 and 2008, several months yielded no results.

The spikes in Graphs 1, 2, 12, and 13 mirror those of graphs 3-9, which are combined in Graph 10. Graph 10 displays four clear peaks from 1 January 2000 to 31 December 2006: at the beginning of the graph (January-March 2000), around September 2001, around October 2002, and around September 2004. Although these peaks cannot definitively be linked to the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks and the two hostage crises (because the data only measures the number of results for each search string), it is unlikely there would be any other factors that would cause such significant increases.

The graphs of results for the search strings suggest many explanations. It appears that terrorist events (or events considered “terrorist”) unrelated to the terrorist incident in question can generate more media coverage for a terrorist cause. The September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks clearly increased the amount of media coverage on Chechnya and Chechen issues – both in the case of associations more aligned with the Chechen cause, such as “separatism” or “independence,” as well as associations not in fact linked to the original Chechen cause, such as “al Qaeda” and “terrorism.” This can also be seen in Graph 13, where the Beslan hostage crisis generated more media coverage of the Moscow hostage crisis (likely because of references to the Moscow siege as a previous similar incident during media coverage of the Beslan siege).

In addition, terrorist attacks increase media coverage in the immediate term, but they have no sustained effects on the number of results. Also, although there are exceptions, the two terrorist attacks in question did not affect media coverage on anniversaries of the terrorist attacks. However, as explained, media coverage of any given terrorist attack is affected by *other* terrorist attacks. The September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks increased media coverage of Chechen terrorism, and the Beslan attack increased media coverage of the Moscow attack. After the Beslan attack, there was also a small increase around the time of the July 2005 terrorist subway bombings in London, although there was no noticeable increase associated with media coverage of the Moscow attacks, suggesting that terrorist attacks that occur closer in time to each other have greater effects on the amount of media coverage.

#### *Qualitative Data and Analysis*

To investigate the qualitative aspects of media coverage, articles were chosen from *The New York Times*, *The Economist*, and *Le Monde*. Search strings used for *The New York Times* and *The Economist* were translated directly to a French search string used for *Le Monde*. General criteria were created to choose articles, though the criteria could not always be followed if not enough articles met the qualifications. Generally, articles were chosen that were at least 800 words with a preference for word counts around 1500. Articles were chosen at the beginning of each hostage crisis, at the end of each hostage crisis, approximately one month after each crisis, and one year after each crisis. Articles around the time of major events were also considered, such as around the trial of the surviving Beslan hostage taker or the death of Shamil Basayev in 2006, though these articles were not the focus of evaluating media coverage. There was an emphasis on evaluating articles close to the time of each hostage crisis, because as time following the event increased, there is naturally less focus on the event specifically, and in the

case of the Moscow hostage siege, there was a possibility for cross-contamination with the Beslan hostage siege. For each event, approximately 6-8 articles were considered for each news source. Examining the sources centered mainly on considering whether articles were favorable, unfavorable, or neutral towards both the Chechen cause and the Russian government.

### *The New York Times*

*The New York Times'* coverage of the Moscow hostage siege was largely neutral towards both the Chechen cause and the Russian government.<sup>53</sup> At the beginning of the crisis, the newspaper covered the major facts of the event, including the Chechen demands, which were cited twice. The first article on 24 October 2002 also referenced both wars in Chechnya, and it also cited a hostage crisis at a hospital in Budennovsk, Russia in 1995.<sup>54</sup> By the end of the crisis, *The New York Times* was tentatively reporting on the fact that gas used in the raid was the cause of death for many of the deaths and that official government estimates were likely incorrect or underestimated. It also raised the possibility that Russia had broken international laws against the use of chemical weapons.<sup>55</sup> By a week or so after the siege, more information regarding the siege had been verified. The reporting at this time was more critical of the government response, yet it also quoted an emotional President Vladimir Putin's response: "And then, with uncharacteristic emotion, he acknowledged the cost of his own government's decision in a way that few Russian or Soviet leaders ever had. 'We could not save everyone,' he said. 'Forgive us.'" The newspaper was critical of the government, though it also acknowledged the government's apologies and justifications. It also acknowledged the large amount of confusion during the raid, and it quoted

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<sup>53</sup> The search string used to generate articles regarding the Moscow siege was [(Chechnya or Chechen) and (moscow) and (theat\* or "nord ost")], following 01 October 2002.

<sup>54</sup> Michael Wines, "Chechens Seize Moscow Theater, Taking as Many as 600 Hostages," *The New York Times*, 24 October 2002.

<sup>55</sup> "Hostage Drama in Moscow: The Aftermath: Hostage Toll in Russia over 100; Nearly All Deaths Linked to Gas," *The New York Times*, 28 October 2002.

one doctor as saying, “‘It wasn’t an evil plot.... It was just a Soviet mess.’”<sup>56</sup> However, in these first three articles, the newspaper also rarely referred to the hostage takers as “terrorists,” calling them instead “guerillas” or “hostage-takers.” Besides the articles published soon after the event, there was little coverage of the Moscow theater siege more specifically (though there continued to be references to it, particularly during coverage of the Beslan event).

*The New York Times*’ coverage of the Beslan event was similar to that of the Moscow siege, though more expansive, with 105 results as opposed to 25 for the Moscow siege.<sup>57</sup> The articles of the first few days of the attack again refrained from calling the hostage takers “terrorists,” choosing “guerillas” or “insurgents.”<sup>58</sup> They also referenced the Budennovsk hostage event, the Moscow hostage event, and other previous attacks referred to as “terrorist violence,” and they also referred to criticism of the Russian government. Such criticisms included those regarding the Russian campaign in Chechnya and accusations of “unwarranted killings and other abuses.” The article at this time also covered criticism following the raid in Beslan, which resulted in the high death toll. They also cited President Putin’s unwillingness to negotiate with Chechens, reporting him as saying at the beginning of the event that the government would “‘throw them in prisons and destroy them.’”<sup>59</sup> However, despite this less favorable coverage of the Russian government, the demands of the terrorists were not immediately cited. The articles during the first few days of the hostage siege referenced Chechnya and various conflicts there but did not explicitly name the demands of the hostage takers. Covering the ending of the hostage crisis, the newspaper also referred to the confusion

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<sup>56</sup> Steven Lee Myers, "The Aftermath in Moscow: The Chronology: From Anxiety, Fear and Hope, the Deadly Rescue in Moscow," *ibid.*, 1 November 2002.

<sup>57</sup> The search string used to generate articles regarding the Beslan school siege was [(Chechnya) and (beslan) and (hostage)], following 01 September 2004.

<sup>58</sup> C.J. Chivers, "Insurgents Seize School in Russia and Hold Scores," *The New York Times*, 2 September 2004.; "250 Die as Siege at a Russian School Ends in Chaos," *The New York Times*, 4 September 2004.

<sup>59</sup> "Insurgents Seize School in Russia and Hold Scores."

over events, in particular the conflicting accounts of what initiated the raid of the school. A month following the hostage event, the focus remained largely on the response of the Russian government – including both reports supporting the response and reports criticizing it – and on the graphic nature of the event.<sup>60</sup> Much of the reporting approximately one month after included North Ossetian anger against the central Russian government, but *The New York Times* also reported, for example, that a Russian law enforcement official stated the hostage takers were addicted to heroin and morphine.<sup>61</sup> Referencing terrorist drug addiction displaces attention towards the Chechen cause, and it also may delegitimize the terrorists and their cause if they are simply perceived as drug addicts, rather than perceived as separatists fighting for a worthy cause. Additionally, one month after the hostage event, the newspaper made more references to the hostage takers as “terrorists.” Approximately one year following the event, articles repeatedly referred to the hostage takers as “terrorists,” though it continued to cite the significant discontent with the Russian government by the North Ossetians.<sup>62</sup>

In sum, *The New York Times* was mostly dispassionate or was not consistently biased towards the Russian government or the terrorists and the Chechen cause. It did refrain initially from calling the hostage takers “terrorists,” although as time passed, it referred to them as terrorists more often. An inquiry to *The New York Times* as to its policy on the use of “terrorist” as opposed to “guerilla,” “insurgent,” or other similar words yielded no response specific to these case studies. Rather, I was directed to the most recent article on this topic from the current public editor of *The New York Times*, Margaret Sullivan, which examined the use of similar terms in regards to the hostage crisis in Algeria in January 2013, quoting the associate managing editor

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<sup>60</sup> "Mourning and Anger at School Caught up in Terrorism," *The New York Times*, 13 October 2004.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.; "Russian Official Says Beslan Rebels Were Addicts," *The New York Times*, 18 October 2004.

<sup>62</sup> "For Russians, Wounds Linger in School Siege," *The New York Times*, 26 August 2005.; "Report on Russia Massacre Faults Officials," *The New York Times*, 29 December 2005.

for standards: “For the most part, we use the dictionary like everyone else, and try to use language that is clear and accurate.”<sup>63</sup> However, in 2005, *The New York Times*’ first public editor, Daniel Okrent, agreed with the former Jerusalem bureau chief that to ““not to use the term began to seem like a political act in itself.”” Okrent also defines terrorism as “an act of political violence committed against purely civilian targets.”<sup>64</sup> Given the analysis of *The New York Times*’ coverage of the Moscow and Beslan hostage crises, Sullivan’s and Okrent’s principles may not always reflect actual practices. Rather, it is possible the newspaper refrained from calling the hostage takers “terrorists” until it was generally accepted by the international community that the events in question were “terrorist” events. Finally, the greater coverage of the Beslan attack compared to the Moscow attack appears to disprove the hypothesis that terrorist events occurring in more populous areas will have greater media coverage. Rather, the “shock value” of attacking a school and victimizing children may have generated more attention for the terrorists. In addition, the fact that most of the victims in the Moscow siege died due to poisoning from the gas used contrasts with the graphic nature of the Beslan siege, where many of the victims were killed in the firefight and where many of the children suffered due to lack of food and water.

### *The Economist*

*The Economist*’s coverage of the Moscow siege was also less extensive than its coverage of the Beslan siege, with 61 results for the former and 121 results for the latter.<sup>65</sup> At the beginning of the Moscow siege, *The Economist* immediately began referring to the hostage takers as “terrorists,” though they use the word “rebel” interchangeably.<sup>66</sup> The magazine also

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<sup>63</sup> Margaret Sullivan, "What's an 'Islamist'? An 'Extremist'? Trying Not to Blur Language Lines," *ibid.*, 22 January 2013.

<sup>64</sup> Daniel Okrent, "The War of the Words: A Dispatch from the Front Lines," *ibid.*, 6 March 2005.

<sup>65</sup> The search string for generating results on the Moscow siege was [(Chechnya or Chechen) and (Moscow) and (theat\* or “nord ost”)], after 1 October 2002.

