# How does media coverage
# of a terrorist act depend on
# the ethical system
# which media presents?

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An analysis
of how media coverage of the hostage taking in theatre "Na Dubrovke", Moscow, 23-26 October 2002, by two broadcasting companies the BBC and Channel "Russia" (in their representation on the web-sites news.bbc.co.uk and www.vesti.ru) was different; how the ethical codes were taken into account by journalists and editors involved into the coverage, and how different ethical values are reflected in the reporting the event.

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# CONTENTS

# List of figures

**Figure A.** Support for censorship to discourage terrorism in Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, UK, and USA

**Figure B.** Support for censorship in Russia

**Figure C.** Two Ethical Mega-Emphases by John C. Merill

**Figure D**. Labels given the hostages by the web-sites news.bbc.co.uk and www.vesti.ru

**Figure E**. Labels given state representatives by the web-sites news.bbc.co.uk and www.vesti.ru

**Figure F.** Labels given the hostage takers by the web-sites news.bbc.co.uk and www.vesti.ru

**Figure G.** Labels given the event by the web-sites news.bbc.co.uk and www.vesti.ru

**Figure H.** Headlines' focus. www.vesti.ru

**Figure J.** Headlines' focus. news.bbc.co.uk

**Figure K.** Subjects presented in the reports

# Introduction

While discussing ethical issues one can rarely find right or wrong answers, but there should always be "well-reasoned" ones.

It is obvious that until the end of the 1940s the biggest world danger was totalitarianism, and in the democratic states the freedom to gather and spread information was strengthening; freedom of expression and minority rights was seen as basic values in the information policy.

Approximately up to the middle of the 1970s terrorism was not considered as a serious threat to the sovereignty of countries. Media coverage of terrorist acts around the world, with a possible exception of Israel, was a matter of internal competition for information between the police forces and the journalists within individual countries.

The use of terrorism as a violent political strategy has been increasing steadily throughout the world during the past four decades. Terrorist acts became a usual issue of news around the world (Kushner, 2003). Since the hostage-taking of the Israeli team by the Palestinian terrorists during the 1972 Munich Olympic Games the role of the media reporting this sort of event is discussed (Alter, 2001; Blaisse, 1992; Gerrits, 1992; Hewitt, 1992; Paletz and Boiney, 1992; Paletz and Tawney, 1992; Picard, 1991; Schbley, 2003; Schmid, 1992; Shpiro, 2002; Viera, 1991; Wilkinson, 1974, 1997).

The mass media are among the most influential enterprises in a democratic society, standing at the crossroad between the citizens and their political, economic and social institutions. In addition, they are instrumental in the transmission of cultural values. The most frequent terrorist technique for influencing the mass media and is the creation of terrorist events with "the object of seducing or trapping the mass media into giving the terrorists huge publicity and portraying them as such a powerful force that it would be folly to resist them" (Wilkinson, 1997).

It would be irrational to deny that modern media have had a great effect on increasing the publicity potential of terrorism. International media practice

faces a new stage of development in the area of freedom of opinion and information rights, especially in covering terrorist acts.

Researchers (Wilkinson, 1997; Schmid, 1992; Frost, 2000) consider that the mass media need to work harder at devising methods of self-restraint that are both appropriate and effective in covering the exceedingly sensitive subject of terrorism. To examine whether and how the media with different cultural backgrounds understand and work on that issue was the start point for this study.

Both the United Kingdom and Russia have separatists' movements claiming independence for regions they live in and regularly committing terrorist acts. BBC and Channel "Russia" are comparable in terms of territory covered by broadcasting. At the same time the two media have two different cultural backgrounds and traditions in journalism. These were the reasons to choose them for comparison.

This dissertation is devoted to the coverage of terrorism in the media in terms of ethical standards and values. Both liberal and communitarian media principles are examined. The basis for the research is media coverage of the hostage-taking in theatre "Na Dubrovke", Moscow, 23-26 October 2002, by two broadcasting companies - the BBC and Channel "Russia" (as presented on their respective web-sites at http://news.bbc.co.uk and http://www.vesti.ru).

Literature review presents a diversity of views on the media coverage of terrorist acts. Also, it demonstrates different points of view on regulating journalists' professional activity. In the end, it reviews the libertarian and communitarian media value systems.

The methodology chapter shows the details of the research design, combining content analysis of text and video materials published on the two above-mentioned web-sites and qualitative interviews with journalists, editors, and people responsible for editorial policy in the respective broadcasting companies.

Research results are presented in the "Findings and discussion" chapter of the dissertation, which consists of key findings from the content analysis and the interviews. The chapter discusses the most important findings of the study

and gives a synthesis of these findings with the arguments identified in the literature.

The Conclusion sums up the undertaken research and outlines perspectives for further studies.

# Literature review

This chapter explores the theory underlining the research project and presents a critical review of the literature. The main area of theory relating to this study centres upon the intersection of political, cultural and media studies, and philosophy, especially in its issues related to moral and ethical problems. The discussion begins with an examination of views on the media coverage of terrorist acts. Next the study explores different regulatory concepts of journalists' professional activity. Finally, it reviews the libertarian and communitarian value systems in terms of the role of the media in them.

2.1. Critical issues in media coverage of terrorism

Although terrorism is a widely discussed issue in journalism and political studies journals (Anderson, 1993; Alter, 2001; Heinze and Borer, 2002; Hopkins, 2002; Wilkinson, 1997), and connections between the media and terrorist groups are articulated, there is nevertheless a lack of literature devoted to the media – terrorism nexus. Existing studies focus on the two main problems: labelling people who commit a terrorist act and a media response to terrorism. Media usually is examined as a part of a triangle: state-terrorists-media.

Shlomo Shpiro (2002), highlighting the role of the media in both the coverage and conduct of modern conflict, concludes that an effective conflict media strategy is an essential tool of warfare that is used by states and terrorist groups.

While many researches have dealt with terrorism from different angles (Barnhurst, 1991; Blaisse, 1992; Crelinsten, 1992; Gerrits, 1992; Gritsai, 2002; Hewitt, 1992; Hocking, 1992; Irvin, 1992; Kahan, 2002; Paletz and Boiney, 1992; Paletz and Tawney, 1992; Picard, 1991; Schbley, 2003; Schmid, 1992; Shpiro, 2002; Viera, 1991; Wilkinson, 1974, 1997), there is yet to be an agreement on what terrorism is.

This lack of a definitional consensus on terrorism is important not only to scholars, but also for the media, which play an important role in the characterisation or labelling of acts of political violence (Eke and Alali, 1991, p.3).

One of the most serious attempts to define terrorism has been that of Paul Wilkinson (1974). He states four types of terrorism (criminal, psychic, war and political) and defines political terrorism as "the systematic use or threat of violence to secure political ends" (p.17). 23 years later in his article "The Media and Terrorism: A Reassessment" he gives five distinguishing characteristics to divide the term *terrorism* from politically motivated violence in general:

1) it is premeditated and designed to create a climate of extreme fear;

2) it is directed at a wider target than the immediate victims;

3) it inherently involves attacks on random or symbolic targets, including civilians;

4) it is considered by the society in which it occurs as 'extra-normal', that is in the literal sense that it violates the norms regulating disputes, protest and dissent; and

5) it is used primarily, though not exclusively, to influence the political behaviour of governments, communities or specific social groups.

However, O'Brien C.C. (1977) stresses that the words "terrorism" and "terrorist" are not terms of scientific classification. He pays attention to their impreciseness and emotiveness:

> *We do not apply them to all acts of politically-motivated violence nor to all people who commit such crimes. We reserve their use foe politically-motivated violence of which we disapprove.*

Supporting O'Brien's point of view, Clutterbuck (1977, p.18) declares that "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter".

An attempt to create a comprehensive overview of media-terrorism relations has been undertaken by David L. Paletz and Alex P. Schmid (1992). The book "Terrorism and the media" combines reviews of different viewpoints on the relationships between the media and terrorism. The overview presents all contributors of the issue – researchers, terrorists, the governments, the press, public, and victims.

In discussion about the media response to terrorism, researchers emphasize three main policies:

1. no specific steps should be taken as regards media coverage of terrorism
2. some form of media censorship or statutory regulation is necessary
3. voluntary self-restraint is accepted, trying to avoid the dangers of manipulation and exploitation by terrorist groups

First of all, supporters of the 'absolute' or 'unlimited' freedom of the press (Hussain et al., 2001) stand on the point expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, authorized by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948. Article 19 of the Declaration states that "everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers". As Siebert *et al* (1963) summarizes, there should be no restrictions on import or export of media messages across the national frontiers.

However, no freedom of expression is totally unlimited. Addressing this to the media reporting of terrorism, Wilkinson (1997) draws a parallel with the ban of pornography on TV and radio mostly accepted by audiences. He adds:

> *"Most decent citizens would also be horrified if the mass media began to provide a platform for race hate propaganda or for drug-pushers or rapists to come on the screen to boast their crimes and to incite others to commit crimes".*

Secondly, supporting the idea of control over the reporting of terrorist acts, government spokespersons blame the media for being partners to terrorism. These are the well-known words of Margaret Thatcher: "We must try to find ways to starve the terrorist and the hijacker of the oxygen of publicity on which they depend"[1].

