

How is terrorism and its perception shaped by Mass Media?

Outline

A. Introduction

1. Deciphering the term terrorism and mass media
2. Symbiotic relationship between terrorism and mass media

Thesis Statement: Mass media plays a pivotal role in shaping public understanding of terrorism through agenda setting, selective framing, and sensational coverage—along with other factors by amplifying psychological fear, reinforcing stereotypes and providing oxygen of publicity to the terrorists.

B. How Mass Media Shapes Perception

Mechanisms of Shaping Public Perceptions

1. Agenda Setting and Amplification of fear

1.1 What media chooses to cover; salience effect

1.2 Mean World Syndrome

1.3 Disparity between statistical risk and perceived risk.

2. Selective Coverage and framing

2.1 Which attacks get coverage?

2.2 Framing the Why — portraying terrorists as random evil Vs explaining political, social or historical grievances (Western Vs Non-Western)

3. Sensationalism and Theater of Terror

3.1 Dramatic Headlines and music, Graphic Visuals, Violent Imagery, Repetition

3.2 focusing on drama rather than the context

4. Stereotyping and distortion of threat

4.1 linking terrorism to specific religion or ethnicity (Muslim stereotyping after 9/11)

4.2 minority scapegoating

4.3 Moral panic

5. Visibility and Propaganda Value

5.1 providing "Oxygen of Publicity" to terrorist activities

5.2 Propaganda formation

C. Consequences for public & policy

1. psychological effects [fear, risk perception]
2. political effects [public support for harsh counterterrorism, erosion of civil liberties]
3. Social effects [discrimination, moral panic, minority alienation, polarization]

D. Why Media behaves this way?

1. Government pressure : Security Narrative, Propaganda
2. Political economy : Ownership, ratings, Advertiser pressure
3. Algorithm, Echo chambers

E. Responsibilities and political Recommendations

1. Media literacy and public education
2. Regulation and fact-checking
3. Ethical Reporting and standard
4. Role of Social Media companies

F. Conclusion

Hook 1-sentence

General Statement

Introductory Paragraph

Former British prime Minister Margeret Thatcher once argued that publicity is the "Oxygen of terrorism"; this striking analogy encapsulates the central role of the mass media: as the essential element that allows the fire of terrorism to breathe, spread and shape public consciousness.

Terrorism is strategic violence designed to achieve a fundamental goal and terrorists are the perpetrators who indulge themselves in these activities to instill fear in public by ^{targeting} ~~destroying~~ symbolic figures and civilians with ultimate goal of bending governments in their favour. However, mass media is diverse array of technologies and platforms that reach a large anonymous, and heterogeneous audience with purpose of dissemination of information, entertainment and ideas on mass scale.

Mass media uses numerous mechanisms to shape public perception of terrorism especially in the form of agenda setting and amplification of fear. With selective coverage and framing, mass media instills psychological fears and distorts the threat perception by ^{broadcasting} ~~delivering~~ the wrong stats instead of actual ^{numbers} ~~data~~. Mass media plays a crucial role in ^{formation of} ~~forming~~ propaganda to benefit certain groups. Media behaves in this

Specific statement
2-sentences

Line of Arguments (5-sentences)

way not only to capture more audience, get more rating but because of the pressure from the certain groups including government.] Hence, mass media plays a pivotal role in shaping public understanding of terrorism through agenda setting, selective framing, and sensational coverage along with other factors by influencing social attitudes, amplifying fear, reinforcing stereotypes and providing oxygen of publicity to the terrorists.]

Body paragraphs

Thesis statement
(2-Sentence)

Topical Sentence

[Mass media shapes public perception using mechanisms by setting an agenda and framing.] [Media does not tell people what to think but it does tell people what to think about, by giving them certain issues a continuous coverage. Media through this repetitive action seems to ensure the importance and significance of the news/event compared to others.] [After 9/11 (2001), U.S media saturated coverage on the terrorism, which led Americans to rank terrorism as the #1 national concern in Gallup polls — even though statistically heart disease or car accidents killed ^{far} more people. ~~media~~.] [In Gallup poll 2001-2002, After 9/11, terrorism jumped to 46% of the Americans naming

Evidence

Linking sentences
(2)
(Supporting Argument)

it the most important problem, compared to less than 1% before.] [media builds a narrative and shapes perception of the people by using sorts of mechanisms especially setting an agenda about an event, problem, or person and framing it in a specific way so that it must convey this message.] (2)

concluding sentence

Topical sentence [media does not dictate people to believe but makes it impossible to ignore the magnitude of the event by amplifying fears through excessive

linking sentence

repetition.] [repeated media exposure cultivates a heightened sense of risk and fear in audience far beyond its real prevalence.] [media deceives our sense of

supporting argument

threat perception by enhancing the event's stigma by thousand times.] [9/11 attacks, terrorists struck two towers, but media coverage magnified fear by replaying images of planes crashing thousands of times in a week. This saturation

evidence

coverage magnified fear across the world. On national level, terror events of Karachi airport 2014, Peshawar APS 2014 ^{are} also ~~explain~~ caused panic in all the nation by continuous TV ticker updates; PEMRA later issued advisories limiting live coverage.] [Media by continuous and repeated replaying images and clips of terror events amplifies panic

in the people) ^② Concluding Sentence

Topic sentence [Media shapes public perception by selective coverage of specific events or portraying specific community as good or bad ~~and by~~ highlighting certain aspects of reality while omitting others, influencing how audiences perceive and interpret events.]

