# Media framing of Terrorism: Analyzing the influence on Public Perception and Policy Response in West Asia.

**Vinkal Deep Kaur**
Student
Amity University Noida

## Introduction

There are several instances in recent history—more especially, the last ten years—of terrorist groups and the media enjoying mutually advantageous relationships. It is generally the case that the architects of terrorism take advantage of the media for the benefit of their operational efficiency, information gathering, recruitment, fund raising, and propaganda schemes, as some notable terrorist attacks in history show, whether they are in the United States (US), Europe, or the Middle East.

The media-related objectives of the offenders are the same, regardless of the crime: attention, recognition, and maybe even some respectability and validity in their respective publics. This is true whether the act of mass destruction is carried out by a network of terrorists or a tiny environmental group in exchange, the media gets the public attention that is essential to its continued existence as well as record revenues and enormous viewership. To put it succinctly, in order for terrorism to have an impact, the media must report on incidents in a way that capitalizes on the public's desire to learn about terrorist acts. Therefore, it is reasonable to claim that there is a mutually advantageous relationship between terrorism and the media of today.

The way the media frames terrorism in the context of West Asia is crucial in influencing public opinion as well as official responses. This is a succinct examination of how media framing affects these elements:

Impact on Public Opinion:

In West Asia, popular opinion of terrorism is greatly influenced by the way the media presents the issue. The way the media portrays terrorism has the power to spread stereotypes, inflame fear, and change people's views about particular groups or ideas. Sensationalist framing that, for instance, highlights violence and presents terrorists as faceless foes can increase public unease and foster an environment of fear. On the other hand, framing that offers background information, draws attention to underlying sociopolitical issues, or emphasizes resilience might help the public develop a more sophisticated knowledge of terrorism and its underlying causes.

Impact on Reactions in Policy:

The way that the media frames the issue of terrorism in West Asia also has a big influence on policy responses. Government representatives frequently use media narratives to assess public opinion and defend policy choices. Sensationalizing threats in the media could put pressure on decision-makers to take more drastic, militarized measures, such stepping up surveillance or sending in the armed forces. However, media framing that places a strong emphasis on prevention, rehabilitation, and addressing the underlying causes can persuade

decision-makers to give more weight to more comprehensive and diplomatic strategies like socioeconomic development, community participation, and conflict settlement.

In general, how the media portrays terrorism can either increase tensions and encourage reactive actions, or it can encourage thoughtful discussion and proactive policy responses that deal with the root causes of terrorism in the area. As a result, it is crucial to evaluate media narratives critically and encourage ethical reporting in order to give the general public and decision-makers a more complex understanding of terrorism.

## MEDIA FRAMING OF TERRORISM

Extreme acts of terrorism draw media attention not just because it is their responsibility to cover any significant event but also because the dramaturgy of terrorism garners widespread interest. Terrorists of today have recognized this dynamic and act to both maximize international attention and inflict suffering on their victims. Terrorists have become "media competent" by knowing and applying the concepts of gaining media attention in most of their activities. Terrorists rely on the attention they garner, and the media obtains from them the standard subject of news coverage—a violent, unexpected, and noteworthy incident that draws attention from the general public for hearing, seeing, and reading.

There are several examples from recent history—more especially, the last ten years—of the mutually advantageous relationship that exists between terrorist organizations and the media. As evidenced by a few notable terrorist attacks throughout history, whether in the US, Europe, or the Middle East, the majority of terrorist organizations take advantage of the media to further their goals of recruiting, fund-raising, recruitment efficiency, and propaganda. The media-related objectives of those who commit acts of terror, whether they include mass destruction by a terrorist network or comparatively insignificant arson by an amateur environmental organization, are always the same: attention, recognition, and maybe even some respectability and validity in their respective publics. In exchange, the media gets the public attention that is essential to its continued existence as well as record revenues and enormous viewership. In a nutshell the media must report on terrorist acts in a way that capitalizes on the public's desire to learn about these attacks, just as terrorism must be communicated in order to have an impact. Therefore, it is reasonable to claim that there is a mutually advantageous relationship between terrorism and the media of today.