<sup>66</sup> "The Chechens Strike," *The Economist*, 24 October 2002.

referenced the tendency for Russian troops to use excessive amounts of force, though in general at the beginning of the siege it referred more to the Russian government and hardly at all to issues surrounding the Chechen cause or Chechen demands. Even if the coverage of the Russian government is neutral or unfavorable, coverage of the Russian government displaces coverage of the terrorists and therefore the Chechen cause. By the end of the siege, the magazine mainly focused on the anger of Muscovites at Russian authorities, stating, “What good were pledges [to not negotiate with terrorists] if Russians continued to die in the absence of a long-term solution to the problems posed by Chechnya, asked many Russians.”<sup>67</sup> A month following the Moscow siege, the focus was still on the Russian government and its policies, with little to no mention of Chechen interests or demands. The magazine reported on President Putin’s manipulation of the event to reportedly discredit Aslan Maskhadov, yet it also reported on the upcoming referendum on a Chechen constitution as well as the presidential elections. The magazine only briefly acknowledged that the constitution was intended to negate Chechen independence and that elections in Chechnya are often unfair. In fact, *The Economist* was mostly concerned with the effect the event would have for the Russian central government, stating that if conflict in Chechnya abates, “that would allow Mr Putin, shortly before his own re-election bid, to rescue some shreds of success from a policy towards Chechnya that so far has failed.”<sup>68</sup> This demonstrated more concern and interest for what President Putin will do than the Chechen cause, and this reporting was without any significant criticism of the government.

*The Economist*’s coverage of Beslan generally appears to be more sympathetic towards the Chechen cause.<sup>69</sup> At the beginning of the Beslan siege, the magazine accused President Putin

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<sup>67</sup> "Triumph or Failure?," *The Economist*, 28 October 2002.

<sup>68</sup> "The Conflict in Chechnya: A Change of Peace?," *The Economist*, 21 November 2002.

<sup>69</sup> The search string for generating results on the Beslan siege was [(Chechnya) and (beslan) and (hostage)], following 1 September 2004.



of connecting Chechen terrorism with international terrorism, which *The Economist* called “a flimsy claim at best.” In fact, the magazine directly linked the event and recent attacks before the Beslan siege with Russian policies towards Chechnya, stating “the overriding cause of the latest attacks is that Russia has failed to find, and indeed has avoided looking for, a political solution in Chechnya.”<sup>70</sup> This coverage was very different than that of the Moscow siege, where *The Economist* speculated about what the government would do, as opposed to critiquing possible government policies. The first articles on the event also infrequently referred to the hostage-takers as “terrorists,” calling them also “captors” or “hostage-takers.” They also referred to the demands of the hostage-takers and referred to the conflict in Chechnya as a “separatist” conflict, which distinguishes Chechnya and its ethno-nationalist form of terrorism from religious fundamentalist terrorism and international terrorism.<sup>71</sup> While the reporting was very unfavorable for the Russian government – referring to their “incorrigible wickedness” – the reporting also referenced “black widows” and the possibility of Chechen vengeance for Russian acts, which could have diminished the significance of the root cause of Chechen independence. This is because “angry widows” simply acting out of vengeance does not suggest that terrorist acts should be perceived as legitimate or justified. At the end of the hostage event, *The Economist* reported on the carnage of the event, as well as previous “terrorist attacks” such as at Budennovsk and in Moscow, but did not refer to the hostage takers often as “terrorists,” calling them “rebels” and “attackers.” The magazine also criticized Russian policies towards Chechnya, and Western tolerance of these Russian policies. It even mentioned the deportation of Chechens by Stalin at the end of World War II, which is significant because the event is seen as a common trauma for Chechens, and because it is a source of the Chechen desire for independence and

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<sup>70</sup> “Putin Points the Finger in the Wrong Direction,” *The Economist*, 2 September 2004.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.; “Terror in Russia: No End to It,” *The Economist*, 2 September 2004.

Chechen terrorism. However, the magazine again mentioned black widows, and it did not make the demands of the terrorists explicit.<sup>72</sup> A few months after the hostage event, *The Economist* continued to criticize the central Russian government, but it also stated, “There is every reason to expect more terrorist incidents in the future.” However, it suggested autonomy could have been an option for Chechnya. It also cited the presence of human rights issues while dismissing the religious foundations for this terrorism, stating, “No wonder so many flock to the armed resistance. For all the talk of al-Qaeda in Chechnya, it is the cycle of impunity, brutality and poverty, not Islamist ideology, that fills rebel ranks.”<sup>73</sup>

Although much more distant from the two hostage events, it is also useful to consider reporting much later in the decade. In 2009, *The Economist* was still critical of the Russian government, but recognized how the Chechen cause may have changed, stating “Russia’s brutal repression and lawlessness have pushed people towards Islamic fundamentalism. The rebels are now driven not by ideas of independence but by revenge or the vision of an Islamist state.”<sup>74</sup> Still, in 2011, the magazine was critical of the Russian government, stating, “Since the early 1990s Moscow’s only policies have been brute force and money, first in Chechnya and then across the north Caucasus.”<sup>75</sup>

*The Economist’s* coverage of the two hostage sieges cannot be categorized as either favorable or unfavorable for either group, largely because it shifted so greatly between 2002 and 2004. The coverage in 2002 was more often favorable to the Russian government while generally ignoring the terrorists’ cause. In 2004, the trend drastically shifted, with reporting containing heavy criticism of the Russian government while mentioning the Chechen wars,

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<sup>72</sup> “Another Siege Ends in Bloodshed,” *The Economist*, 4 September 2004.

<sup>73</sup> “Chechnya: Still Calling for Help,” *The Economist*, 13 January 2005.

<sup>74</sup> “Russia’s North Caucasus: A Mountain of Troubles,” *The Economist*, 16 July 2009.

<sup>75</sup> “Russia’s Unruly North Caucasus: Islam Inflamed,” *The Economist*, 7 April 2011.

Stalin's deportation, and human rights abuses against Chechens. The reporting in 2004 also supported steps towards greater Chechen autonomy or even independence, a position not seen in reporting by *The New York Times*.

*Le Monde*<sup>76</sup>

*Le Monde's* coverage of the two events, interestingly, appeared to be the opposite of *The New York Times* and *The Economist*: search results retrieved 224 results for the Moscow siege but only 134 for the Beslan siege, even though the French search strings mirrored their English versions. Among the first articles covering the Moscow siege,<sup>77</sup> the demands of the hostage takers were mentioned immediately (the removal of Russian troops and independence), the war in Chechnya was mentioned (though not specified as to which war), and references were made to the Kavkaz Center, a prominent separatist website that was not mentioned in any of the articles examined from *The New York Times* or *The Economist*. The hostage takers were not referred to as terrorists but as "a commando group," "combatants," and "assailants." However, the newspaper also reported on the sensitivity of the attack for Putin, mirroring *The Economist's* coverage of the Moscow siege.<sup>78</sup> By the end of the siege, the hostage takers were still referenced as a "commando group," and the article discussed the demands of the hostage takers. Although the newspaper presented Aslan Maskhadov as a moderate secessionist leader, it also expressed sympathy for President Putin and reported that authorities attempted to rescue the hostages safely. The use of a gas during the raid was not mentioned until the end of the article following

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<sup>76</sup> Discussion in this section is based on analysis of French documents by a native English speaker who speaks French fluently but non-natively.

<sup>77</sup> The search string used to retrieve Moscow results was [(tchéchénie or tchéchéne) and (moscou) and ("théâtre" or "nord ost")].

<sup>78</sup> Natalie Nougayrède, "Un Commando Tchétchène Prend Des Centaines D'otages À Moscou," *Le Monde*, 25 October 2002.

the end of the siege.<sup>79</sup> However, a subsequent article issued at the end of the siege mentioned the fatal use of gas almost immediately, reporting the high number of deaths due to the gas and, like *The New York Times*, the possibility that Russia had violated the Chemical Weapons Convention. The article questioned the use of the gas, and also quoted doctors and witnesses questioning the use, finally stating at the end, “Bien d’autres questions se posent” (“Many other questions arise”).<sup>80</sup>

Approximately one month after the siege, *Le Monde* continued to be critical of the government, questioning the use of gas and discussing the political situation in Chechnya, while also suggesting that the distance between Moscow and Chechnya allows many Russians to ignore the situation. The newspaper also interviewed hostages and witnesses, some of whom stated they did not believe the terrorists intended to hurt them and that the hostage takers even brought them food from the theater buffet, a particularly humanizing aspect. Indeed, *Le Monde* even suggested the idea that “le seul projet de ces adeptes du Jihad était de rappeler au monde le génocide en cours contre leur peuple puis de relâcher les otages et de mourir en héros” (“the only intent for these Jihadists was to remind the world of the ongoing genocide against their people, then to release the hostages and die as heroes”), showcasing how media coverage can be simultaneously favorable and unfavorable. This was also one of the few articles to discuss what concessions may have been offered and whether negotiations ever took place. One of the most humanizing articles in regards to the terrorists as well as one of the most critical of the Russian government, the article concluded by suggesting that President Putin may have needed to demonize the Chechens to make the war politically popular again.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> “Les Forces Speciales Mettent Fin À La Prise D’otages De Moscou,” *Le Monde*, 28 October 2002.

<sup>80</sup> “Questions Sur Le Dénouement De La Crise Des Otages De Moscou,” *Le Monde*, 29 October 2002.

<sup>81</sup> Natalie Nougayrède, and Sophie Shihab, “Questions Sur Une Prise D’otages,” *ibid.*, 16 November 2002.

A year following the siege, *Le Monde* still criticized the Russian government for “war crimes” in Chechnya and then accused the West of silence on the matter. Criticizing President Putin’s terrorism policies, the newspaper stated, “Vladimir Poutine a su monnayer son soutien à la « guerre contre le terrorisme » lancée par Washington après le 11 septembre 2001” (“Vladimir Putin realized he could profit from the “war against terrorism” launched by Washington after 11 September 2001”). Stating that the Russian government simply purports Chechen terrorism to be a problem with al Qaeda, the newspaper criticized the government for equating Chechen terrorism with international terrorism – with the use of the verb “monnayer” in particular suggesting a very negative act of “monetization” – and foreign governments for allowing the Russian government to do so.<sup>82</sup> Throughout the coverage of the Moscow siege, *Le Monde* rarely called the hostage takers terrorists, instead sympathizing with Chechens and even with the terrorists at times while criticizing the government sharply for policies in Chechnya and for the handling of the hostage siege.