Terry Anderson (1993), from his experience as both journalist and hostage – he was chief Middle East correspondent for The Associated Press during which time he was held hostage in Lebanon from March 1985 to December 1991 – supports Thatcher's position. He claims:

> *"Don't give the terrorists what they want. Don't give them publicity. Don't report on their demands, or even – for the most adamant of media critics – on their actions. If they cannot expect publicity, they will go away".*

Analysing the problem of the coverage of terrorism from the governmental perspectives, Hocking underlines a prevailing idea of symbiosis of the media and terrorists. "Media recognition is absolutely crucial; the success of a terrorist act depends mainly on the media coverage it enjoys" (Frey, 1987 cited Hocking, 1992, p.87). Though calls for controlling the media with regard to the coverage of terrorist events usually come from the government, a survey taken in 1994 by Times/Mirror Centre for the People and the Press (now the Pew Centre) shows public opinion supporting censorship to discourage terrorism. According to the study, 71 per cent of British respondents supported censorship (See Figure A).
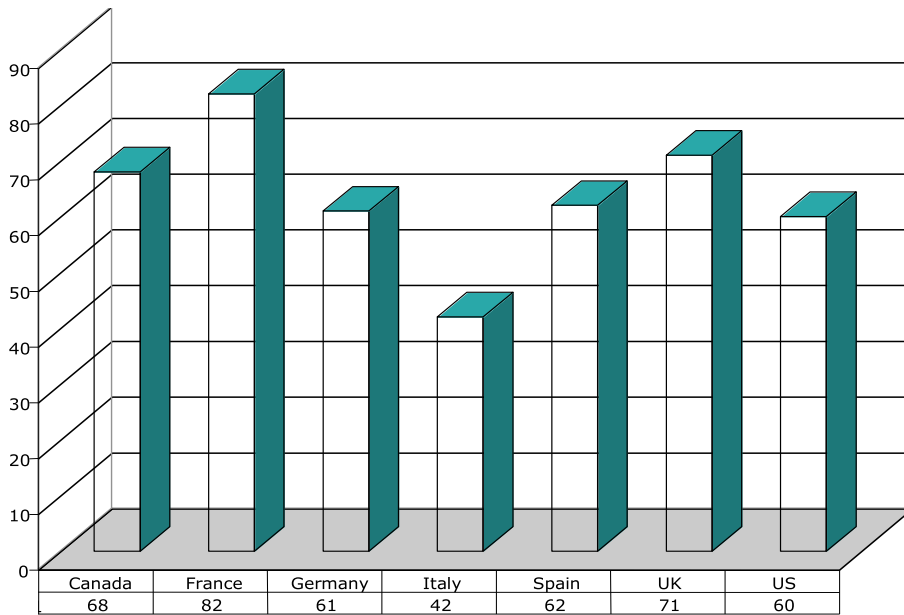
Arguing with a possible opinion that this is  because of the high level of terrorism in the UK, Chris Frost (2000) calls attention to both Spain and Italy, which have the same problems, but had a lower number of respondents calling for censorship (62 per cent and 42 per cent, respectively).

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[1] "Thatcher, Margaret"  *The Oxford Dictionary of Modern Quotations*. Ed. Elizabeth Knowles. Oxford University Press, 2002. *Oxford Reference Online*. Oxford University Press.  18 August 2003 <http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t93.001752>

A survey taken by The Public Opinion Foundation in 2002 just 3 weeks later the hostage taking in theatre "Na Dubrovke" demonstrates supporting censorship by Russian respondents. 53 per cent of respondent s supported state censorship (See Figure B).

**Figure A. Support for censorship to discourage terrorism**



| | Canada | France | Germany | Italy | Spain | UK | US |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 68 | 82 | 61 | 42 | 62 | 71 | 60 |

*Sourse: Times/Mirror Centre for the People
and the Press survey, 1994*

**Figure B. Support for censorship in Russia**

| The media needs state censorship | 53% |
|---|---|
| The media does not need state censorship | 22% |
| I don't know what censorship means | 16% |
| No answer | 9% |
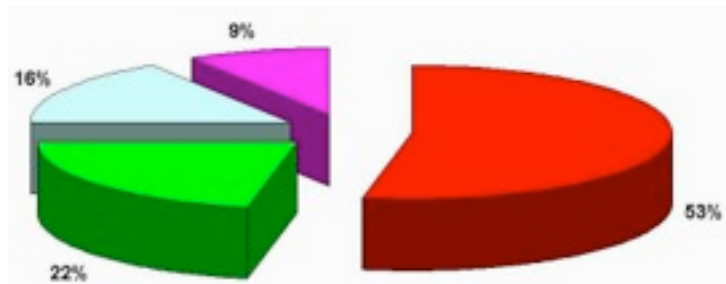


*Source: The Public Opinion Foundation (Russia)
survey, 16 November, 2002*

The organisation Article 19, the International Centre against Censorship in Johannesburg, in 1995 formulated principles, which recommended governments to use in the preparation of laws in the field of freedom of expression and information rights. According to Principle 2 of the document, for instance, a restriction sought to be justified on the ground of national security "is not legitimate unless its genuine purpose and demonstrable effect is to protect a country's existence or its territorial integrity against the use or threat of force, or its capacity to respond to the use or threat of force, whether from an external source, such as a military threat, or an internal source, such as incitement to violent overthrow of the government". In addition, Principle 13 declares, "in all laws and decisions concerning the right to obtain information, the public interest in knowing the information shall be a primary consideration".

Even those democratic states which have been under pressure from terrorism have been unenthusiastic about comprehensive censorship of the media's coverage of terrorism.

> *It is widely recognised that it is important to avoid the mass media being hijacked and manipulated by terrorists, but if the freedom of the media is sacrificed in the name of combating terrorism one has allowed small groups of terrorists to destroy one of the key foundations of a democratic society (Wilkinson, 1997).*

Thirdly, for some authors (Schmid, 1992; Wilkinson, 1997; Frost, 2000) voluntary self-restraint and self-regulation by the media seem to be the best policy options for a democratic society in regard to the media's response to terrorism. This media policy is the most favoured by the more responsible mass media organisations. Many major media have adopted guidelines for their staff with the aim of helping to prevent the more obvious mistakes.

The following section demonstrates a variety of self-restraint mechanisms regarding to media ethics.

## 2.2. Media ethics: discussion about self-regulation mechanisms

Ethics, in fact, is the branch of philosophy that deals with the moral component of human life and is usually referred to as moral philosophy. As Day (1999) ponders over the terms *ethics* and *morals* which are often used interchangeably. He reflects the growing realization that professional ethical behaviour cannot be divorced entirely from the moral standards of society at large.

Ethics is often thought of as a rational process applying established principles when two moral obligations collide. The most difficult ethical dilemmas arise when conflicts arise between two "right" moral obligations (Hopkins, 1997; Day, 1999; Merill, 1997).

The incoherence of journalistic discourse about professional ethics is merely a reflection of a larger societal incoherence with respect to moral discourse (Knowlton, 1997). MacIntyre suggests that this inconsistency is the product of a philosophical confusion that results from the encounter in public discourse of several competing and incompatible philosophical traditions (MacIntyre, 1984).

Alex P. Schmid (1992, p.125) lists a set of ethical principles of journalism which has emerged "in the Western democracies among the quality media". The following elements are included into the list:
- to report truthfully (honestly, accurately, objectively, and reliably)
- to report comprehensively so that the public gets the best information available in order to develop understanding of conflicting viewpoints and to reduce ignorance of significant issues
- to report impartially (with fairness to all sides who have a point)
- to maintain editorial independence against all interest groups
- to separate news from commentary, so that one's bias toward a person or institution does not influence a news report

Schmid suggests it is arguably not only the breaking of these principles that makes media coverage of terrorism problematic, but "also the issues not covered adequately by these principles".

The fundamental principles expressed in journalism's codes of ethics are supposed to provide the basis for ethical decision-making. (Iggers, 1998, p. 35)

David L. Paletz and Laura L. Tawney (1992, p.105) scale broadcasting organisations according to the existence of guidelines concerning the coverage of terrorism:

> Level 1 - no rules for covering terrorism; no guidelines, codes or even approaches;
>
> Level 2 - no rules, but philosophies or general policies about how to cover terrorism;
>
> Level 3 - no rules for terrorism, but general programming rules for coverage of violence and civil disorders;
>
> Level 4 - standardised guidelines;
>
> Level 5 - detailed rules, codes, and guidelines.

In doing this, the scholars take into account the fact that the absence of a code does not necessarily mean untrammelled or detached coverage.

The prescriptions of the codes are mainly negative, specifying banned conduct and classifying the limits of the allowable conduct. Iggers (1998) is concerned with this leading connection with misconduct rather than defining journalistic discourse.

That does not mean that journalists should rely on situational ethics – a "hum a few bars and I'll fake it" (Seib and Fitzpatrick, 1997, p.202) approach to moral judgments. The rights and responsibilities of journalists should be accompanied by "a carefully reasoned loyalty to some theory or theories of ethics that can guide the day-to-day practice" (Ibid).

Anderson (1993) supposes general guidelines too often do not fit all cases. He states that ethical questions can be answered only individually and as each case happens:

> *The media are not a single entity that can be cautioned, leaned on or controlled. It is difficult to get a group of journalists to agree on something as simple as a basic code of ethics. It is unrealistic to expect any widespread voluntary restraint in matters that involve such attention-grabbing events as terrorist attacks (Anderson, 1993).*

Even when journalistic traditions and the ethical systems in which they develop are widely different, Herrscher (2002, p.289) believes that discussion of a possible Universal code of journalism ethics "can be useful, positive, and healthy for all those involved". The main argument for it is globalisation of communication and standardisation of practices and codes around the world. Providing the idea of one ethical code for al journalists, Herrscher draws a parallel with a Universal declaration of human rights: "Human rights are still violated, but without the declaration the world would be much worse off".

Nevertheless, the 1999 Annual Report of the Press Complaints Commission, an independent body which deals with complaints from members of the public about the editorial content of newspapers and magazines in the UK, showed its opposition to plans publicized by bodies such as the World Association of Press Councils to establish some form of global Code of media ethics. The Commission strongly believes that systems of media regulation should be organised at a local level and responsive to the needs and culture of a particular country. The report includes the Lord Wakeham's following words:

> *"The strength of the media in Europe is that it is so different, from country to country, and so vibrant and competitive. The regulation of it needs to spring from national cultures and the demands of the public at a national level. You simply cannot do that at a European or global level. My own personal belief is that the only role of European or global bodies should be to promote as much truly independent self regulation as possible - in as many countries as possible. But it must be promoted*

*always at a national level in response to local needs and based on nations' differing cultures".*

Supporting that, Bakshtanovsky (1998) focuses on the trend in the Russian media to copy the professional codes of conduct of the Western media. He ponders on automatically transferring complexes of rules without "our own moral search". Keeping in mind the differences in value systems, Bakshtanovsky sees that duplication is not only useless but dangerous.

Professor Claude-Jean Bertrand in his foreword to Christians' (1993) book "Good news: social ethics and the press" expounds three ways for inciting media professionals to be ethical. The oldest is external physical pressure, by laws, police, and courts. From Bertrand's point of view, these should be used as little as possible but are essential to preserve freedom for all. The second road is internal moral pressure from the individual conscience but it does not really work "in the days of big media". The researcher believes in "the most reliable and acceptable external moral pressure, coming from peers and the public", preferably in an institutionalized form, such as media ombudsmen, press councils, critical reviews, and a score of other accountability systems.

However, media accountability systems have not multiplied. As Bertrand notes, there are "fewer than a hundred ombudsmen in the world for tens of thousands of media". A major reason for this may be, he proposes, the traditional media ethics: the ideal of uncontrolled individualism and of an unregulated market.

