

# How news coverage of terrorism may shape support for anti-Muslim policies

February 21 2019

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Terrorist attacks committed by the so-called Islamic State are rising in Western countries. A new *Political Psychology* study indicates that how the news media portray these attacks may influence emotional responses and support for anti-Muslim policies such as immigration bans.

For the study, investigators developed a model to explain how threat components—such as threat severity (i.e., portrayed number of offenders) and threat controllability (i.e., diffuse versus non-diffuse terror threat)—of terrorism news coverage influence news consumers' emotional reactions and subsequent policy support.

The study found that [news articles](#) featuring a high number of offenders increase individuals' fear of terror, irrespective of whether the threat is portrayed as controllable or not. News articles featuring a low number of offenders only evoke fear of terror if the threat is portrayed as diffuse. Also, news articles emphasizing a high number of offenders combined with a controllable terrorism threat elicit anger on the government. Both anger and fear of terror subsequently increase support for anti-Muslim policies.

The findings may spur discussions on how to deal with terrorism in maintaining a healthy and inclusive democracy.

**More information:** Jörg Matthes et al, Terror, Terror Everywhere? How Terrorism News Shape Support for Anti-Muslim Policies as a Function of Perceived Threat Severity and Controllability, *Political*

*Psychology* (2019). [DOI: 10.1111/pops.12576](https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12576)

Provided by Wiley

Citation: How news coverage of terrorism may shape support for anti-Muslim policies (2019, February 21) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2019-02-news-coverage-terrorism-anti-muslim-policies.html>

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