*Le Monde*’s coverage of the Beslan siege was less extensive, and, in contrast to *The New York Times* and *The Economist*, less favorable for Chechens and the terrorists.<sup>83</sup> In the first article on the Beslan siege, although the newspaper mentions the demands of the hostage takers by the third paragraph, it appears to misidentify the demands as the release of combatants detained in Ingushetia (a demand which is not reported in any of *The New York Times* or *The Economist* articles examined and which is not supported by the literature). This demand was misreported in at least two articles and not corrected by *Le Monde* until approximately one

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<sup>82</sup> Natalie Nougayrède, "Vladimir Poutine a Obtenue Le Silence De L'occident Sur Les Crimes De Guerre Commis En Tchétchénie," *ibid.*, 03 October 2003.

<sup>83</sup> The search string used to retrieve Beslan results was [(tchétchénie or tchétchène) and (beslan) and (otage)].

month after the crisis.<sup>84</sup> The first article on the siege, in fact, referenced Chechnya only once (as a geographic locator for North Ossetia).<sup>85</sup> Although the first article refrained from calling the hostage takers “terrorists”, towards the end of the crisis, *Le Monde*’s reporting called the hostage takers “commandos” and “terrorists” interchangeably. It also referenced “shahidki belts,” a very specific term for female Chechen Islamist suicide bombers, seeming to point particularly to the Islamist nature of Chechen terrorism. It also called the attack “an extension of the war throughout the North Caucasus,” presumably referring to the Chechen war, without in fact discussing Chechen separatism or the conflict in detail. The newspapers rarely referenced Chechnya or Chechen demands (instead citing the inaccurate demand) but rather focused on Ingush-Ossete relations.<sup>86</sup> In fact, there were more references to Ingushetia than to Chechnya, presumably because half the terrorists were reportedly Ingush and half Chechen. By the end of the crisis, *Le Monde* repeatedly referred to them as “terrorists” or a “terrorist commando unit.” The reporting became very sympathetic to the North Ossetians, who were the victims of the attack, using graphic and emotional descriptions of the carnage. The newspaper cited censorship instructions given to state media by the central government, as well as attempts by the government to lie about the number of victims, details not favorable for the government. It also criticized the government assault, stating that how it was carried out “semblait nettement privilégier la liquidation rapide des terroristes, plutôt qu’un effort de sauvetage des otages” (“obviously seemed to favor the rapid elimination of the terrorists, more so than an effort to save the hostages”). However, the newspaper also cited an official who called the hostage takers “savages,” as well as another official who stated there were “Arabs” among the terrorists; it also

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<sup>84</sup> “200 Enfants Pris En Otage En Ossétie Du Nord,” *Le Monde*, 02 September 2004; Natalie Nougayrède, “Le Kremlin Redoute Une Explosion Des Tensions Dans Le Caucase,” *ibid.*, 18 October 2004; “Vladimir Poutine Affronte Une Nouvelle Crise Dans Le Caucase,” *Le Monde*, 03 September 2004.

<sup>85</sup> “200 Enfants Pris En Otage En Ossétie Du Nord,” *ibid.*, 02 September 2004.

<sup>86</sup> “Vladimir Poutine Affronte Une Nouvelle Crise Dans Le Caucase,” *ibid.*, 03 September 2004.

reported the use of hostages as human shields by the terrorists, a detail rarely if ever mentioned in *The New York Times* or *The Economist* and a detail that could be damaging for the Chechen cause because it is so appalling.<sup>87</sup>

A month following the siege, *Le Monde* continued to blame government forces for the deaths. However, the reporting also referred to the hostage takers as “Ingush and Chechen Muslims,” and repeatedly mentioned religion, especially the presumed religion of the hostage takers. It also called the hostage takers “terrorists” almost exclusively. At this point, nonetheless, the reporting did accurately report the demands of the hostage takers as stated by Shamil Basayev (independence of Chechnya and the retreat of Russian troops, which are the demands most often cited by scholars and experts). At the same time, *Le Monde* also reported that Aslan Maskhadov was supposed to engage in negotiations but did not, whereas *The New York Times* and *The Economist* implied that the Russian government may have been the party less eager to negotiate.<sup>88</sup> A year after the Beslan siege, *Le Monde* described the anniversary and mourning accompanying it, and again referred to religion, specifically the dichotomy of Orthodox Christians and Muslims in North Ossetia. Although the reporting called the hostage takers “terrorists,” it was more sympathetic to Chechens, stating that President Putin “préfère accuser le terrorisme international” (“prefers to blame international terrorism”) while also discussing the political situation in Chechnya.<sup>89</sup> By 2006, the surviving hostage taker was found guilty of terrorism and murder, but *Le Monde* stated “les questions sur l’action des services de sécurité

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<sup>87</sup> “Moscou Met Fin Dans Un Bain De Sang À La Prise D’otages En Ossétie,” *Le Monde*, 06 September 2004.

<sup>88</sup> “Le Kremlin Redoute Une Explosion Des Tensions Dans Le Caucase.”

<sup>89</sup> Madeleine Vatel, “Un an Après La Prise D’otages, Beslan, Toujours En Deuil, Réclame La Vérité Pour Ses Enfants,” *ibid.*, 02 September 2005.

russes on été éludées” (“questions on the actions of Russian security forces were avoided”), and it reported on the criticisms of the use of flamethrowers by Russian forces.<sup>90</sup>

Media coverage from *Le Monde* was more favorable to the terrorists and the Chechen cause during and following the Moscow siege than the Beslan siege, in contrast to *The New York Times* and *The Economist*. However, *Le Monde* incorrectly reported on facts, including the demands of the terrorists during the Beslan siege; it also misreported twice the name of the musical in the Moscow theater, “Nord-Ost.”<sup>91</sup> As time increased after the event, particularly following the Beslan siege, the media coverage became more sympathetic or at least less critical of the use of terrorism to further the cause. This is logical, given that during the immediate time period of a terrorist event, especially one involving children like the Beslan siege, media coverage focuses on the graphic nature of the event.

#### *Statements from Foreign Leaders*

To consider whether media coverage may have had an effect on how foreign leaders approached the two hostage incidents, the statements of foreign leaders about the two incidents were also examined.<sup>92</sup> Although the most appropriate method would be to consider statements made after a certain amount of time (to allow for any possible effects of media coverage to occur), leaders mainly made statements in the immediate time periods of the events with the exception of a few cases. In addition, in some cases it was not clear exactly when or under what circumstances leaders made statements, other than in the immediate periods following the events.

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<sup>90</sup> Marie Jégo, "Le Survivant Du Commando Tchétchène De Beslan Est Reconnu Coupable," *ibid.*, 18 May 2006.

<sup>91</sup> Natalie Nougayrède, "Un Commando Tchétchène Prend Des Centaines D'otages À Moscou," *ibid.*, 25 October 2002.; Natalie Nougayrède, and Sophie Shihab, "Questions Sur Une Prise D'otages," *ibid.*, 16 November 2002.

<sup>92</sup> The leaders considered in this section include Prime Minister Tony Blair, President George W. Bush, and President Jacques Chirac, as the three primary leaders of the United Kingdom, United States, and France. Statements from the United Nations Secretary General and United Nations Security Council were also considered. As stated, these four sources of statements were considered because media coverage was examined in the three countries, which are also represented on the U.N. Security Council.



Statements were taken from media sources, which gave the most information on the statements; to avoid cross contamination, only direct quotes from the leaders or their spokespersons were considered. Finally, in searching for statements, search terms were used that only combined the leaders' names with words indicating the incidents in order to avoid biased results as much as possible.

After the Moscow siege, Prime Minister Tony Blair<sup>93</sup> of the United Kingdom called the hostage attack, along with a terrorist bombing in Bali that occurred around the same time period, "brutal and horrifying reminders of this new form of terrorism." He stated, "A deadly mixture of religious and political fanaticism is being pursued by those who have no compunction about taking human lives, no matter how innocent, and little about losing their own."<sup>94</sup> He also stated, "I hope people will understand the enormity of the dilemma facing President Putin as he weighed what to do, in both trying to end the siege with minimum loss of life and recognising the dangers of doing anything that conceded to this latest outrage of terrorism from Chechnya."<sup>95</sup> The spokesman for President George W. Bush<sup>96</sup> of the United States, Ari Fleischer, stated that President Bush "understands it is the terrorists with whom the blame lies."<sup>97</sup> President Bush also stated ("soon after the episode," according to *The New York Times*), "People tried to blame Vladimir, they ought to blame the terrorists. They're the ones who caused the situation, not President Putin."<sup>98</sup> Speaking to President Putin, President Jacques Chirac<sup>99</sup> of France stated, "J'ai suivi heure par heure l'évolution de la situation à Moscou et c'est avec un profond soulagement

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<sup>93</sup> Prime Minister Blair's political party was the British Labour Party, a center-left political party.

<sup>94</sup> "Uk Backs Russia over Siege," *BBC News*, 28 October 2002.

<sup>95</sup> "West Backs Russia over Rescue Tactics," *BBC News*, 28 October 2002.

<sup>96</sup> President Bush's political party was the Republican party, a right-wing political party.

<sup>97</sup> "West Backs Russia over Rescue Tactics."

<sup>98</sup> Judith Miller, and Eric Lichtblau, "U.S. Investigates Moscow Theater Siege, Seeking Qaeda Link," *The New York Times*, 19 November 2003.

<sup>99</sup> President Chirac's political party was the UMP (Union pour un Mouvement Populaire), a center-right political party.

que nous avons appris la nouvelle du dénouement de la prise d'otages. La priorité que vous avez donnée à la préservation de la vie des otages avait permis de limiter les conséquences de ce drame et d'éviter la tragédie" ("I have followed closely the evolution of the situation in Moscow and it is with great relief that we have learned of the denouement of the hostage crisis. The priority to which you gave the preservation of the hostages' lives helped to limit the consequences of this drama and to avoid a tragedy").<sup>100</sup> The United Nations Security Council gave a press released on 24 October 2002 before the siege had ended that condemned "taking hostages" as well as "other recent terrorist acts," and "expressed the deepest sympathy and condolences to the people and the Government of the Russian Federation and to the victims of the terrorist attack and their families."<sup>101</sup> The U.N. Secretary-General also called the event "a heinous act of terrorism, which cannot be justified by any circumstance."<sup>102</sup>

During the Beslan crisis, Prime Minister Blair stated, "No cause can justify such wicked acts of terrorism. My thoughts, and the thoughts of the British people, are with you and the Russian people at this difficult time."<sup>103</sup> He also expressed his "revulsion at the inhumanity of terrorists prepared to put children through such suffering." In comparison, for instance, the Polish Prime Minister Marek Belka<sup>104</sup> was quoted as stating "he was 'shocked and outraged' by the assault on the school by the Russian forces. 'I never imagined that an anti-terrorist unit could go so far. All the limits have been over-stepped. It's impossible to go any further,' he said. But he also condemned the hostage-takers saying 'Terrorism is terrorism, and there is no justification

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<sup>100</sup> "Le Monde "Solidaire" Avec La Russie," *Le Parisien*, 27 October 2002.