Because media coverage of terrorist attacks shapes public perceptions of the threat, it is crucial to investigate how terrorism is framed in the media. Numerous frameworks exist for evaluating how well the media influences the general population. A framework of this kind highlights the interdependence of political actors, the public, and the media. The public "uses" the media to become informed, policy makers "use" the media to further specific objectives, and the media "uses" the public by bringing specific issues to their attention in order to generate money. Thus, publicity is the unifying purpose shared by terrorist acts and the media. We first need to think about the impact newspapers have on the public in order to properly grasp this interaction. Terrorism is covered by media outlets worldwide, which helps to explain why it occupies a major place in political discourse. The media is aware that the public is drawn to terrorism and the pictures it creates. Remarkably, attracting the public's attention is also one of terrorism's primary goals. It goes without saying that terrorists want to raise as much awareness as they can to achieve their goals.

If we believe that the purpose of a terrorist assault is to spread fear, then it must meet two requirements: it must be violent and effectively conveyed. The attacks are designed to be as severe as possible in order to cause harm to others as well as to garner attention and make sure that the offenders' views are heard. Therefore, it should not be shocking that ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) choose locations like a major theater, the headquarters of a well-known magazine, and a major city's main airport. There was an assurance that the attacks would dominate social media, show up in print and digital media, and instill a sense of fear in our minds. The selection of victims indicates that the offenders are looking for media attention. They obviously understand how much of an impact these strikes may have on the entire world. The terrorists' ultimate objective, which is to instill dread throughout their target area, is aided when the media creates pictures of terror in order to report on these incidents. Now that the relationship between the media and terrorism has been proven, it is time to go a little further and look at how the media really frames terrorism. There is no

denying that media consumers appear eager to find out more about terrorist activities. The media goes into great depth about the attacks to provide the audience with the information they desire because they recognize the necessity for the people to be informed. On the other hand, objective reporting of the facts is a very uncommon occurrence. The audience must impose a meaning on these terrorist attacks through its own "interpretive lenses" because of their ambiguity and uncertainty. The media provides these lenses in some way. In order to grab the public's attention when covering terrorism, the media employs phrases, logos, symbols, and specific keywords. More significantly, mass media continually shapes people's perceptions, emotions, and images, which allows them to focus the public's attention in particular ways. As was already mentioned, these words and pictures are not impartial. They are not immune to the public's ideological preferences that certain media sources cater to. They also "talk" to their viewers by using these pictures to evoke a message about terrorist strikes.

## How media portray and use terrorism

The public's perspective of terrorism is greatly shaped by the media, which also frequently shapes the storyline around these violent acts. A careful balance between educating the public and preventing the unintentional amplification of extremist messages characterizes how terrorism is portrayed in the media. Media outlets frequently use attention-grabbing headlines and striking visuals when covering terrorist attacks, which heightens the sense of urgency among viewers. The way that terrorist activities are framed is crucial; some media sources highlight the goals and ideology of the attackers, while others concentrate on the effects on people and inspirational tales of resiliency. Because social media platforms facilitate the quick dissemination of information, especially propaganda from extremists, they have further exacerbated the situation. Beyond its immediate news coverage, the media has a significant role in crafting the narrative around terrorism by influencing public opinion, societal attitudes, and legislative actions. For media companies, finding a balance between doing ethical reporting and avoiding unintentional support for terrorist objectives is an ongoing struggle.

Policy response by turkey

Over the years, Turkey has encountered many terrorist threats, especially from organizations like the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and, more recently, ISIS. Turkey has responded to these dangers with a variety of legislative measures, and the media has been essential in defining public perception of these initiatives.

Military Operations and Extensive Counterterrorism Measures: Turkey has taken action against the PKK and ISIS through both military operations and counterterrorism measures. The media frequently portrays these acts as essential steps the government is doing to guarantee national security. The coverage can draw attention to the difficulties presented by terrorist groups and the need for strong security measures to protect the nation.

Nationalist Narrative:

The media in Turkey often frames the fight against terrorism within a nationalist narrative, emphasizing the protection of the country's unity and territorial integrity. This framing seeks to garner public support for government actions and portrays counterterrorism efforts as essential for maintaining national cohesion.

Societal Impact and Human Stories:

Media coverage also focuses on the societal impact of terrorism, sharing human stories of victims and their families. This approach aims to generate empathy and support for government actions against terrorist groups. By highlighting the personal tragedies resulting from terrorist attacks, the media reinforces the urgency of counterterrorism measures.