Whatever points of view researchers advocate, they agree that codes of ethics cannot be conceived, developed or applied in a cultural or political vacuum. A wide range of historical, economic, political, social, and cultural factors may influence what appears on TV screens, on radio, on web, and in print. In this study the British and Russian media are examined so the researcher's attention is focused on the ethical systems the media presents. The next section is devoted to the difference between libertarian and communitarian media ethical systems.

## 2.2. Libertarian and communitarian ethical values

Historically speaking, liberalism was a product of the Enlightenment. Modern communitarianism was primarily an outgrowth of the Reformation (White, 2000).

On the contrary with the atomic individualism of Western liberalism, communitarians emphasize communal nature of society. Communitarians argue that human beings are not really atomic individuals at all, but rather members of croups and/or communities (Tam, 1998).

Liberal critics of communitarianism argue that community standards are eventually set by a few influential individuals; those standards may be or maybe not set objectively. Therefore, communitarians often advocate legal moralism as a liberty-limiting principle. "Politically, communitarianism tends toward aristocracy (or theocracy) rather than democracy" (White, 2000).

The most well-known attempt to define models of the press was done by Frederick S. Siebert et al (1963) in their Four Theories of the Press. The authoritarian theory, the libertarian theory, the Soviet theory and the social responsibility theory were suggested as the main normative models of the press. Denis McQuail (1984) later proposed two additional models: the development model and the democratic-participant model. Different other models suggested are all variants of libertarian, social democratic and authoritarian systems.

It is described that the Western private media are libertarian meaning that they enjoy full independence from the government. Its history is usually drawn back to 17th century philosopher John Milton, who stated in his "Areopagitica" competition between choices would eventually bring about the best possible order, both for the individual and society at large. This 'free will' principle relates to the press as well.

The philosophy of the Enlightenment, with its positive view of human nature and human freedom, had a direct influence on the thinking of the role of the

press in society. Only through free competition of ideas the truth can be faced. The libertarian press model is deeply embedded in a certain human and moral philosophy.

The core of the theory is a negative idea that links liberty with freedom from external and internal control. Isaiah Berlin (1969) says human goals are numerous and accordingly "the highest premium must be placed on the freedom *from* any political claim" that there is a remarkable human ideal that should be practised by all 'good' citizens. Anderson (1993) confirms:

> *We learned to be very suspicious of our leaders, and in particular any attempt by them to overtly control the information to which we have access.*

Speaking about the role of journalists in liberalism, Anderson (1993) refers to the "fundamental belief in objectivity". Journalists are meant to present the facts and the facts only for the audience equipped with seemingly unbiased material to analyze and draw conclusions. The journalistic ideal means by allowing the public access to the widest variety of information, which the audience will be able to use to develop informed opinions and make wide decisions. Reporting for Hopkins (2002) initially means to be "candid". Otherwise, "our credibility will quickly erode". Reporters' morality became equivalent to an objective, unbiased reporting of facts.

Nevertheless, most Western countries (except the USA) have some kind of state or public broadcasting system which is not congruent with classic libertarian principles.

Communitarianism is a quite new philosophy even though, as Amitai Etzioni (1995) points out, the term existed in political philosophy in Ancient Greece. More recently, Charles Taylor, Michael J. Sandel and Michael Walzer in the 1980s disputed liberal values from the concept of a "common good". The community ought to secure the proper balance between common good and individual autonomy, "avoiding a society which leans towards social anarchy or conformism" (Etzioni, 1995).

The media soon became an inherent part of the communitarian society. It was concluded that the press had failed its societal duties, and a new journalism

based on local participation. This type of journalism is called public journalism, civic journalism, responsible journalism, communitarian journalism, etc. Public journalism is firmly based on normative ethics which rejects both libertarian normative ethics based on the autonomous self, and post-modern relativist ethics based on an understanding of opposing discourses at any given time (Christians et al., 1993).

Communitarians also wish to have a say that information in the world is unequally distributed. Communitarians claim that such findings prove that information systems are not only undemocratic in them, but also serve to threaten democracy at large. On the basis of this argument, Christians et al. (1993, p.75) claim that "the inclusiveness of community clearly implies institutional and intellectual restructuring."

Jonh C. Merill (1997) highlights the duality of emphasis in journalistic ethics. The libertarians put the primary emphasis on individual and personal ethics and self-development, as the communitarians place the society or community development and harmony first (See Figure C). At the same time the philosophical emphases cannot be mutually excluded.

Figure C. Two Ethical Mega-Emphases by John C. Merill

| Libertarianism | Communitarianism |
| --- | --- |
| **Enlightenment liberals** | **Groupists / Cooperationists** |
| Individualism | Networking / social cohesion |
| Diversity | Conformity / bonding |
| Competition | Cooperation |
| Existentialism | Absolutism |
| Pluralistic society | Universal solidarity |
| Meritocracy | Egalitarianism |
| Maximum freedom of expression | Restrained freedom |
| Relative / pragmatic ethics | Absolute / normative / universal ethics |
| Personal ethical codes | Legalistic ethical codes |
| Personal transformation | "Civic transformation" |
| "Inner-directed" motivation | "Other-directed" motivation |
| Self-enhancement | Selflessness |
| Self reliance | Like-minded worldview |
| Anti-media professionalization | Media professionalization |
| Full-spectrum news | "Positive" / "socially helpful" news |
| **Exemplars** | **Exemplars** |
| Lao-Tsu, Socrates, Aquinas, Milton, Locke, Hume, Voltaire, Constant, Jefferson, Mill, Nietzsche, Thoreau, Camus, Jaspers, Rand, Nozick | Confucius, Plato, Augustine, Rousseau, Hegel, Marx, Niebuhr, Hutchins, Bellah, MacIntyre, Lasch, Sandel, Jonas, Etzioni, Rawls |

*Source: Merrill, John C (1997) Journalism ethics : philosophical foundations for news media*

Libertarian individualism was a revolutionary doctrine against dictators who controlled the news. At the same time, this created confusion about the news media's rationale and mission. Thoughtful members of the profession recognize that "great issues of the information age demand more details than journalistic morality in the democratic liberal tradition has provided". (Christians et al, 1993, p.44)

Liberalism, the founding philosophy of many constitutional democracies, has been criticized in recent years for placing too much trust in individual rights and distributive justice. The ideas of the Enlightenment are progressively

more being distrusted. Stephen Whittle, Controller of the BBC Editorial policy, articulated his worries on the IIC Broadcasting Forum, 7 February, 2002:

> *We are becoming more individually driven in both our consumerism and in our moral universe. "Independence" rates higher than "community"; "self belief" more than "faith". There is a real tension between freedom and responsibility.*

Dialogic in character, communitarianism seeks intertextual narratives of individuals not framed by, but indelibly part of, their communal experience (Mahfood, 2001). In the development of a system of communication, communitarianism avoids all perceived constructs of domination by focusing on pluralism of experience, language, culture and identity (Ibid).

Another significant difference between liberal and communitarian journalism is the extent to which an editor will permit the expression of a reporter's personal opinion. It is considered in bad taste and evidence of a lack of training for a reporter to impose her or his views on the audience in the Western tradition.

However, in the Russian press, the presentations of personal comments, evaluations, and remarks of reporters are still a common practice (Danilochkin, 1995). Although some news services have taken the completely opposite approach, aiming for an objective account of events, this trend has not become dominant. Some advocates of so-called literary journalism have actually strengthened their positions against those who became adept at a laconic 'news-only' style. This literary kind of writing is fostered by a long-practiced and cherished tradition of Aesopian language-the use of a hidden and sometimes explosive message embedded in a context that seems perfectly innocent and politically acceptable (Danilochkin, 1995).

Professor Claude-Jean Bertrand in his foreword to Christians' (1993) book "Good news: social ethics and the press" emphasizes: "Quite a few Europeans believe that alternative exists both to the horrors of totalitarianism and to the wild outburst of jungle individualism".

The former president of USSR Mikhail Gorbachev points that the world should look beyond two extreme ideas:

> *While we must calmly analyse the dangers of collectivism, we must do the same for the individualism of the West. Changes in the world must affect and alter the consumerist direction of Western culture … The crisis of modern civilisation has done immense damage to mankind. It has undermined social instinct family values, moral principles. (Gorbachev, 1993 cited Tam, 1998, p.2)*

William Ernest Hocking, the Harvard professor of philosophy who prepared the Hutchins Commission's "Framework of Principle", promoted a version of free expression inspired by the Socialist view of the press: that freedom is not just a "freedom of issuers" or a professional right, but a moral prerogative of the society-as-a-whole.

Michael Ignatieff (2000 cited Plaisance, 2002, p.206) presumes that journalists are transforming, "willing or not, into 'much more than mediators' of conflicting sources of information".

Both individualistic and communitarian philosophical foundations can be a basis for journalists' decision-making, but, as Merill (1997, p.220) proposes:

> *Rational journalists' those who desire to be ethical, will try to avoid the extremes of both individualism and communitarianism. They will value self **and** community… … This is part of ethical mutualism. At the same time, ethical journalists will try to develop a moral character (the indirect view) while they also consider the importance of specific acts in particular situations as they arise (the direct view).*

# Methodology

The following section reveals the details on research design, covering the sources of data collection and methods.

Research aims and objectives

The aim of the study is to explore whether and how media coverage of a terrorist act depends on the ethical system which media presents. In particular, the study explores how this was realized in reports by the two web-sites news.bbc.co.uk and www.vesti.ru, concerning the hostage taking in theatre "Na Dubrovke", Moscow, 23-26 October 2002.

In order to achieve the aim of the study, three main objectives have been identified.

1. To compare how the web-sites of the BBC and Channel "Russia" represented the Moscow hostage crisis 23-26 October 2002.
2. To explore to what extent did journalists and editors take into account any codes of ethics while reporting the event.
3. To investigate how different media ethical values are reflected in the coverage.

Research design

A key part of any research activity is the development of an effective research strategy or a research design (Creswell, 2003). The research design will generally detail the most suitable methods of investigation, the nature of the research instruments, the sampling plan, and the types of data, i.e. quantitative or qualitative (Descombe, 1998; Deacon et al, 1999; Fitzpatrick et al, 1998).  A research design forms the framework of the entire research process. If it is a good design, it will ensure that the information obtained is relevant to the research problem and that it was collected by objective and

economic procedures. A poorly designed survey will fail to provide accurate answers to the questions under investigation.