<sup>101</sup> "Security Council Condemns 'Heinous' Moscow Hostage-Taking, Demands Immediate, Unconditional Release," <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2002/sc7545.doc.htm>.

<sup>102</sup> "Secretary-General Extends 'Deepest Condolences' to Those Who Lost Loved Ones in Moscow Hostage Incident," <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2002/SGSM8458.doc.htm>.

<sup>103</sup> Roger McDermott, "North Ossetia Crisis Complicated by Child Hostages," *The Jamestown Foundation*, 1 September 2004.

<sup>104</sup> Prime Minister Belka is a member of the Democratic Left Alliance party, a social-democratic political party.

for it.”<sup>105</sup> During a general speech on the war against terrorism to the United Nations, President Bush stated, “In the last year alone, terrorists have attacked police stations, and banks, and commuter trains, and synagogues – and a school filled with children. This month in Beslan we saw, once again, how terrorists measure their success – in the death of the innocent, and in the pain of grieving families.”<sup>106</sup> He also stated that the siege was “another grim reminder of the length to which terrorists will go to threaten this civilized world,”<sup>107</sup> and that “We stand with the people of Russia, we send them our thoughts and prayers in this terrible situation.”<sup>108</sup>

President Chirac stated, “In the face of this terrible terrorist drama, I want to convey my emotion and to express the solidarity of France with the Russian people.”<sup>109</sup> In contrast, Ségolène Royal, the President of the Poitou-Charente regional council in France (and a member of the liberal Socialist party [PS]) and presidential candidate in the 2007 elections stated that France must “faire pression sur Poutine pour qu’il trouve une solution politique en Tchétchénie” (“put pressure on Putin to find a political solution in Chechnya”) and “Une barbarie d’Etat s’est ajoutée à une barbarie terroriste” (“State barbarism is found alongside terrorist barbarism”).<sup>110</sup>

The United Nations Security Council stated in a press release, “The Security Council condemns in the strongest terms the heinous terrorist act involving the taking of hostages at a secondary school in the town of Beslan, the Russian Federation, on 1 September 2004, as well as

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<sup>105</sup> “World Horrified at Bloody End to Russian Hostage Crisis,” *Agence France Presse*, 3 September 2004.

<sup>106</sup> “President Speaks to the United Nations General Assembly,” The White House, <http://georgewebush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2004/09/20040921-3.html>.

<sup>107</sup> Jocelyn Gecker, “World Leaders Voice Horror, Condemnation at Russia School Seizure,” *Associated Press Newswires*, 3 September 2004.

<sup>108</sup> “High Death Toll in Russia Siege,” *BBC News*, 4 September 2004.

<sup>109</sup> “France and Interpol Offer Help to Russia Following School Tragedy,” *Associated Press Newswires*, 4 September 2004.

<sup>110</sup> “Les Réactions,” *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 6 September 2004.

other terrorist attacks committed recently against innocent civilians in Moscow and on two Russian airliners....”<sup>111</sup>

These statements from political leaders suggest that political leaders are in fact more extreme in their positions than media sources. The three political leaders, in addition to the U.N. Security Council, do not hesitate to call the hostage takers “terrorists,” and they make repeatedly references to the “heinous” acts while expressing great sympathy with the government. It is also unclear if political parties matter for whether leaders express favorable or unfavorable opinions for the Chechen cause. Prime Minister Blair, President Bush, and President Chirac – one liberal politician and two conservative politicians – criticize the terrorists heavily. Prime Minister Belka and Ms. Royal, both liberal, express sympathy for the Chechen cause. The U.N. Security Council was certainly influenced by Russia’s status as permanent member, but still has no defined political leaning. Prime Minister Blair, President Bush, and President Chirac may be less inclined to express sympathy for the Chechen cause because they are leaders of countries and have their own fears about terrorist attacks on their own soil. President Bush, certainly, would have been eager to gain as many supporters for his “war against terrorism” as possible. Given that media coverage of terrorist events can best be described as “mixed,” it appears that political leaders are the ones who signal support or rejection of a terrorist group’s cause.

## **Conclusion**

The assumption of many scholars is that if terrorists gain media coverage of their attacks, they will further the cause for which they are fighting. However, this assumption relies on many further assumptions: that increases in media coverage are sustained indefinitely or at least temporarily in the case of a terrorist attack, that media coverage will be favorable of the

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<sup>111</sup> "Security Council, in President Statement, Condemns Hostage-Taking at Russian Federation School, Demands Their Immediate Release," <http://www.un.org/News/Press/doc/2004/sc8179.doc.htm>.

terrorists' cause, and that this media coverage will influence domestic policies or international pressure to change domestic policies. However, these assumptions are not necessarily true. In the case of the Moscow theater siege in October 2002 and the Beslan school siege in September 2004, Chechen terrorists did not generate sustained coverage of their cause, the Chechen desire for autonomy and independence. The media coverage of the terrorist events was also not necessarily favorable towards the Chechen cause: sometimes it was favorable; sometimes it was unfavorable; sometimes it sympathized with the government, despite the Russian government's arguable "overreaction" to both events; and sometimes it misrepresented the terrorists' demands or failed to adequately cover the Chechen cause. This was the case even across three media sources, and three media sources that are accepted as reputable, influential Western media sources.

At the same time, Western leaders in the three countries of these three media sources had no qualms about heavily criticizing the terrorist attacks and making it clear that there was "no justification" for such terrorism. These statements were made immediately, and the leaders often immediately sympathized with the Russian people and the Russian government. President Bush even stated a year following the Moscow siege that the deaths could not be blamed on President Putin, despite the fact that the gas used by the Russian special forces was what caused nearly all of the deaths. This is not to say that terrorists are justified in their use of violence, but rather that foreign leaders in Western countries may have incentives to follow a "zero tolerance" policy because of fear of terrorism in their own countries.

It is clear, however, that media coverage is not correlated with statements by international leaders. This disproves the assumption that media coverage is always favorable for terrorists. Although favorable media coverage may generate sympathy within a target Western population,

it is the president or prime minister of that Western country that has the ear of the domestic leader (in this case, President Putin). Given that President Putin acts autocratically in regards to Chechnya, it may be other foreign leaders who likely have the greatest ability to encourage changes in his policies rather than the domestic Russian population. Even if the populations of the United States, the United Kingdom, and France understand and support autonomy and independence for Chechnya, these populations are unlikely to effect policy changes in a government like that found in Russia.

Terrorists' short-term and long-term goals include generating attention towards their cause. If the Chechens themselves have been unsuccessful in spurring policy change towards Chechnya, they can hope that others may induce such change. However, the use of terrorism to achieve this may not be effective. Terrorists may be successful in other ways – at spreading fear, at inducing a government overreaction – but not at gaining sufficient media attention of their cause. The Chechens have no independent state and little autonomy, and they are not moving towards such a status, despite these two terrorist attacks as well as many other terrorist attacks.

Media coverage may still allow other terrorist groups to be successful. The Chechen terrorists did not generate sustained media coverage of Chechnya, but other terrorist groups may be more successful in this aspect. However, given the examination of the media's discourse, even increased coverage does not guarantee favorable coverage. The adage, "Any press is good press" is often stated but not proven. Further research should examine whether unfavorable media can still effect policy change favoring a terrorist group's long-term, ultimate goal.

The simple assumption that media coverage increases and is favorable towards a terrorist group's goal is not proven, and this research does not support this assumption. However, this case study cannot be generalized. The media is arguably guilty of editorializing and dramatizing

news events, and this is also true for terrorist events. Such editorializing and dramatization may indeed assist other terrorist groups in improving their effectiveness. Further research is needed to greater articulate the relationship between the media, terrorist groups, and terrorist groups' causes, especially for ethno-nationalist terrorism (given that these groups seek achievable goals, as opposed to absolutist groups). Determining how successful terrorism can be means being one step closer to determining how to disrupt terrorism. In an age where terrorism is a valid fear of so many leaders and populations, diminishing the success of terrorism is a worthy goal.

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## Appendix (Source: LexisNexis Academic)

Table 1

Search terms	Type	Hits	Dates	Jan-Mar 2000	Apr-Jun 2000	Jul-Sep 2000
(chechnya or chechen) and (terror*)	Major World Publications (Note: searches will be biased towards English sources)	9352	01/01/2000-12/31/2006	196	115	95
(chechnya or chechen) and (separat* or secession*)	Major World Publications	9592	01/01/2000-12/31/2006	1120	569	471
(chechnya or chechen) and ("freedom fighter")	Major World Publications	390	01/01/2000-10/01/2006	19	17	6
(chechnya or chechen) and (independen*)	Major World Publications	11730	01/01/2000-12/31/2006	1111	766	474
(chechnya or chechen) and (islam*)	Major World Publications	11699	01/01/2000-12/31/2006	974	548	382
(chechnya or chechen) and ("al qaeda" or "al qaida")	Major World Publications	6367	01/01/2000-12/31/2006	40	24	15
(chechnya or chechen) and (negotiat*)	Major World Publications	1670	01/01/2000-10/01/2006	124	108	41

Oct-Dec 2000	Jan-Mar 2001	Apr-Jun 2001	Jul-Sep 2001	Oct-Dec 2001	Jan-Mar 2002	Apr-Jun 2002	Jul-Sep 2002	Oct-Dec 2002	Jan-Mar 2003
86	108	99	494	1120	387	288	303	972	302
231	322	211	251	339	252	187	239	624	184
6	6	7	31	49	15	7	7	49	15
358	449	419	466	544	372	351	376	756	345
262	220	164	571	1053	306	280	329	753	303
34	26	15	320	1208	392	203	241	554	227
36	35	29	68	148	36	27	30	207	45

Apr-Jun 2003	Jul-Sep 2003	Oct-Dec 2003	Jan-Mar 2004	Apr-Jun 2004	Jul-Sep 2004	Oct-Dec 2004	Jan-Mar 2005	Apr-Jun 2005	Jul-Sep 2005
334	309	282	352	304	1253	338	231	147	339
243	296	275	282	283	915	263	401	196	260
14	8	7	13	3	48	13	13	7	6
363	389	421	390	358	768	356	255	191	262
353	285	333	325	388	902	311	320	220	523
232	196	218	289	210	656	194	130	71	255
30	49	26	67	37	266	52	49	19	25

Oct-Dec 2005	Jan-Mar 2006	Apr-Jun 2006	Jul-Sep 2006	Oct-Dec 2006
213	148	144	219	176
261	190	214	273	241
9	5	1	5	4
234	189	194	238	334
407	303	308	332	246
140	84	148	153	91
15	21	25	27	28