(Supporting Arguments) linking sentence

[Media is constrained by ownership, advertisers and state influence, which affects coverage and frames to be chosen.] Random evil headlines attract more attention than nuanced discussions of poverty, foreign policy or occupation. State elites prefer terrorism framed as ~~random~~ evil acts rather than linked to grievances — preventing legitimacy for insurgents.] [Palestinian acts of freedom and liberation labeled as "terrorism", while Israeli military operations often framed as "security operations". U.S. media rarely discussed the root causes (foreign policy, military presence in Middle East) — Afghanistan; instead framed terrorism as "hatred of freedom" (Bush narrative)] [Media's biasness, selective coverage and framing is evident of media's shaping perceptions.] ^③ Concluding sentence

Evidence

Topical sentence [Media stereotypes certain groups and communities and links terrorism to them through different

mechanisms of media's perception building] [Media through selective coverage and framing declares certain elements or communities or groups and their certain action as extremism and terrorism]

[It is evident that after 9/11 incident, portrayal of muslims in the west as terrorists or extremist

is the example to witness. Media often describes events and reports news without context as Edward said's concept of other Orientalism as portraying East as bad, exotic, conserved and the portrayal of terrorism in western media is rarely contextualized; it is presented as barbarism with history] [As per reports of Media Tenor international study

2017 found that 80% of terrorism coverage in western outlets was associated with Islam even though most victims of terrorism are muslims themselves. Americans were ^{4x} more likely to describe

Muslim attackers as terrorists compared to white attackers.]

[Media consequently, creates structures that shapes the way we see the world.] [Media stereotypes certain people, religion and communities using its power to manipulate perceptions of the masses.]

④ Concluding sentence
[News outlets dramatize stories for ratings, using graphic visuals, dramatic language,

Countdown tickers — all keep audiences hooked ;
utilizing the mechanism to change/ shape people's
perception.] [By sensationalizing, fear becomes exaggerated,
even when risk is low.] [Hence, this technique as

Barry Glassner mentioned in The Culture of fear : "media
profit from exaggerating rare threats untill they seem
ubiquitous." Exaggerated news from the news outlets
distorts threat perceptions and causes psychological
impacts on the humans.] [As per the report of

Gallup (2001), Americans who watched more than 8
hours of 9/11 coverage daily reported PTSD-like
symptoms, despite not being near the attack and same
as per PNAS study (2004) denotes that Viewers of
more than 6 hours of Boston Marathon coverage had higher
acute stress than some people present at the event.]

[Through emotional music, graphic visuals, dramatic
language like on CNN & BBC's non-stop coverage
of 9/11 and ^{Boston} Marathon using sensationalism, caused
many psychological effects on the users.]

[Media creates propagandas, a theater of
terror by promoting terrorist activities shaping the
perceptions of the people.] [Events like, Bin Laden's
video tapped messages, Anders Breivik's (Norway, 2011)
manifesto promotes terror-fear (on media) in people, whereas

linking sentence

TV agencies, news outlets ^{help in} promoting these] [media needs shocking content; terrorists need visibility.

Supporting Arguments

The media-terrorist symbiosis highly impacts one another where media acts as a theater for terrorism and terrorism acts as a source of ratings, audience, and spicy content. Media is dependent on hot stories, stories which would help increase its popularity, income, audience whatever the source is and in return terrorism is

facilitated (messages ^{to masses}) through media] [Bruce Hoffman

in his book, Inside Terrorism says, "Every terrorist act is a performance designed to attract attention, and the media are the stage", and

Evidence

same from Jenkins (RAND) as "Terrorism is theatre, the audience is the public, and the media provides the stage." RAND noted ISIS

generated over 1000 propaganda items monthly, knowing media would amplify them.] [In Conclusion,

It is evident of media supporting directly or indirectly terrorism ~~at~~ by providing a platform and promoting their agenda.] ⑥ concluding sentence

Topic sentence

[This role of media in shaping the perceptions of people about terrorism causes lot of problems ^{disturbing} ~~in~~ person's mental health (Psychological) _{like} effect]