Denscombe (1998, p. 173) states that in practice the quantitative and the qualitative methods are not mutually exclusive. At the same time, Fitzpatrick et al (1998, p. 21) argue that combining both methodologies is "to attempt suicide and not be successful".

Generally, journalists' material is derived from other sources, such as witnesses' reports, official statements, interviews, documents, press releases, press conferences, press agencies, and other news media. The construction of news therefore is "most of all a reconstruction of available discourses" (van Dijk, 1988). Subsequently, it is one-sided to analyse so comprehensive concept as media coverage of an event just from the one perspective.

Also, Campbell (1959 cited Creswell 2003, p. 64) gave credence to "maximally different methods". He though that methods should lie along some sort of "continuum of difference".

This study uses both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to obtain the most comprehensive data with which to answer the research question. The author agrees with Denscombe (1998) in that good research is likely to use parts of both approaches, because assumptions from each methodology will frequently overlap.

The research was conducted in two languages, English and Russian, which had both advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, the bilingualism of the study allows analysing the sample as close to the original material as possible. On the other hand, it was a bit difficult to relate some categories and definitions from the Russian side to the English side and vice versa. Nevertheless, the research design has minimised the gap caused by using two languages for the study.

## The quantitative method employed in this study

Quantitative content analysis is just one of several established research techniques which may be used in text analysis (Berger, 1991; Silverman, 1993). Krippendorff (1980) characterises content analysis as a research technique for use in analysing a wide variety of communications (not just text) which is: "unobtrusive", "accepts unstructured material" and structures it in such a way as to enable further analysis; and is a method which "can cope with large volumes of data" (Krippendorff, 1980, pp 29-31). Furthermore, it involves analysing messages which are used to inform people about something they have not directly experienced.

The purpose of content analysis is to quantify relevant and manifest features of a large number of texts, and the statistics are used to make broader inferences about the processes and politics of representation (Deacon et al, 1999). Silverman (1993 p. 59) explains:

> *The research method involves establishing categories and then counting the number of instances when those categories are used in a particular item of text. . . [It] pays particular attention to the issue of reliability of its measures - ensuring that different researchers use them in the same way - and to the validity of its findings - through precise counts of word use.*

Deacon et al (1999) state that there are no definitive guidelines on the issue of sample size. The final decision will be a compromise between the minimal theoretical and empirical requirements.

Content analysis offers several advantages to researchers who consider using it. In particular, content analysis looks directly at communication through texts or transcripts, and that is why it gets to the central aspect of social interaction; allows using both quantitative and qualitative procedures; can be used to interpret texts; provides insight into complex models of human thought and language use (Berger, 1991, p.93; Palmquist, 1997).

Nevertheless, Palmquist (1997) and Berger (1991) are concerned about several disadvantages of the method, both theoretical and practical. In particular, content analysis can be extremely time-consuming; subject to increased error, mostly when analysis is used to attain a higher level of interpretation; tends too often to just count words; often disregards the context that produced the text, as well as the state of things after the text is produced; is inherently reductive, particularly when dealing with complex texts.

To achieve the aim of the study, the sample includes only journalistic reports concerning the hostage taking published on the news.bbc.co.uk and www.vesti.ru web-sites.

The analysis of vocabulary or lexical choice is to be a central component of content analysis (Hansen et al, 1998). The analysis of lexical choice was oriented on the labels given hostages, hostage takers and state forces by the two media. See Appendix 6 for the results of the analysis.

For the analysis of vocabulary or lexical choice 116 articles published on the news web-sites of the BBC and Channel "Russia" were chosen - 24 from news.bbc.co.uk and 92 from www.vesti.ru. Although this sample may seem unbalanced at first sight there was a reason for that choice. The average length of the English articles is 25 sentences but the Russian ones usually consist of 7 sentences (the count of words is unreasonable because of the different grammatical structure in the two languages).

The second step of the content analysis was a study of the journalists' texts and video materials according to the coding frame presented in Appendices 2, 3. The aims of the analysis were to explore the focus of the materials, balance in presenting facts and opinions, subjects of the articles and the video reports.

For the management and analysis of quantitative data a spreadsheet and analysis program Microsoft Excel was used.

<u>The qualitative method employed in this study</u>

Due to the exploratory nature of the approach to research, the adopted qualitative research method requires in-depth insight and richness of data in the subject area (Denscombe, 1998).

Qualitative interviews with journalists and editors involved in reporting the Moscow theatre siege enabled the cross validation of findings, known as "triangulation" (Fitzpatrick et al, 1998; Deacon et al, 1999). This means "the combination of different research methods to reveal different dimensions of the same phenomena" (Fitzpatrick et al, 1998, p.28). This was the reason for interviews, where the data obtained is more detailed and rich, as well as offering some immediate means of validation, which is not so feasible with questionnaires or with telephone survey (Denscombe, 1998).

All interviews, except one with Respondent 5, were held after the completion of the content analysis, so it was possible to obtain more specific information about the quantitative findings.

Interviews were carried out with 2 journalists from the BBC and 1 journalist and 2 editors from Channel "Russia". All the people listed below were involved in reporting the hostage taking in Moscow, 23-26 October 2002.
Respondent 1.
Danila Galperovich, political correspondent, Russian Service, BBC
Respondent 2.
Andrei Medvedev, correspondent, "Vesti" TV news program, Channel "Russia"
Respondent 3.
Caroline Wyatt, BBC Paris correspondent, (from November 2000 to April 2003 she worked as the BBC Moscow Correspondent)
Respondent 4.
Kirill Demkov, senior editor of the web-site www.vesti.ru, Department of Internet broadcasting, Channel "Russia"
Respondent 5.

Angelina Timofeeva, editor-in-chief of the web-site www.tvkultura.ru, Department of Internet broadcasting, Channel "Russia", (23-26 October 2002 she worked as an editor of the web-site www.vesti.ru)

In addition, two interviews were held with persons from the BBC and Channel "Russia" who are responsible for editorial policy:

Respondent 6.
Stephen Whittle, BBC Controller of Editorial Policy

Respondent 7.
Yulia Rakcheeva, Deputy of the News Department, Channel "Russia".

All interviews were carried out in July, August and September 2003. Face-to-face interviews were impossible because of limited time and funds; the respondents were in Moscow, London and Paris. Interviews with respondents 1, 2, 3, 6 and 7 were conducted by telephone; respondents 4 and 5 chose to be interviewed by e-mail because of lack of time and personal preferences. E-mail interview has some limits for researchers, such as self-editing by an interviewee. However, the researcher had an opportunity to ask further questions to respondents 4 and 5 if needed. Interviews 1, 2, 4, 5 and 7 were conducted in Russian, and interviews 3 and 6 in English following the interviewees' preferences.

A flexible topic guide comprising a set of predetermined general themes, in order to steer the overall interviewing process, was used in line with an inductive approach and qualitative research practices. Deacon et al (1999, p. 290) make a point that this typically frees the researcher from the constraints of specific pre-set types of questions by allowing themes from earlier interviews to be fed into the next ones with plenty of scope to explore new or unexpected angles. It also ensures, on the other hand, that a similar type of data from all informants is collected (Daymon and Holloway, 2002, p.171).

The interview topic guide for journalists and editors included the following areas:

- How journalists learn about ethical standards of the media
- Choice of labels for people involved in terrorist acts
- Ethical questions which had to be decided in the coverage of the Moscow hostage taking
- Personal views of the interviewees on the meaning of "ethical reporting of a terrorist act"
- Balanced reporting as an ethical issue
- Effectiveness of a written code of conduct in routine work
- Personal views on the value of different ways of regulation: laws, codes, self-regulation
- Personal views on the possibility of having an agreement between the media and the state in some ways limiting the coverage of terrorist acts.

Questions were open-ended, designed to explore respondents` views in their own words without influence from the researcher and to encourage interviewees to develop their own arguments. In order, that reliable data for analysis could be produced; interviews were tape recorded with the interviewees` permission.

In interviewing the possibility of bias should be kept in the mind of the researcher. The interviewer takes an outsider stance, which is seen as advantage in terms of objectivity. On the other hand, the research acknowledges the influence of the researcher's "own political values" (Silverman, 2001, p.25) such as a subjective understanding of ethical journalism, the researcher's personal ethical values and cultural background. Even though the researcher tried to remain as neutral as possible (Hansen et al, 1998; Deacon et al, 1999), the fact remains that the researcher's preferences, established assumptions and concepts might still have biased the interview process, elicitation of information and interpretation of answers (Deacon et al, 1999; Denscombe, 1998).

The important limitation refers to the researcher's own interviewing abilities as the study is of such a scale and the researcher does not have special training in conducting scientific interviews. Furthermore, the researcher is aware that her status as a student caused uneasiness.

Besides, some interviews were conducted in English, which is a foreign language for the researcher thus missing the subtleties and opportunity to enter in more depth about certain remarks by the interviewees.

Reliability and validity

Reliability and validity are crucial aspects of research in practice and their importance are underestimated at the researchers' peril. Hansen et al (1998, p.19) suggest the two terms are arguably interconnected and it should be noted that a certain degree of overlap does occur.

Reliability refers to the stability and consistency of the results produced by the research: to the effect that the same results could be obtained if the research was repeated in exactly the same way. Essentially reliability is concerned with the consistency, accuracy and predictability of the research findings ().

Validity on the other hand refers to how well a specific research method measures what it claims to measure. Validity can be divided into two main types: internal and external. Internal validity refers to measures related to a specific survey rather than universally transferable findings; for instance, successful practice for the BBC may not be valid to other media. In contrast, external validity refers to the degree to which specific research findings can be generalised into other non-related research situations (Gunter, 2000). For a research measure to be valid, it must also be reliable. But if it is reliable, it may or may not be valid. Hence, reliability is a necessary but not sufficient condition for validity.

The quantitative content analysis in this study is both reasonably valid and reliable to produce objective results. Carrying out pilot studies and updating

the coding frame (See Appendices 1-3) helped to ensure the findings are valid and reliable as much as possible.

The interviews employed as a qualitative method for this study have weaknesses concerning how valid and reliable they can be supposed to be. Interpretation of findings is subjective process, so may affect the results of the research.

To sum up, both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to how media coverage of a terrorist act depends on the ethical system which media presents. The researcher puts equal importance on findings from the interviews, as it does on findings from the content analysis.