Table 2

Search terms	Type	Hits	Dates	Jan. 2000	Feb. 2000	Mar. 2000	Apr. 2000	May. 2000
(chechnya or chechen) and (terror*)	Major World Publications (Note: searches will be biased towards English sources)	9403	01/01/2000-12/31/2006	133	51	48	39	49
(chechnya)	Major World Publications	69621	01/01/2000-12/31/2006	3356	2410	2516	2001	1467
Percent [(chechnya or chechen) and (terror*)] of [(chechnya)]		13.5	01/01/2000-12/31/2006	4	2.1	1.9	1.9	3.3

Jun. 2000	Jul. 2000	Aug. 2000	Sep. 2000	Oct. 2000	Nov. 2000	Dec. 2000	Jan. 2001	Feb. 2001	Mar. 2001
27	28	48	16	28	31	27	44	41	23
1454	1314	1168	861	724	1013	1050	1255	1094	1414
1.8	2.1	4.1	1.9	3.9	3.1	2.6	3.5	3.7	1.6

Apr. 2001	May. 2001	Jun. 2001	Jul. 2001	Aug. 2001	Sep. 2001	Oct. 2001	Nov. 2001	Dec. 2001	Jan. 2002
40	26	33	32	26	436	410	473	237	104
1016	888	850	917	837	1704	1369	1134	908	902
3.9	2.9	3.9	3.5	3.1	25.6	30	41.7	26.1	11.5

Feb. 2002	Mar. 2002	Apr. 2002	May. 2002	Jun. 2002	Jul. 2002	Aug. 2002	Sep. 2002	Oct. 2002	Nov. 2002
90	193	75	140	73	64	73	166	434	323
814	836	848	853	633	679	1148	983	1848	1389
11.1	23.1	8.8	16.4	11.5	9.4	6.4	16.9	23.5	23.3

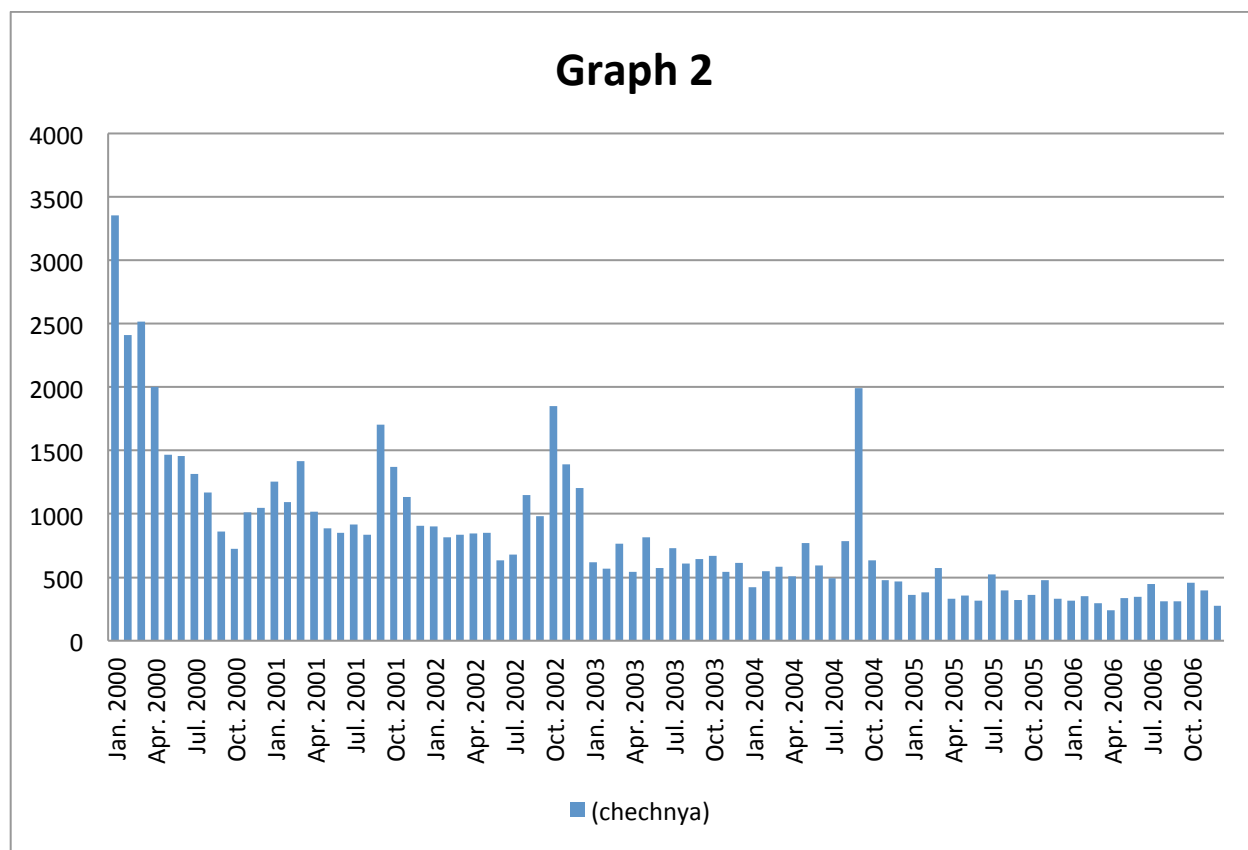
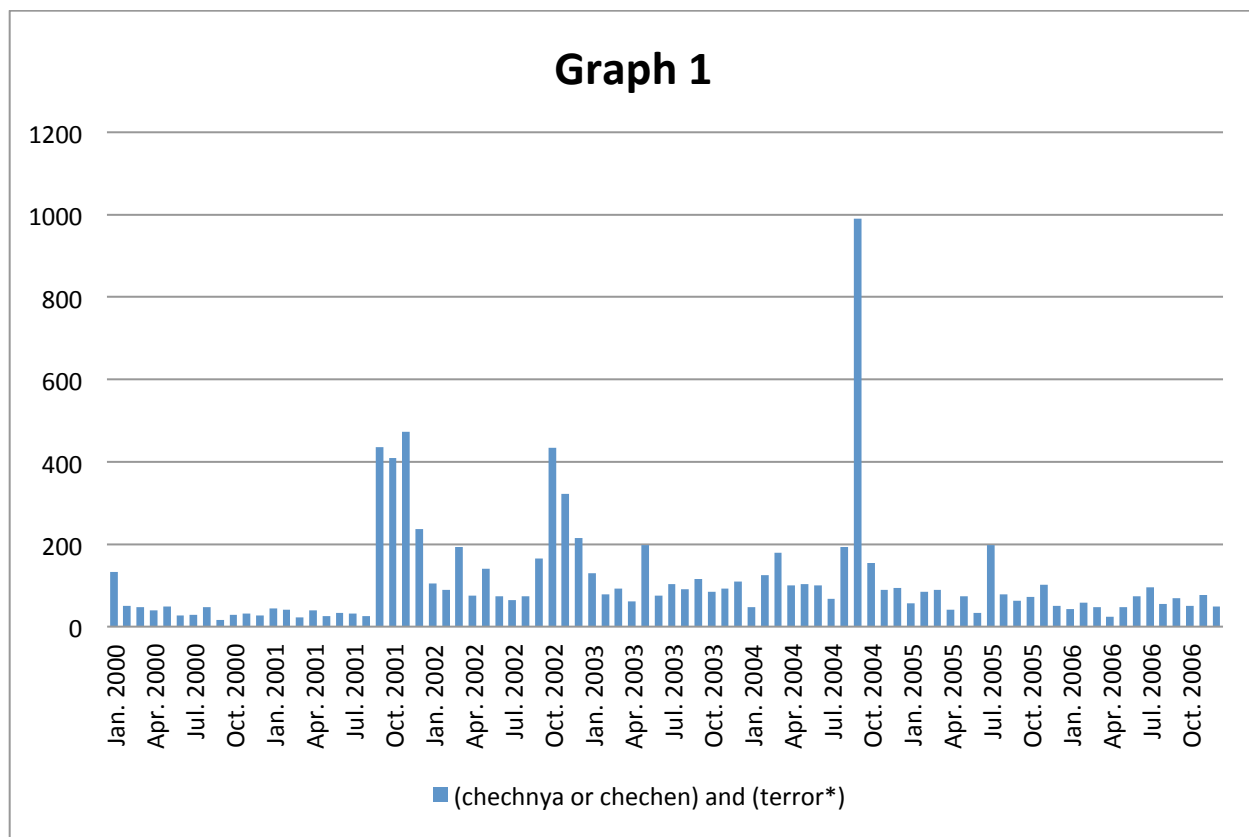
Dec. 2002	Jan. 2003	Feb. 2003	Mar. 2003	Apr. 2003	May. 2003	Jun. 2003	Jul. 2003	Aug. 2003	Sep. 2003
215	130	79	93	61	198	76	103	91	116
1205	621	570	766	541	818	573	729	608	643
17.8	20.9	13.9	12.1	11.3	24.2	13.3	14.1	15	18

Oct. 2003	Nov. 2003	Dec. 2003	Jan. 2004	Feb. 2004	Mar. 2004	Apr. 2004	May. 2004	Jun. 2004	Jul. 2004
84	92	109	47	125	180	100	103	100	68
668	543	612	424	550	583	510	771	593	492
12.6	16.9	17.8	11.1	22.7	30.9	19.6	13.4	16.9	13.8

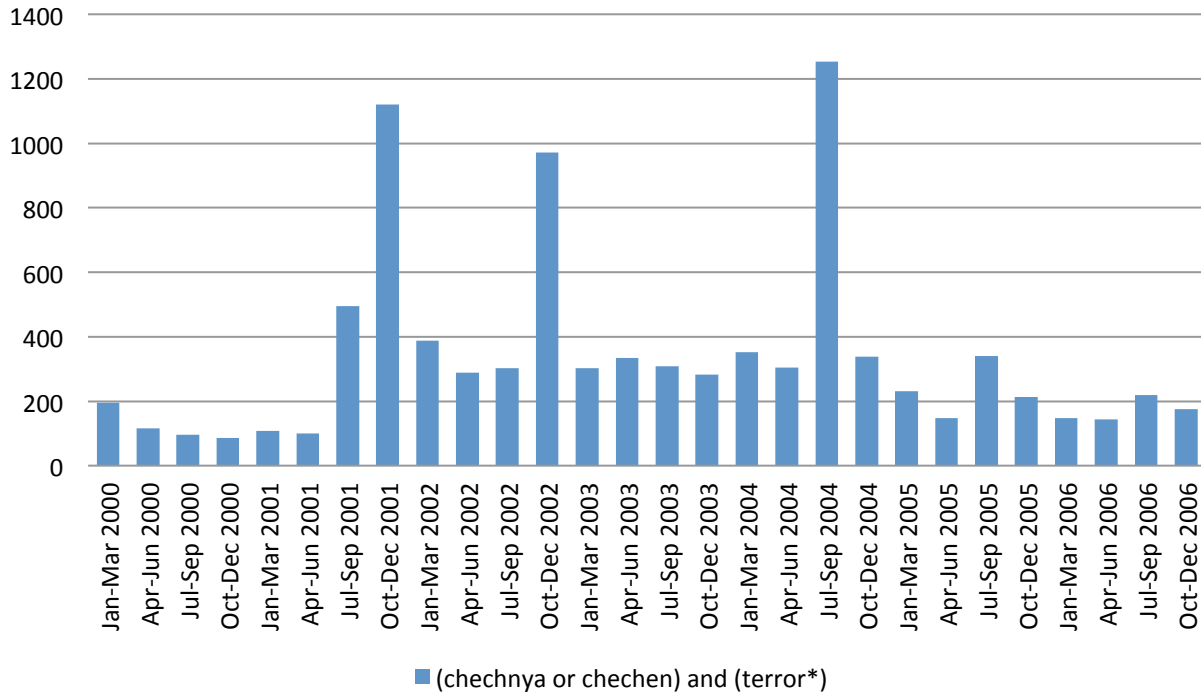
Aug. 2004	Sep. 2004	Oct. 2004	Nov. 2004	Dec. 2004	Jan. 2005	Feb. 2005	Mar. 2005	Apr. 2005	May. 2005
194	991	155	90	94	56	85	89	41	73
783	1991	633	475	466	362	379	574	329	358
24.8	49.8	24.5	18.9	20.2	15.5	22.4	15.5	12.5	20.4