Government Messaging and Press Conferences:

Official government messaging and press conferences are covered extensively by the media. The framing of these events is critical in shaping public perceptions. Government statements, particularly those emphasizing the importance of security measures, are often highlighted to convey a sense of resolve in addressing terrorism.

Challenges in the Kurdish Region:

The media frames the government's response to the PKK within the broader context of addressing Kurdish-related issues. The Kurdish question is a sensitive and complex aspect of Turkey's political landscape, and media coverage often reflects the government's stance on resolving this issue while countering PKK activities.

Public views of the security concerns facing the region as well as policy actions are significantly shaped by how the media portrays terrorism in West Asia. Media sources have the ability to affect how people perceive and comprehend terrorist acts, which can have an impact on how laws are drafted and how the public feels.

Policy response

Establishing the Agenda:

Religious or Ethnic Focus: Policymakers may be persuaded to enact security measures that disproportionately target particular communities if media coverage focuses primarily on the religious or ethnic aspects of terrorist acts in West Asia. Increased profiling and surveillance may result from this, as well as possible community estrangement.

Influence on Law: Laws pertaining to counterterrorism can be drafted as a result of the legislative agenda being shaped by media framing. Policies that affect civil liberties and human rights may be created with an emphasis on resolving alleged religious or ethnic threats.

Global Affairs:

Global Struggle Narrative: International relations can be greatly impacted by media portrayals of terrorism in West Asia as a component of a larger global struggle. Depending on how disputes are framed, nations may side with or against particular groups, which may result in the development of alliances or the application of sanctions.

Military Interventions: The justification or opposition of military interventions in the region might be influenced by media coverage. Conflicts that are framed as part of a global fight may have an impact on public opinion and international support for military action, which could have an impact on geopolitical dynamics and regional stability.

Policymakers must comprehend how media framing affects international relations and agenda-setting. It emphasizes the need of media literacy and the necessity for decision-makers to evaluate the information they receive from the media critically in order to develop more thoughtful and successful answers to the intricate problem of terrorism in West Asia.

Public Perception

Fear and Anxiety:

The media frequently highlights the dramatic features of terrorist acts, which makes people more fearful and anxious. Stronger security measures may be demanded, and public opinion may be shaped by this emotional reaction.

Stereotyping & Bias:

Prejudice and discrimination may be encouraged by certain frames that reinforce preconceived notions about particular populations. Long-term societal repercussions from this could affect how various communities relate to one another.

Impact on Security Measures:

Allocation of Resources:

Publicized attacks: The public's perception of the gravity and character of the threat is influenced by media coverage that frequently highlights dramatic or high-profile terrorist attacks. In response, governments might focus resources on areas or problems that garner a lot of media attention, possibly ignoring places that receive less attention but yet face security threats.

Law enforcement and Intelligence: When certain risks receive more attention in the media, funds for law enforcement and intelligence organizations that specialize on those specific concerns may be reallocated. This may have an impact on how carefully preventive measures, intelligence gathering, and community involvement are balanced.

Policies and Laws:

Public Perceptions: Public perceptions of terrorism are shaped by media portrayals, and policymakers frequently act on these impressions. Even though the true threat level may not justify such harsh measures, popular demands for tighter security measures may lead to the enactment of emergency measures and counterterrorism laws.

Human rights and civil liberties: How the media frames a story can affect how security measures and personal freedoms are balanced. Policymakers might be more inclined to enact strict measures that violate civil liberties and human rights if media coverage highlights how serious the threat is. Maintaining a fair and successful counterterrorism strategy requires an understanding of how media framing affects the distribution of resources and the creation of laws. To guarantee that security measures are proportionate, targeted, and respectful of fundamental rights and freedoms, policymakers must take into account a comprehensive, evidence-based approach and be mindful of the potential biases in media coverage.

Global Collaboration:

Diplomatic Relations: How nations cooperate to combat terrorism might be influenced by the way the media frames the issue. Both positive and bad representations can influence countries' desire to cooperate, which can determine how successful international efforts are in fighting terrorism.

In conclusion, how the media portrays terrorism in West Asia has a significant impact on how the public and policymakers react. It is imperative that both the public and politicians evaluate media narratives critically, taking into account a variety of viewpoints and avoiding the perpetuation of stereotypes that exacerbate societal divide and obstruct the implementation of successful counterterrorism measures.