# Findings and discussion

*This chapter presents the key findings from the content analysis and interviews. These findings are set out in the order of the research objectives. Quotations are extracted from the interviews to support the summary of these findings. This chapter discusses major findings, which emerged from the study and provides a synthesis of these findings with the arguments identified in the literature.*

4.1. Quantitative findings

There are some parallels in the ways of presenting information by both web-sites. First of all, both of the media publish textual information accompanying with pictures, video reports, and links. Both of them use a feature as a form for presenting analytical materials, observations and political, historical and social context. Both of the web-sites highlight graphically opinions and quotes inside materials.

However, the reports which are published on the two web-sites are different in terms of their structure.

The Russian www.vesti.ru brought out small (the average length of the articles was 7 sentences) reports with new information its journalists and editors managed to gather. A material could be unbalanced in terms of presenting in one text all sides which have a point. The audience was supposed to follow the news and to wait for new information.

In contrast, the web-site news.bbc.co.uk published online comprehensive reports which presented the maximum information journalists could find until time of issue even they repeated information, pictures and quotes from

previous publications. The audience of the web-site was expected to get a whole picture of the event from one report.

The definition of terrorism has an impact on whether or not the doers of an act of violence are labelled "criminals", "terrorists", "rebels" or "freedom fighters" (Wilkinson, 1997). It is especially important given that media's choice of label in their coverage of an act of violence stands to influence the audience's views of the act.

The analysis of lexical choice showed how the two web-sites called the key parts of the hostage taking – hostages, hostage takers, and state representatives (including special and security forces). As it was presented in the literature review, labelling of people committed a terrorist act is the most questionable. Naming the two other key parts of the situation by the two media – www.vesti.ru and news.bbc.co.uk - was approximately the similar.

The percentage bar chart in Figure D provides a summary of the results from the comparison of names given the hostages by the two web-sites. Five the most popular words were taken into the chart. It clearly shows that four out of five the most popular labels are the same in materials published by the British and the Russian web-sites. They are "hostages", "people", "children", and "foreigners". The difference is only in the fifth most used label. It is emotionally neutral "audience" (3.55 %) for the www.vesti.ru and expressive "captives" (6.16 %) for the news.bbc.co.uk.

It indicates the naming of the hostages by the two media firstly as people. Journalists showed them from the human point of view by giving such characteristics.  Concentrating on "foreigners" the media possibly underlined international level of the event. In spite of general "foreigners" the media used "citizens of".  The usage of the definition "foreigners" (including "citizens" and names of different nationalities) was 26.4 per cent for the news.bbc.co.uk and 14.6 per cent for the www.vesti.ru.

It is remarkable that the word "Russians" as a label for the hostages was used in less than 1 per cent of all nominations (0.39 % for www.vesti.ru and 0.36 % for news.bbc.co.uk).

**Figure D. Labels given the hostages by the web-sites news.bbc.co.uk and www.vesti.ru**
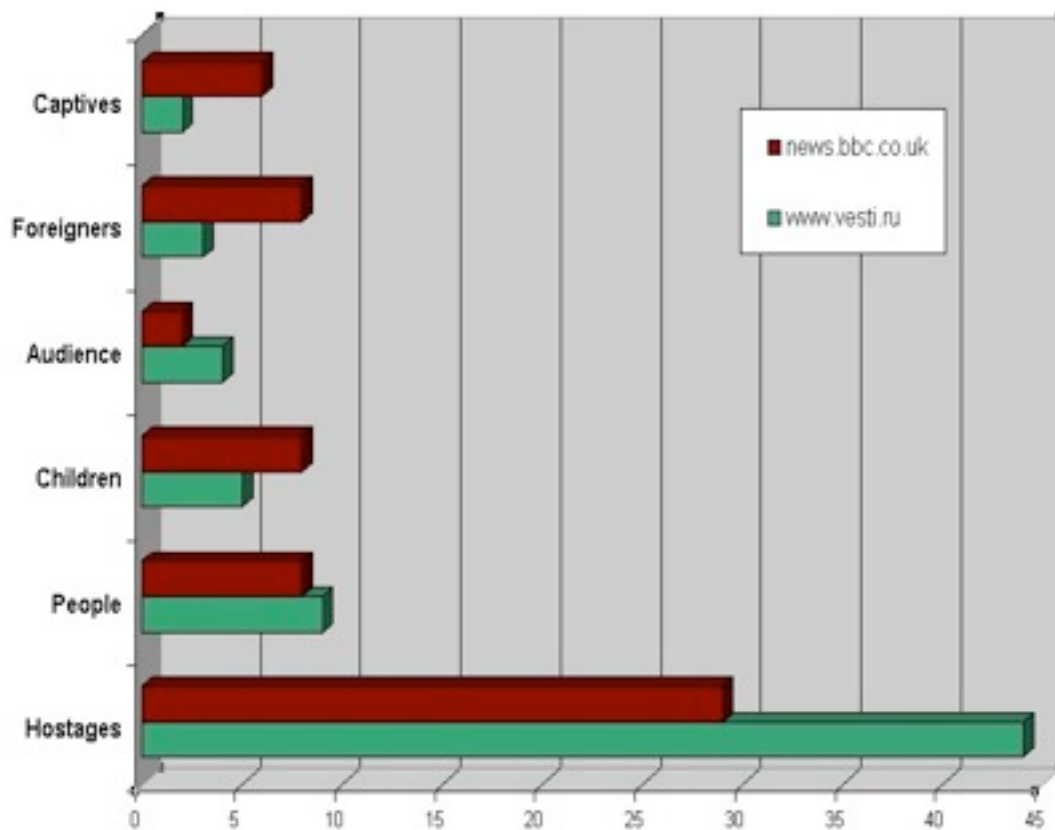


Another accent was made on gender of the hostages. The sum of "a woman" and "women" was 7.97 per cent of all definitions given by news.bbc.co.uk and 4.74 per cent given by www.vesti.ru. The percentage for "a man" and "men" was 1.45 and 2.37 respectively.

The web-sites did not use a lot of expressive lexemes to call the hostages. For example, "a victim" and "victims" received only 1.5 per cent of all labels used by the Russian web-site and 0.36 per cent used by British journalists.

Analysis of the usage of single and plural forms in the texts showed that the British web-site is more likely to show one person in comparison with the Russian web-site. 15.94 per cent of single forms were registered in reports of

the news.bbc.co.uk and 10.27 per cent were found in materials of the www.vesti.ru.

Figure E depicts a summary of the results from the analysis of definitions given state representatives and forces by the two media.  The summarised results in Figure E show that the most popular labels are more different than in the comparison of names given to the hostages.

Although this chart may seem different from the previous one at first sight there is no dissimilarity in general. It should be kept in mind that the BBC broadcasts worldwide where not everyone is familiar with the system of Russian government. Therefore, the BBC used more general terms such as "police", "the government", "authorities" when the web-site www.vesti.ru was more concrete giving names like "the antiterrorism headquarters", "силовые структуры". It is reasonable in terms of the audience. From the chart it can be deduced that both web-sites referred to President Vladimir Putin approximately equally.

However, the fifth popular definition used by the Russian web-site is "soldiers of special forces" which is remarkable. The www.vesti.ru site focused not on state power generally only but on people who work at special and security forces and in charge of rescue hostages. There is no the same example from the BBC's materials.

**Figure E. Labels given state representatives by the web-sites news.bbc.co.uk and www.vesti.ru**

The summarised results for labelling hostage takers are depicted in Figure F. It is clear from the results that there is only one label – "Movsar Baraev" - is the same in both 'top lists' and has approximately the same percentage. Four other definitions are totally different.

**Figure F. Labels given the hostage takers by the web-sites news.bbc.co.uk and www.vesti.ru**
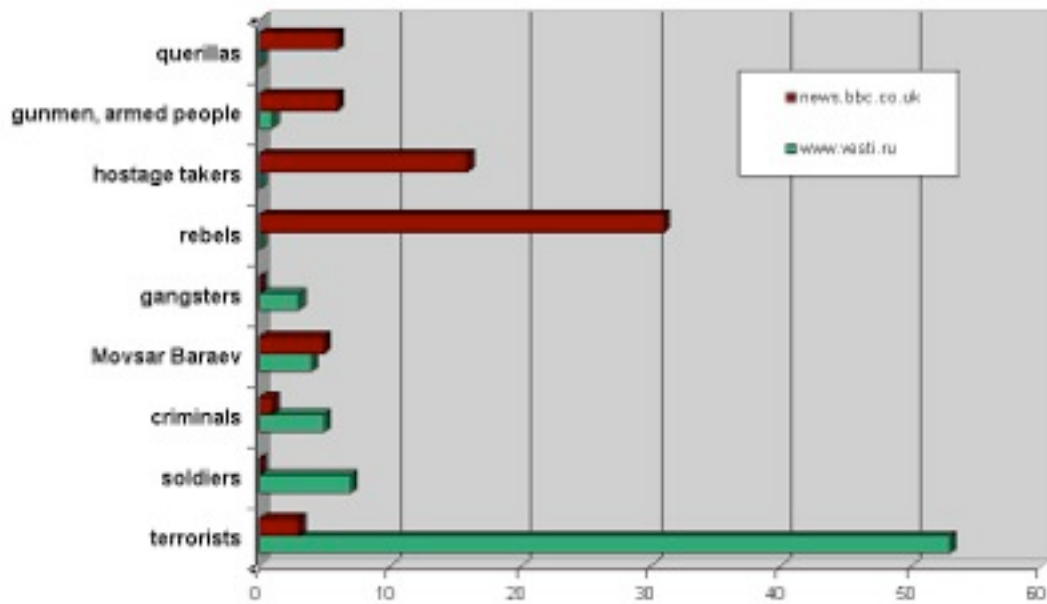


The word "terrorists" was used by Russian journalists in more than a half (53.74 %) of all names chosen for hostage takers .The BBC used it six times (3.1 %) but four of them were quoted. One third of all labels given the hostage takers by the British web-site was "rebels" which was not used by Russian journalists at all. The same is about the word "guerrilla" (6.35 % of names on the news.bbc.co.uk)

It should be mentioned that Russian journalists probably took a responsibility to criticise people committed the terrorist act. They used expressive lexemes "criminals" (4.6 %) and "gangsters" (3.3 %). These words were found in the