Jun. 2005	Jul. 2005	Aug. 2005	Sep. 2005	Oct. 2005	Nov. 2005	Dec. 2005	Jan. 2006	Feb. 2006	Mar. 2006
33	198	78	63	72	101	50	43	58	47
318	521	395	322	360	475	330	316	349	297
10.4	38	19.7	19.6	20	21.3	15.2	13.6	16.6	15.8

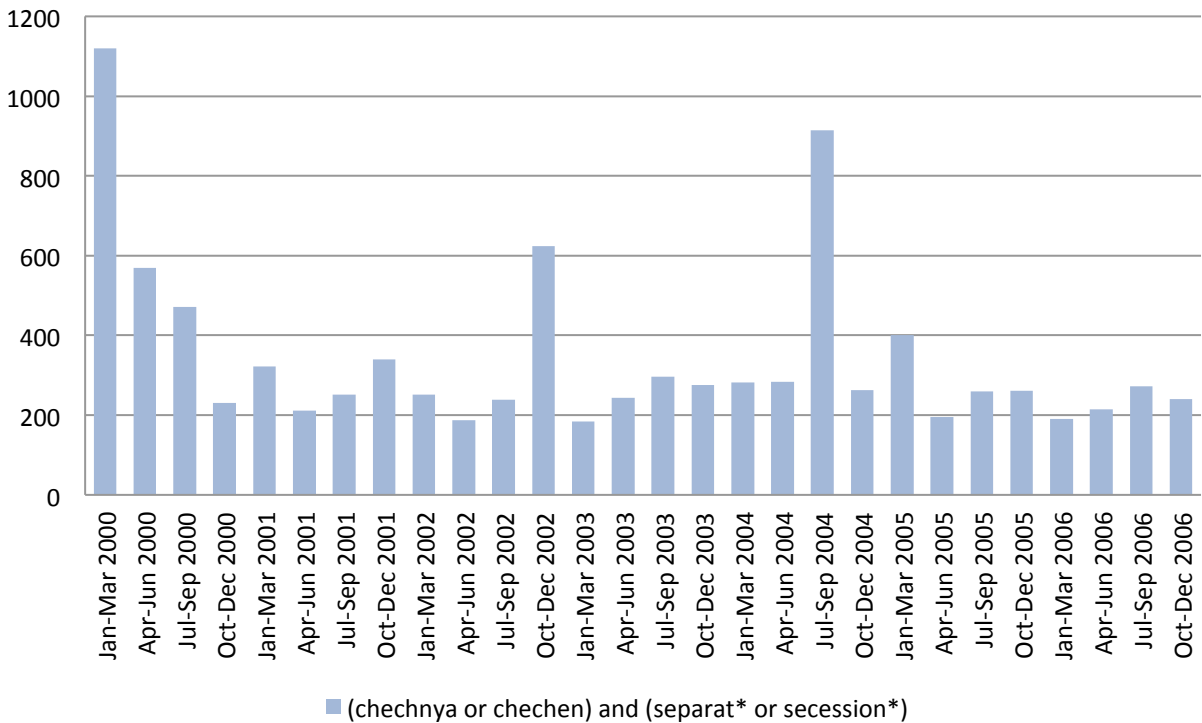
Apr. 2006	May. 2006	Jun. 2006	Jul. 2006	Aug. 2006	Sep. 2006	Oct. 2006	Nov. 2006	Dec. 2006
24	47	74	96	55	69	50	77	49
238	334	345	446	312	313	455	395	277
10.1	14.1	20.6	21.5	17.6	22	11	19.5	17.7