Linking Sentence

Supporting Arguments [Repetitive violent imagery, dramatic and emotional music, dramatic language, cultivates a worldview of fear and people feel insecure all the time] [fear of death increases nationalism, prejudice, and conformity. people feel threatened & insecure, hence rising violent behaviour in them. They feel the need to do something on their own to counter ^{the} violent actions often turning violent.] ^{Gerd Gigerenzer} [It is After 9/11,

Evidence fear of flying skyrocketed and people preferred car travels resulting death increased by 1500 (road accidents). people who watched TV of more than 6 hours daily about Boston Marathon bombing 2013, experienced PTSD symptoms.] [Watching TV, especially incidents of terror causes psychological issues.]

optional linking sentence [It is evident, that excessive media exposure not just instills fears but also distorts normal mental activities by causing psychological and neurotic issues (PTSD for instance)] ⑦ **concluding sentence**

topic sentence [media coverage not only impacts mental health but has political and social consequences too.]

[media salience directs policy priorities — fear amplified by sensationalizing (the news) in public leads to pressurize leaders into making harsher security laws, which inadvertently impacts ^{the} fundamental human rights and curtailment of liberties.] **Linking sentence**

Supporting Arguments

Evidence [New ^{counterterrorism} legislation is rushed through under media-fueled public pressure. Government makes strict laws to restrict and control the terrorism but inadvertently curtails the liberties of the citizen in the processes.] [US-Patriot Act (2001) — public demand for safety after media-amplified 9/11 led to sweeping surveillance powers and curtailment of civil liberties. Pakistan's National Action plan (2014) is evident that massive media coverage of APS peshawar massacre compelled government to adopt stricter counterterrorism measure] [Media not just impacts person's psychological and mental health but also devours the political and social liberties.] ⑧ **Concluding sentence**

Topic sentence [Mass media behaves in this way because of the personal interests, government pressure, capturing audience, ratings, advertisers pressure and building a collective narrative and propaganda] [Media channels, news outlets have personal interests dictated by

Supporting Arguments the owners of that channel. Owner's perspective and especially his connection with government or with other party directly influence the news. Such as government pressure, advertiser's pressure make news channels to show public what they want not what is right] [PEMRA has often restricted live

Evidence

Coverage of terrorist incidents to avoid "panic", but also to keep state's preferred narrative. China's and Russia's strict control over media ensures terrorism is framed as "foreign-inspired extremism", justifying heavy state crackdowns. CNN's wall-to-wall coverage of 9/11 spiked its ratings by 600% [These above examples solidify the fact that media is dictated, directed and influenced by ownership, government, advertisers, public interest, reward virality over deeper socio-political explanations of terrorism] ⑨

Concluding sentence

~~Concluding sentence~~

[Through ethical and responsible reporting, contextualization, avoiding amplification of fear and agenda, no dramatization; and with clear media laws, transparency and with regulation of social media algorithms, media can be transformed into responsible fifth pillar of the state.]

[media usually spices up the news by sensationalizing it as Breaking news or by dramatizing it with dramatic music and imagery, without any context is unethical and irresponsible behaviour]

linking sentence

[media. By regulating the algorithms of social media, passing and strict implementation of laws by government, transparency and making media answerable to people can sort out lot of issues in the society and boost wellbeing of the community] [Pakistan's PEMRA

Supporting arguments

Evidence

code, UK's COBRA (cabinet office ^{briefing} breathing Room) and EU's "Radicalisation Awareness Network" are the countersteps to make media responsible and ethical.]

[Thus, responsible media behaviour, combined with prudent political strategy, can transform mass communication from a tool of fear into an instrument of resilience] (concluding sentence) (10)

Concluding paragraph

Paraphrased Thesis statement

[Terrorism today is not only a battlefield phenomenon but also mediated reality, with its perception largely crafted by mass media through selective coverage and framing to sensationalism and ^{from} agenda setting and propaganda to stereotyping certain communities, ~~int~~ having profound psychological consequences, breeding fear and anxiety, political consequences and steering governments towards reactive security measures.] [Mass media uses many techniques and mechanisms to control, manipulate and shape the perception of terrorism (of the masses).

(Line of Arguments)

Through repetitive news, violent imagery, dramatic and emotional music and attaching certain meanings to certain people and groups. mass media amplifies fear, instills insecurity perception, acts as a stage for the terrorism, provides oxygen of publicity to the terrorists. yet media does not behave this

way by chance. — government pressure, commercial profit motives, digital algorithms, and audience echo chambers all incentivize dramatization over contextualization. Government pressure, makes media to behave in a certain way and promote specific security narrative, showing random evil instead of socio-political grievances of the group. [still same media can be reoriented into the force of resilience: by adhering to ethical reporting, contextualizing grievances, ensuring transparency building media literacy to protect citizens from manipulation. If pursued responsibly, mass communication can shift from being oxygen of terrorism to the antidote against it. with balanced media practices and prudent political actions, the fear of manufactured by terrorism can be transformed into collective strength, empowering societies to resist both violence and its exploitation in the public mind.]

[Hope notes]