37
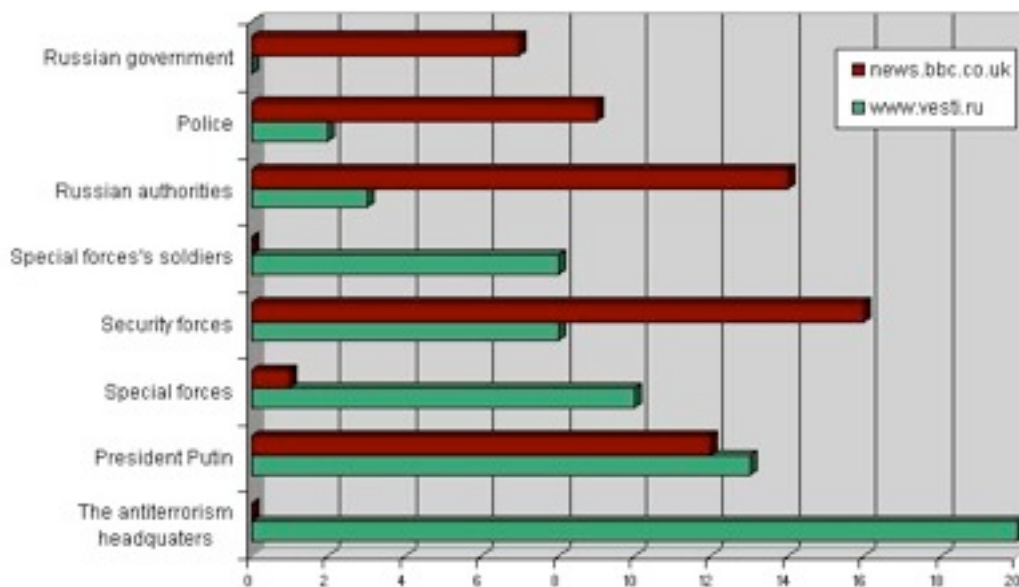
BBC's reports in 1.05 per cent and 0 per cent of materials respectively. The British web-site labelled attackers more neutrally with "hostage takers" (8.4 %), "gunmen", "armed people" (6.34 %) and "suicide troops" (3.17 %).

It is interesting note that the British web-site was four times more concentrated on the nationality of the hostage takers. "Chechens", "Chechen rebels", "Chechen suicide unit", "Members of the Chechen rebel group" and "a Chechen hostage taker" got 11.64 per cent of all definitions given by news.bbc.co.uk. However, "Chechens", "Chechen soldiers" and "Chechen mojahedeen" got 2.64 per cent of all labels given by the Russian web-site. This possibly suggests that while the British media clearly linked the event with the movement for independence of Chechnya, the Russian web-site presented the hostage taking as an act of terror which has a little connection with the conflict between the Russian government and the Russian region of Chechnya.

The chart in Figure G below illustrates the results from the analysis of labels given the event. Accents which were made by the two media are clear from the chart.

**Figure G. Labels given the event by the web-sites news.bbc.co.uk and www.vesti.ru**
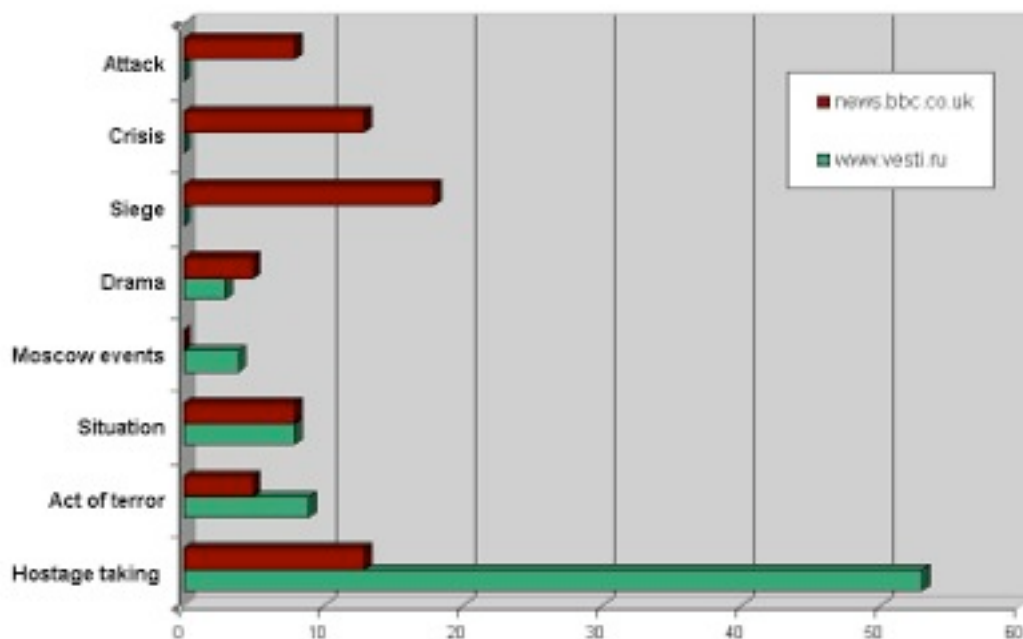
The "Hostage taking" got 53.12 per cent of all definitions used by the www.vesti.ru site. The BBC's news web-site named the event in the same way in 13.51 per cent of all definitions. It is interesting to note that three out of five words which were the most used by the British media are not registered in the Russian texts absolutely. They are "Siege" (18.92 %), "Crisis" (16.21 %) and "Attack" (8.11 %). Possibly the most neutral word – "Situation" – was used equally by both of the web-sites (8%).

The results of the analysis of headlines' focus are summarised in the pie charts below. It is clear that headlines of the Russian reports were devoted to all main parts of the event – the hostages, the hostage takers and the state forces – in about equal proportion. The news.bbc.co.uk site called the audience's attention mostly to the hostages (44%). The second place was given to the hostage takers.

**Figure H. Headlines' focus. www.vesti.ru**



**Figure J. Headlines' focus. news.bbc.co.uk**

17% 17% 22% 44%

■Hostages  ■Hostage takers  ▣State representatives and special forces  ■Others
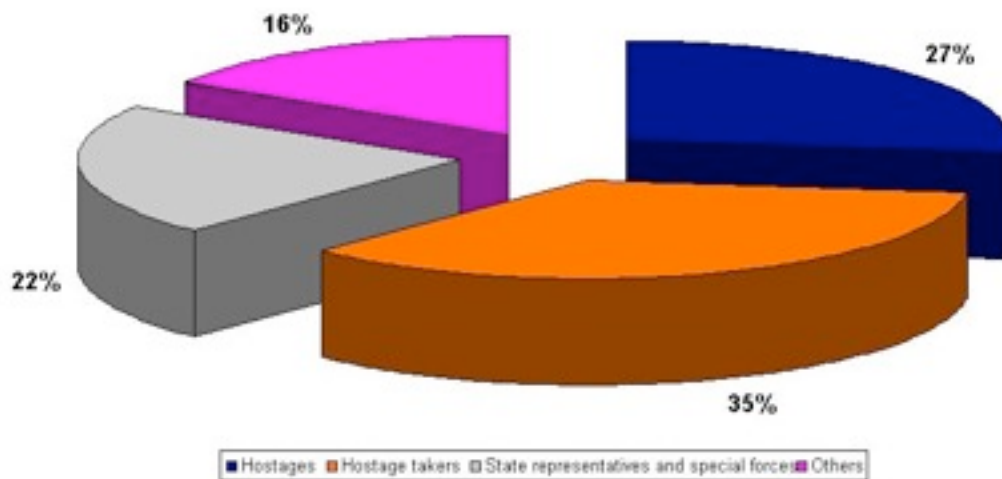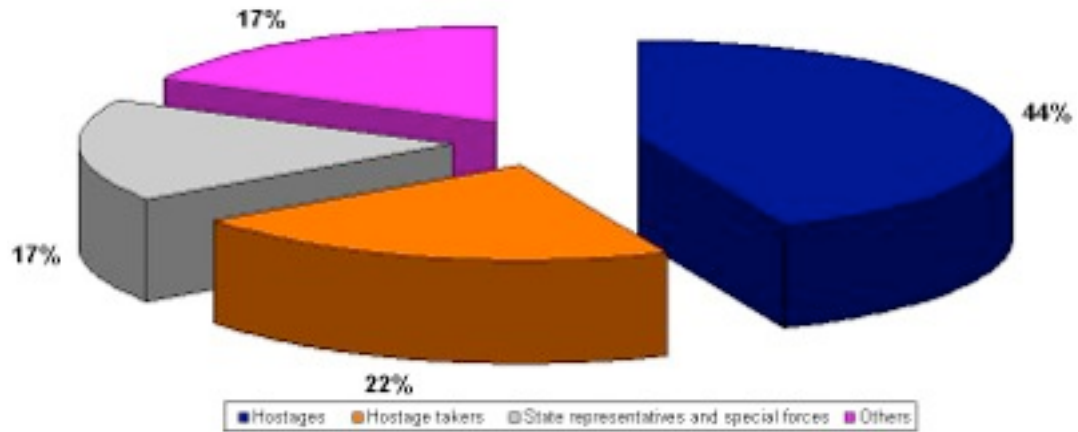
Appendix 6 contains tables which present all words used for labelling the event, the hostages, the hostage takers and state forces by the two web-sites.

The chart below demonstrates the results of the comparison of subjects which are presented in the media's reports. It is clear from the chart that while the British media concentrated on hostage takers' words and actions (15, 24), the Russian web-site more reported about the situation inside the theatre in general (11), state representatives' words (18) and hostage takers' actions (24).