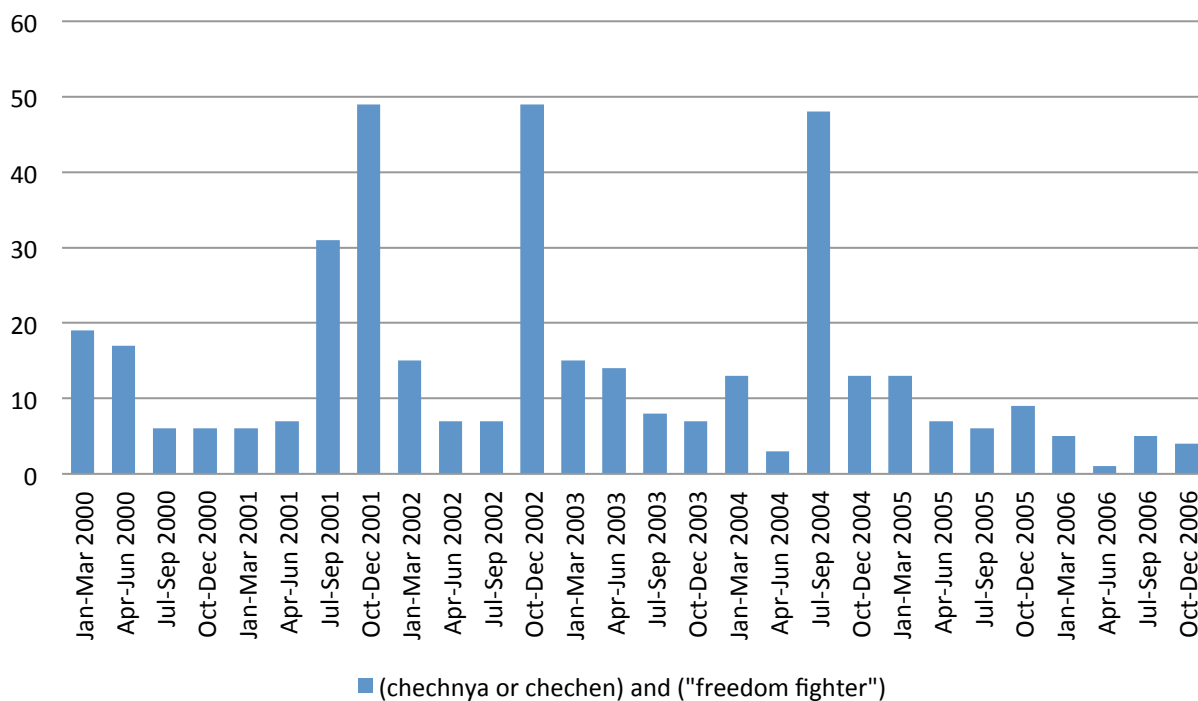
### Graph 3



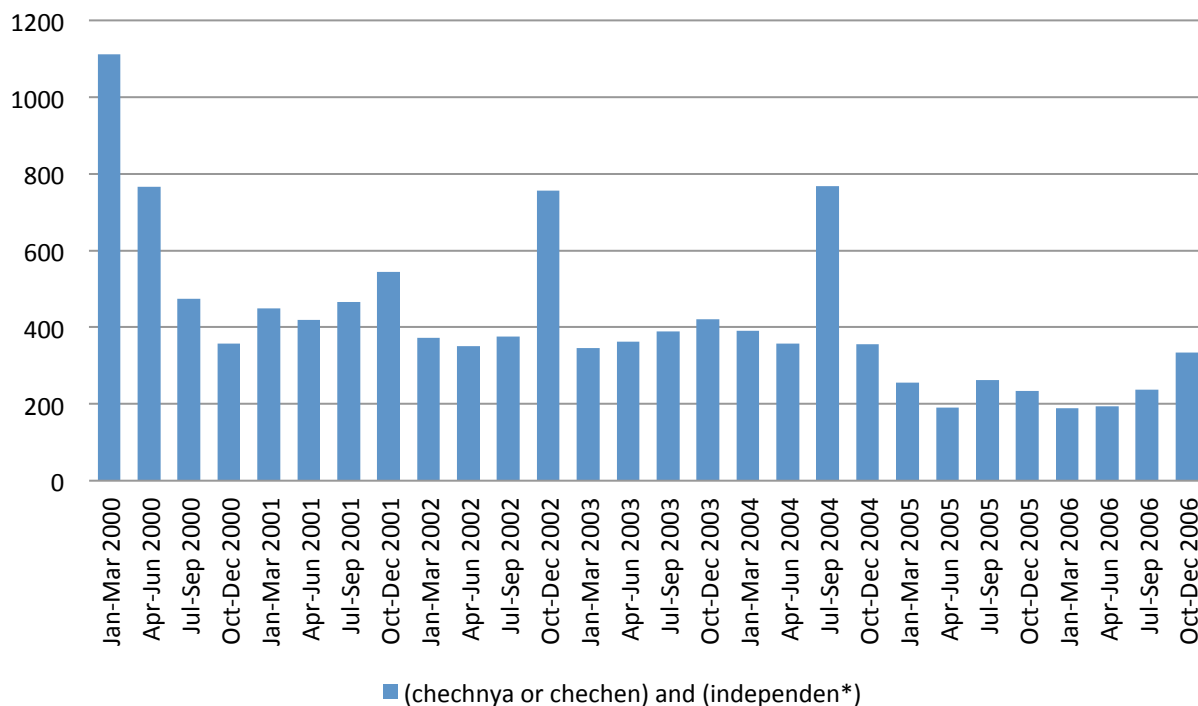
### Graph 4



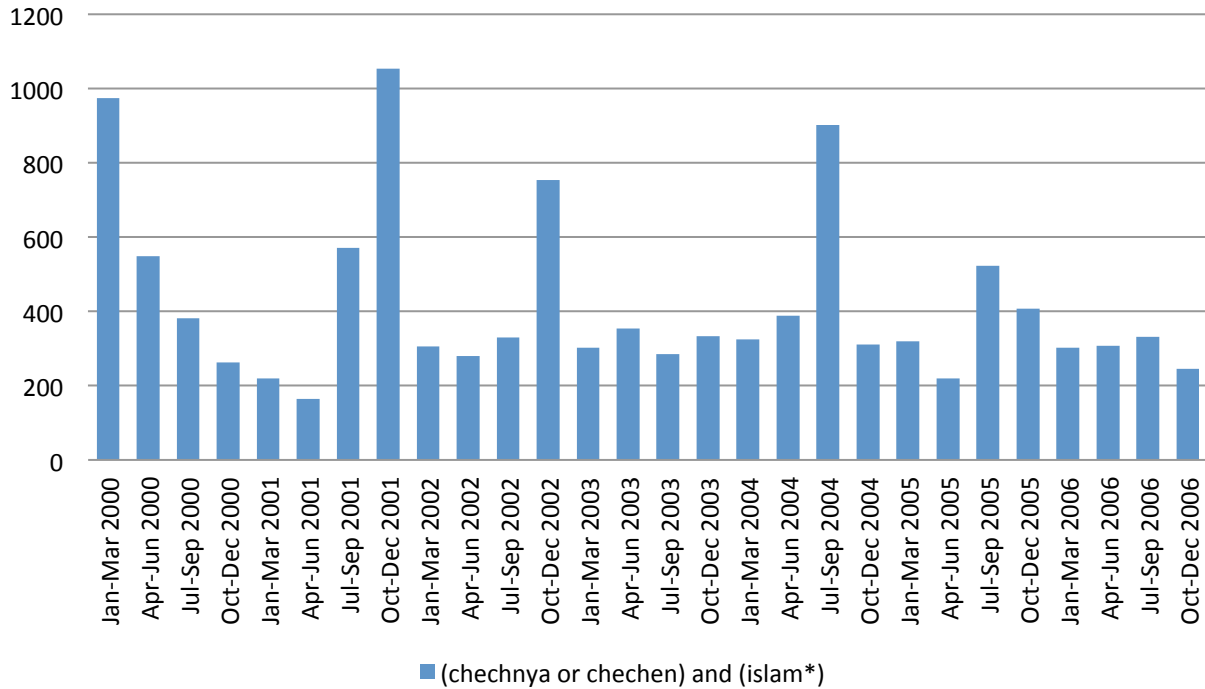
### Graph 5



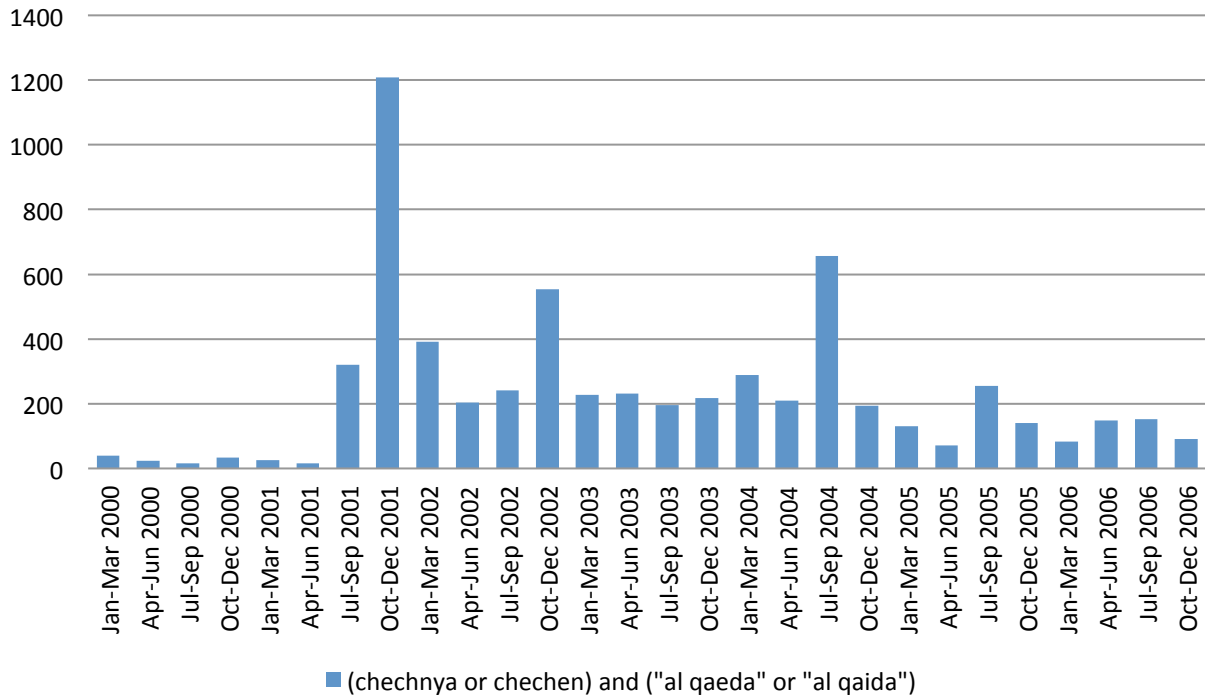
### Graph 6



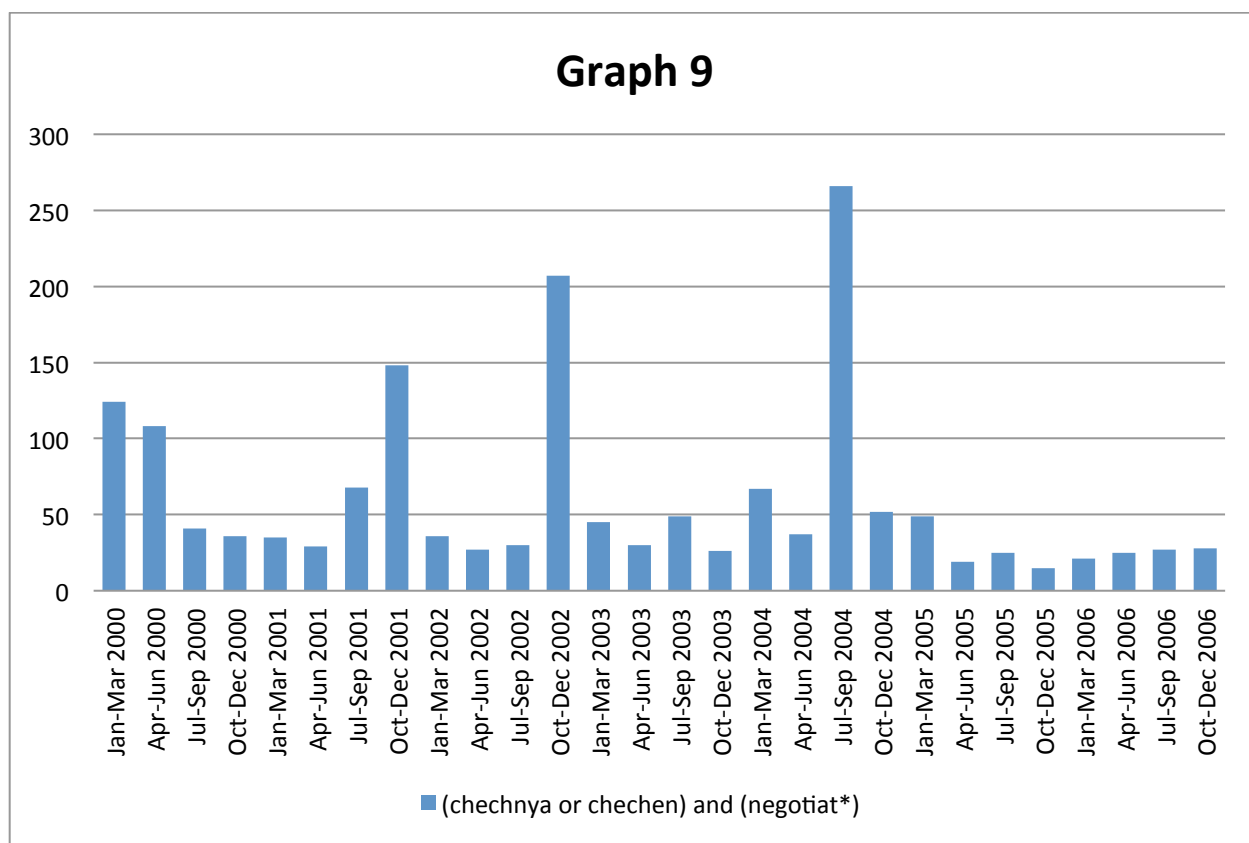
### Graph 7



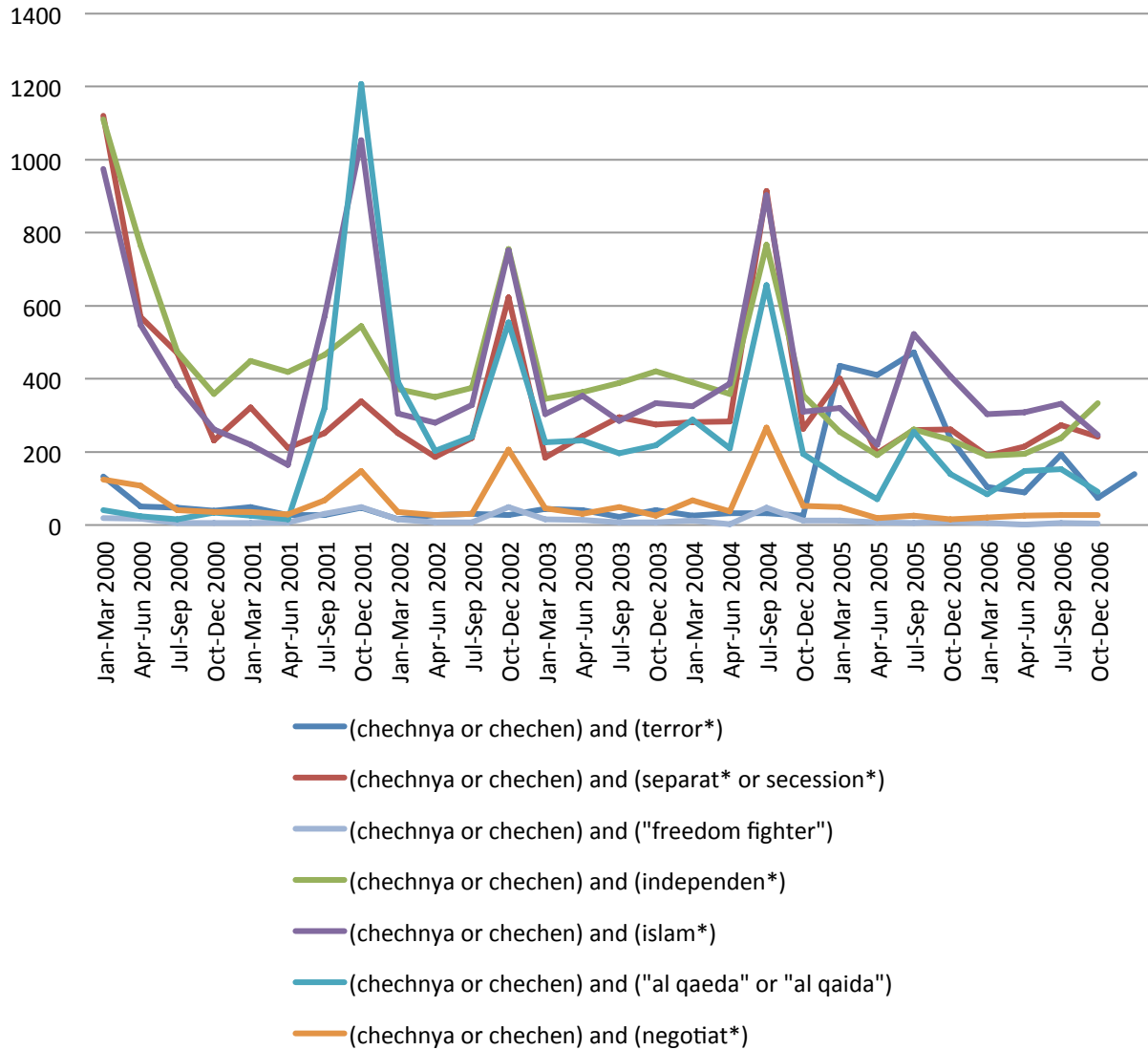
### Graph 8



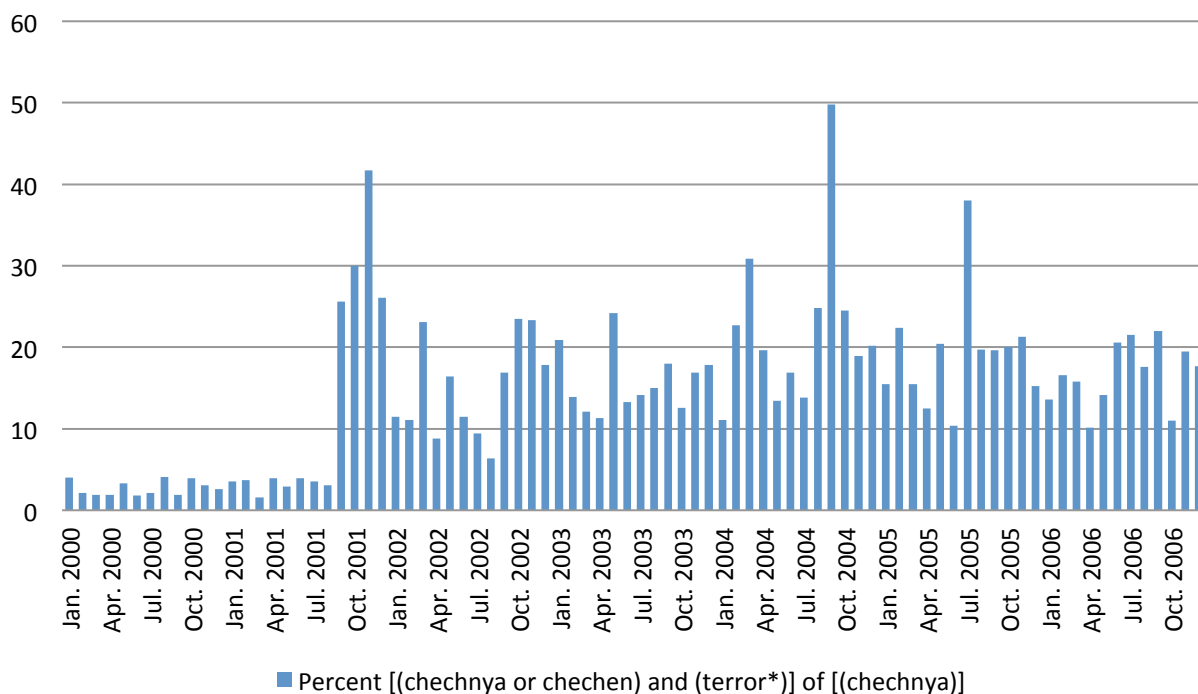




# Graph 10 - Aggregate Associations



# Graph 11



## Table 3

Search terms		Type	Hits	Dates	Oct. 2002	Nov. 2002	Dec. 2002	Jan. 2003	Feb. 2003
(chechnya or chechen) and (moscow) and (theat* or "nord ost")		Major World Publications	518	10/01/2002-12/31/2006	158	107	31	23	25

Mar. 2003	Apr. 2003	May. 2003	Jun. 2003	Jul. 2003	Aug. 2003	Sep. 2003	Oct. 2003	Nov. 2003	Dec. 2003
12	15	11	4	15	4	10	29	4	9

Jan. 2004	Feb. 2004	Mar. 2004	Apr. 2004	May. 2004	Jun. 2004	Jul. 2004	Aug. 2004	Sep. 2004	Oct. 2004
4	17	10	7	1	7	6	8	60	12

Nov. 2004	Dec. 2004	Jan. 2005	Feb. 2005	Mar. 2005	Apr. 2005	May. 2005	Jun. 2005	Jul. 2005	Aug. 2005
4	2	3	1	8	2	3	3	6	3

Sep. 2005	Oct. 2005	Nov. 2005	Dec. 2005	Jan. 2006	Feb. 2006	Mar. 2006	Apr. 2006	May. 2006	Jun. 2006
4	10	3	2	4	2	1	0	2	2

Jul. 2006	Aug. 2006	Sep. 2006	Oct. 2006	Nov. 2006	Dec. 2006	Jan. 2007	Feb. 2007	Mar. 2007	Apr. 2007
3	2	3	7	0	1	2	0	5	1

May. 2007	Jun. 2007	Jul. 2007	Aug. 2007	Sep. 2007	Oct. 2007	Nov. 2007	Dec. 2007	Jan. 2008	Feb. 2008
0	1	1	3	4	3	3	1	1	0

Mar. 2008	Apr. 2008	May. 2008	Jun. 2008	Jul. 2008	Aug. 2008	Sep. 2008	Oct. 2008	Nov. 2008	Dec. 2008
0	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0

**Table 4**

Search terms		Type	Hits	Dates	Oct. 2002	Nov. 2002	Dec. 2002	Jan. 2003	Feb. 2003
(chechnya or chechen) and (beslan) and (hostage)		Major World Publications	2320	09/01/2004-12/31/2008	0	0	0	0	0

Mar. 2003	Apr. 2003	May. 2003	Jun. 2003	Jul. 2003	Aug. 2003	Sep. 2003	Oct. 2003	Nov. 2003	Dec. 2003	Jan. 2004
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Feb. 2004	Mar. 2004	Apr. 2004	May. 2004	Jun. 2004	Jul. 2004	Aug. 2004	Sep. 2004	Oct. 2004	Nov. 2004
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1251	126	45

Dec. 2004	Jan. 2005	Feb. 2005	Mar. 2005	Apr. 2005	May. 2005	Jun. 2005	Jul. 2005	Aug. 2005	Sep. 2005
53	48	38	44	18	25	20	42	62	72

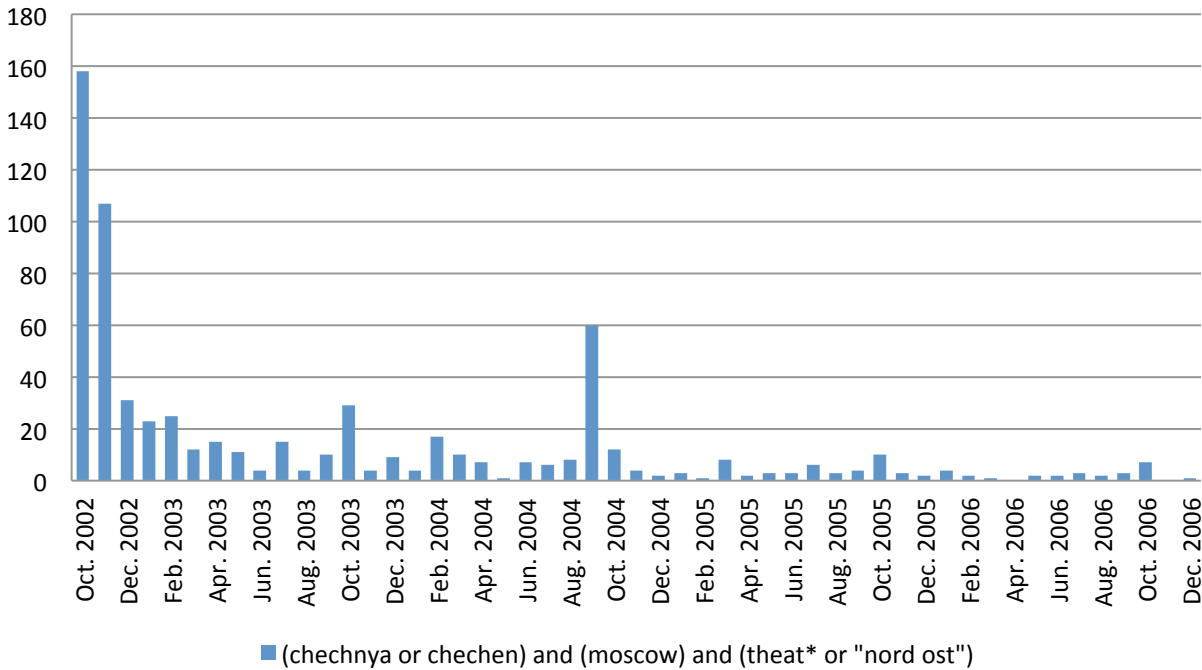
Oct. 2005	Nov. 2005	Dec. 2005	Jan. 2006	Feb. 2006	Mar. 2006	Apr. 2006	May. 2006	Jun. 2006	Jul. 2006
61	15	27	6	12	9	8	50	14	50

Aug. 2006	Sep. 2006	Oct. 2006	Nov. 2006	Dec. 2006	Jan. 2007	Feb. 2007	Mar. 2007	Apr. 2007	May. 2007
15	24	34	9	14	5	1	9	12	6

Jun. 2007	Jul. 2007	Aug. 2007	Sep. 2007	Oct. 2007	Nov. 2007	Dec. 2007	Jan. 2008	Feb. 2008	Mar. 2008
9	16	5	14	3	3	2	4	7	6

Apr. 2008	May. 2008	Jun. 2008	Jul. 2008	Aug. 2008	Sep. 2008	Oct. 2008	Nov. 2008	Dec. 2008
2	2	1	4	3	14	4	4	0

### Graph 12



### Graph 13