**Figure K. Subjects presented in the reports**
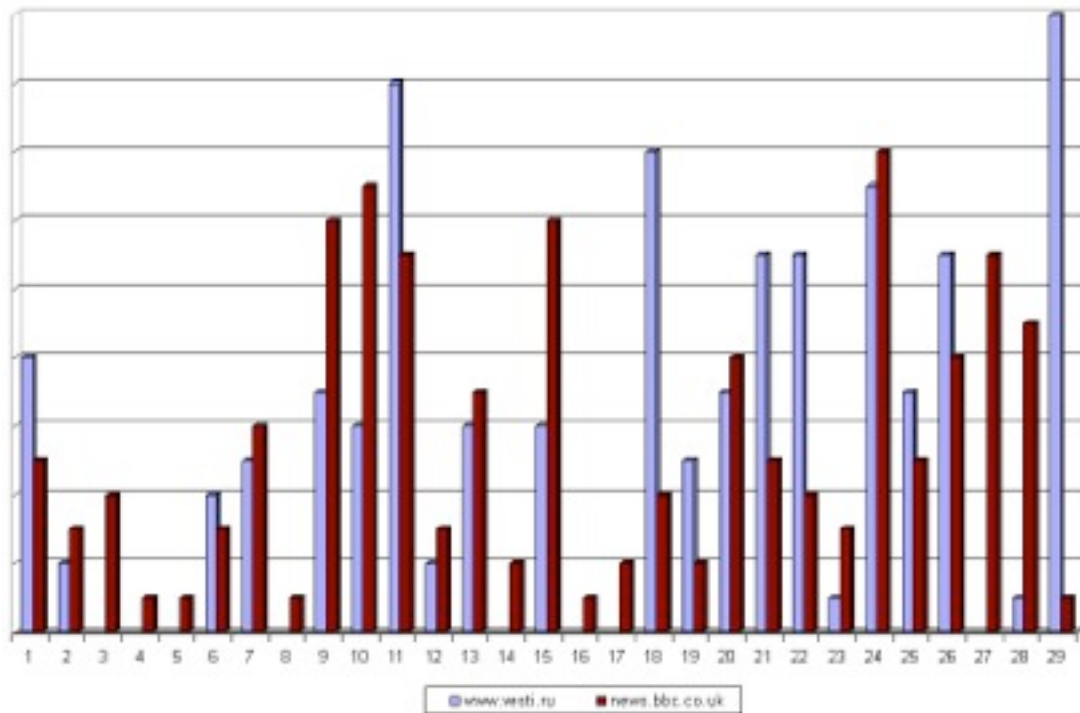


1 Situation around the theatre
2 Relations between "the state" and the hostage takers
3 Relations between "the state" and the hostages
4 Relations between the hostages and the hostage takers
5 Reaction by relatives
6 Reaction by Russian institutions
7 Reaction by international institutions
8 Expert's opinion
9 Historical context
10 Social context
11 Situation inside the theatre
12 Hostages about themselves
13 Hostages about hostage takers
14 Hostages about "the state"
15 Hostage takers about themselves
16 Hostage takers about hostages
17 Hostage takers about "the state"
18 State representatives about their actions
19 State representatives about hostages
20 State representatives about hostage takers
21 Details of the hostage taking
22 Special forces' actions
23 Hostages' actions
24 Hostage takers' actions
25 Details about hostage takers
26 Details about hostages

27     Residents' opinion
28     State representatives' actions
29     Other

Also the www.vesti.ru site paid much its attention to details of the hostage taking (21), special forces' actions (22) and details about hostages (26). The British web-site focused on historical (9) and social (10) context and residents' opinion (27).

The analysis of video materials showed that the British media shot much more often (in 4.5 times) special forces' actions than the Russian web-site. Also the hostage takers were showed more often (in 3.8 times) then on the www.vesti.ru web-site.

Blood and dead bodies were showed in the materials of both web-sites proportionally. Editors of the both sites did not focus a lot on that kind of visual information even journalists wanted to show more. In her interview Caroline Wyatt (the BBC)said: "*We had a lot of arguments with London from Russia, the pictures we wanted to show, both of the victims and the perpetrators that we simply weren't allowed to show they said would too distressing too bloody too close up*." Andrei Medvedev from Channel "Russia" cut "too bloody" shots personally because of their useless: "*You can take a general shot of dead bodies, one second, you don't need more. People know how terrible those pictures are without your zoom*".

To sum up, the content analysis showed that the most questionable issues were labelling the hostage takers and focusing on the state representatives' and special forces' actions. There was a divergence of opinion of the two media regarding those questions. The Russian web-site more focused on special forces' actions avoiding to show them. The British media paid more attention to average people (hostages, residents, relatives) possibly linking them with the audience of the media.

<u>4.2. Qualitative findings</u>

All respondents in this study considered that the reporting a terrorist act is a complicated ethical issue. Despite of rules, instructions, and codes which are called to help journalists and editors in covering extreme situations such as local conflicts and wars there is a need to decide ethical questions personally.

There is a written code of conduct for journalists and editors of the BBC. It calls Producers' Guidelines. To know it is a part of contract for every employee of the company. Caroline Wyatt (BBC) confirms: *"There is a whole book of about three hundred pages which covers pretty much anything you can think of how you should act, as a journalist in whatever situation*." Also, according to Stephen Whittle (BBC), reporters and editors have access to seminars and meetings organized regularly. They are devoted to different problems but, as Danila Galperovich (BBC) noted, mostly they are about "war, terrorism, and other extreme situations".

The interviewees from the BBC acknowledged the importance of ethical codes and their effectiveness.

In contrast, Russian respondents demonstrated indifference to such kind of regulation as a written code of conduct. There is no a written code of Channel "Russia" but an instruction regarding to journalists' actions in extreme situations. Andrei Medvedev called it *"two sheets of paper"*. "*I don't see any reasons for writing an ethical code for our Channel*", - said Yulia Rakcheeva. Angelina Timofeewa said she does not need a guideline because of her professional experience: "*I'm a professional editor and speaking about different emergency situations, there were a lot of terrorist acts in Moscow and Russia in general. I have practice; I know what to do what to write even it sounds cynic".* Victor Yukechev, director of the Press Development Institute-Siberia, thinks that ethical codes are not effective in the Russian media (personal communication, 16 July, 2003). He suggests that self-regulation means not having texts of codes of conduct only but existing mechanisms for

control. Victor Yukechev adds: "Today we have The Big Jury of the Union of Journalists which is called to solve and to regulate any ethical collisions. But the Union of Journalists is not one corporative organisation for all journalists and its decisions are not rules for them who are not members of the union".

At the same time as the respondents from the BBC emphasised importance of written standards respondents from the Russian side mostly operated by individual ethics. Kirill Demkov (Channel "Russia") said that the work of the editorial room of the site www.vesti.ru was not regulated specially. *"It was more to do with the non-written rules, i.e. what is permissible or possible and what is not. Actually, the basics of the morality are acquired during life: when you study or work…anything that is concerned with life, adding to that elementary professional knowledge – news has to news, i.e. it has to have an informational reason, etc.*" Editor of the site www.vesti.ru Kirill Gutskov said that reporting the event he used "*Hippocratic obey "don't harm*" (personal communication, 10 August, 2003)".

At the same time, respondents from Channel "Russia" showed that they accepted "Western values" of reporting such as separating news from commentary (Timofeewa, Demkov), reporting truthfully and accurately (Timofeewa, Medvedev, Demkov). This leads to the Alex P. Schmid's concept of ethical principles of journalism which has emerged in the Western democracies (see p. 14). Angelina Timofeewa said: "*The material should be clearly divided in terms of news and commentary*". Kirill Demkov added: "*This is the basics of the journalism: the facts should be double checked, all the personal thoughts and additions the journalist (if we're talking about news, not the analytical programs) should leave for the talks with his wife or whoever, not taking them into the broadcast*".

Nevertheless, these standards were not accepted totally but adopted. For example, nobody of Russian respondents refers to the principle of maintaining editorial independence against all interest groups.

Speaking about ethical reporting all respondents used mostly negative examples and statements, showing which conduct is meant as unethical. Stephen Whittle (BBC) pointed:

*"It certainly doesn't mean glamorising the terrorists, it certainly doesn't mean encouraging imitation; it certainly doesn't mean giving people anything rather then a factual and truthful description of exactly what is happening, and what their threats are and what they have actually done."*

Illustrating his point of view Kirill Demkov (Channel "Russia") said:

*"During the first hour of the event on Dubrovka there was a telephone call from a hostage to a NTV studio (they were broadcasting live). The journalist from the NTV asked the hostage to give the phone to the terrorist, and then that journalist started communicating with the terrorist, asking him questions about how serious their intentions were, nearly asking to "expound their demands", etc. To be honest, I was expecting for a sound of shooting in the phone. That would be the most perfect proof of hoe serious their intentions were, wouldn't it? Thankfully, this didn't happen. But if I were that journalist's manager or governance, I would dismiss him from broadcastings forever. What he did, cannot be done, and here we are discussing not the question of the giving the broadcasting time to the "villain", but the question of a pure ethics – that journalist has threatened the man's life."*

Using explanations in negative form by the respondents confirms the Iggers's (1998) concern about "leading connection with misconduct rather than defining journalistic discourse".

At the same time Yulia Rakcheeva (Channel "Russia") presented other understanding of the issue: "Ethical reporting a terrorist act means coverage which doesn't influence negatively on victims, doesn't damage them and their relatives in any sense and doesn't spread panic among people".

Making her personal choice between right for information and right for life, Yulia Rakcheeva (Channel "Russia") without any doubts and thinking for a long time selected right for life. Supporting her, Andrei Medvedev (Channel "Russia") pointed: "*For me a person's life is more important than right for information. When people are dead you cannot do anything. But if you know that people can be saved or not because of what you broadcast … you feel responsibility. Otherwise their blood will be on your hands*".

In contrast, respondents from the BBC were not so direct in their choice. Caroline Wyatt (BBC) was not sure in her decision: "*I would fight very-very hard for the right to broadcast information but if I thought what I broadcast is endangering somebody's life I don't know that I would do it in that sense*". Danila Galperovich (BBC) said that right for life usually depends on life for information and illustrated his point by following: "*If you remember the incident in the city of Mineral'nye Vody where Chechens took hostages and on a bus were driving to the Chechnya. On one hand, information I broadcasted could be heard by the Chechens but people live on the territory which the Chechens were going through should know about the capturing and their motion. Without that kind of information residents could lose their lives. Personally, I think that security forces should do their job and they don't need the media help, they shouldn't need*".

As it was presented in the literature review, there are debates about labelling people who committed an act of terror. The results of the interviews reflect that discussions on the practical level. "*There were no doubts how to call hostage takers. They are terrorists*", - said Yulia Rakcheeva (Channel "Russia"). Kirill Demkov also had no doubts: "*To me, personally, they were terrorists from the very beginning. For the source I work for – as well. For the British you are talking about Chechen fighters might have been separatists or even freedom fighters, but in this case nobody's talking about the Independence. Some people seized the others, who came to watch the play or musical. What is this, if not terrorism*?" Supporting his colleagues, editor of

the www.vesti.ri site Kirill Gutskov said: "*Only those who doesn't see the real situation call those beasts as "fighters for the independence of Chechen people*" (personal communication, 17 August, 2003).

In contrast, all respondents from the BBC avoid calling hostage takers as "terrorists" following the Producers' Guidelines. Stephen Whittle explained: "*Because it is not a word which has any agreed definition internationally or nationally. If one goes back a little into Africa, for example, today Nelson Mandela is a respected world leader. Ten years ago he was an imprisoned terrorist. One men's terrorist we say is another persons' freedom fighter.*"

Just after the Moscow hostage taking the Antiterrorism convention was signed by Russian media (See Appendix 8). According the convention news media employees should not interview "terrorists on the initiative of their own at the time terrorists are committing their crime", "provide terrorists with access to live airwaves without preliminary approval given by the Antiterrorism Headquarters", "insult and humiliate terrorists that have hostages' lives in their hands".

Clearly in accordance with liberal principles of the press, all respondents from the BBC refused a possibility of voluntary "*coordinating their work with the state needs*" (Danila Galperovich). "*I cannot imagine a voluntary agreement,*" – said Caroline Wyatt. Stephen Whittle added: "*We wouldn't. Partly because of our culture and tradition here… the BBC believes fundamentally that it is very important to be independent of government.*"

On the contrary, Yulia Rakcheeva called the signing the Antiterrorism Convention a "*really positive fact*". Kirill Demkov considered "*on one hand, quite watchfully, as usually when it comes to any sorts of limitations for the press (even if the intentions are the most positive). On the other hand, I understand that nowadays the acceptance of something like that is necessary. In that case, the journalists could really affect the work of the special forces, I mean it could prevent from the job being done absolutely right. Yet, until today I didn't see the negative effect of the Convention, and I hope that there won't*

*be any"*. Angelina Timofeewa articulated her view: "*There was a scandal because of not professional work of some journalists. It leaded to panic and, in general, some important possibly helpful for hostages decisions were delayed. It was obvious that we needed some forms of regulation*."

It visibly links to the concept of "common good" (See p.19). The press is not an independent 'mirror' of the society and the state but an active part of it.

To sum up, the respondents could be undoubtedly divided into two groups according to their views on the issue. Respondents from the British side demonstrated that their decisions were in accordance with the Producers' Guidelines an ethical code of the media. Respondents from Channel "Russia" showed that they mostly used personal value systems and made their conclusions according to the situation and individual ethics. It should be mentioned, that even interviewees presented different ethical background and professional experience they articulated the liberal and communitarian concepts clearly.

# Conclusion

*In this final chapter, a number of conclusions will be drawn about the study. These will be considered in light of the established objectives and the overall aim of the paper. These section will than provide recommendations for further research emerging from the study.*

This study aimed to compare how the web-sites of the BBC and Channel "Russia" represented the Moscow hostage crisis 23-26 October 2002, to explore to what extent did journalists and editors take into account any codes of ethics while reporting the event, and to investigate how different media ethical values are reflected in the coverage.

Therefore, the researcher has examined some fundamental aspects of media coverage of terrorist acts. Also different points of view on regulation of journalists' professional activity were described. In addition, the libertarian and communitarian media value systems were examined.

Thus survey within quantitative content analysis and qualitative research approach in the form of interviews was undertaken. Primary research revealed findings that support the academic literature.

The findings revealed that the coverage of terrorist acts depend on the ethical system which media presents.

The content analysis showed that the most questionable issues were labelling the hostage takers and focusing on the state representatives' and special forces' actions. There was a difference of opinion of the two media regarding those questions. The Russian web-site more focused on special forces' actions in texts avoiding to show them in video. The British media paid more attention to average people (hostages, residents, relatives) possibly linking them with the audience of the media.

Respondents from the British web-site demonstrated that their decisions in difficult ethical situations were made in accordance with the liberal concept that jjournalists are meant to present the facts and the facts only for the audience equipped with seemingly unbiased material to analyze and draw conclusions. Respondents from the BBC strongly stated their independence from the state. This is clearly links to the liberal value system.

At the same time respondents from Channel "Russia" showed that they mostly used personal value systems and made their conclusions according to the situation and individual ethics. Russian journalists and editors strongly stand for victims and against attackers showing their attempt to achieve the communitarian "common good".

As David L. Paletz and Laura L. Tawney (1992, p.105) said, the absence of a code of conduct does not necessarily mean untrammelled or detached coverage of a terrorist act. It was visibly confirmed by the research. Discussing ethical issues there are not always right or wrong answers, but there should always be "well-reasoned" ones.

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# List of appendices

Appendix 1. Content analysis: the coding frame designed for the pilot study

Appendix 2. Content analysis of texts: the final version of the coding frame

Appendix 3. Content analysis of video materials: the final version of the coding frame

Appendix 4. List of subjects for texts

Appendix 5. List of subjects for video materials

Appendix 6. Analysis of lexical choice

Appendix 7. Sample letter to an interviewee

Appendix 8. The translation of the Antiterrorism convention signed by Russian media

Appendix 9. Quotes from the BBC Producers' Guidelines regarding the coverage of terrorism and violence

Appendix 10. Statement of principles on coverage of war on terrorism, USA

Appendix 11. Transcript of the interview with Stephen Whittle, BBC Controller of Editorial Policy, 27 August, 2003

Appendix 12. Transcript of the interview with Caroline Wyatt, BBC Moscow Correspondent from November 2000 to April 2003, 27 August, 2003

Appendix 13. Transcript of the interview with Kirill Demkov, senior editor of the web-site www.vesti.ru, Department of Internet broadcasting, Channel "Russia", 8 August, 2003

# Appendix 1: Content analysis coding schedule for the pilot study

- **Article's ID**                                               ☐☐ ☐ ☐

- **Media**                                                          ☐
    1. news.bbc.co.uk
    2. www.vesti.ru

- **Date-month-year**                                      ☐☐☐☐☐☐

- **Article length** (number of words)           ☐

- **Headline** (copy verbatim)

- **Headline focus**
    1. Hostages are in the main focus
    2. Hostage takers are in the main focus          ☐
    3. Special forces are in the main focus
    4. Governmental representatives are in the main focus
    5. A hostage is in the main focus
    6. A hostage taker is in the main focus
    7. A member of special forces is in the main focus
    8. A governmental representative is in the main focus
    9. Other
- **The subject of the article**
 (See List of subjects)                                       ☐

- **Sources** (number of references)
    1. A hostage taker…………………………………..
    2. Hostage takers…………………………………………
    3. A hostage………………………………………………
    4. Hostages………………………………………………….
    5. A hostage's relative…………………………………
    6. Hostage's relatives…………………………………
    7. A state

7. A state representative…………………………………

8. Exclusive information…………………………………

9. Russian news agencies…………………………………

10. International news agencies……………………….

11. Press releases …………………………………………

12. Press conference …………………………………………

13. Anonym …………………………………………………………..

14. Other …………………………………………………………..

**- Presence of still pictures**

1. No
2. One
3. Two
4. Three
5. Four
6. Five
7. Six

(If '3', '4', '5', '6', '7' the next question should be answered for every picture separately)

**- Picture focus**

1. Hostages are in the main focus
2. Hostage takers are in the main focus
3. State forces are in the main focus
4. Other

|        |   |
|--------|---|
| pict 2 |   |
| pict 3 |   |
| pict 4 |   |
| pict 5 |   |
| pict 6 |   |

**- Number of people pictured**

1. One person
2. Two people
3. More than two people

**- Video length** (number of sentences)

**- Video subjects** (in secs)

(See List of video subjects)

| Subj | secs |
|------|------|
|      |      |
|      |      |

## Appendix 2: Content analysis coding schedule for texts

- **Article's ID**

- **Media**
    1. news.bbc.co.uk
    2. www.vesti.ru

- **Date-month-year**

- **Article length** (number of sentences)

- **Headline** (copy verbatim)

- **Headline focus**
    1. Hostages are in the main focus
    2. Hostage takers are in the main focus
    3. Special forces are in the main focus
    4. Governmental representatives are in the main focus
    5. Other

- **The subject of the article**
 (See List of subjects)
1 paragraph……………………………………………………
2 paragraph……………………………………………………
3 paragraph……………………………………………………
4 paragraph……………………………………………………
5 paragraph……………………………………………………
6 paragraph……………………………………………………
7 paragraph……………………………………………………
8 paragraph……………………………………………………
9 paragraph……………………………………………………
10 paragraph……………………………………………………
11 paragraph……………………………………………………

Article  ……………………………………………………………

- **Sources** (number of references)
    1. A hostage taker……………………………………………..
    2. Hostage takers…………………………………………….
    3. A hostage…………………………………………………
    4. Hostages…………………………………………………
    5. A hostage's relative……………………………………….
    6. Hostage's relatives……………………………………….
    7. A state representative……………………………………
    8. Exclusive information……………………………………
    9. Russian news agencies……………………………………
    10. International news agencies…………………………….
    11. Press releases ………………………………………….
    12. Press conference ………………………………………

13. Anonym ……………………………………………..

1. Other ……………………………………………..

- Presence of still pictures
    1. No
    2. One
    3. Two
    4. Three
    5. Four
    6. Five
    7. Six
(If '3', '4', '5', '6', '7' the next question should be answered for every picture separately)
- Picture focus
    1. Hostages are in the main focus
    2. Hostage takers are in the main focus
    3. State forces are in the main focus
    4. Other

| | |
|---|---|
| pict 2 | |
| pict 3 | |
| pict 4 | |
| pict 5 | |
| pict 6 | |

- Number of people pictured
    1. One person
    2. Two people
    3. More than two people

- Picture's inscription
(See List of subjects)

# Appendix 3: Content analysis coding schedule for video materials

- Video length (secs)

- Video subjects (in secs)

(See List of video subjects)

| subj | secs |
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## Appendix 4. List of subjects for texts

1. Situation around the theatre
2. Relations between the state and the hostage takers
3. Relations between the state and the hostages
4. Relations between the hostages and the hostage takers
5. Reaction by relatives
6. Reaction by domestic institutions
7. Reaction by international institutions
8. Expert's opinion
9. Historical context
10. Social context
11. Situation inside the theatre
12. Hostages about themselves
13. Hostages about hostage takers
14. Hostages about the state
15. Hostage takers about themselves
16. Hostage takers about hostages
17. Hostage takers about the state
18. State representatives about their actions
19. State representatives about hostages
20. State representatives about hostage takers
21. Details of the hostage taking
22. Special forces' actions
23. Hostage actions
24. Hostage takers actions
25. Details about hostage takers
26. Details about hostages
27. Other

## Appendix 5. List of subjects for video materials

1. Panorama of the theatre
2. Special forces' actions
3. General shot of relatives
4. Hostages
5. Hostage takers
6. State representatives
7. Journalist's "stand up"
8. A dead body. General shot
9. A dead body. Close shot
10. Blood
11. Weapons
12. Relatives, General shot
13. Relatives. Close shot
14. The theatre inside
15. Children
16. Expert's opinion
17. Hostage takers. General shot
18. A hostage taker. Close shot
19. Other