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The Construction of War on Terror Issue in Online Mass Media: News Framing Analysis of Surabaya Bombings

Introduction

The notion of framing has been utilised in a range of different news articles within mass media practices. Furthermore, the framing within mass media coverage might be influenced by several factors such as the political interest of media corporation and the agenda setting. These kind of practices are likely to produce overgeneralised portrayal of a certain issue. In the context of War on Terror issue, for instance, terror attacks are often linked disproportionately to a broader narrative of religion and culture. Furthermore, it has predominantly appeared in mass media after the 9/11 attacks (Heeren & Zick, 2014: 61; Morey & Yaqin, 2011). From the perspective of Indonesia, the case of Surabaya bombings might be a compelling example to discuss. The massive coverage by numerous media companies has indeed presented a variety of frame in regards to the suspected terrorists and the larger image of Islam and Muslims.

Accordingly, this brief introduction leads to the objective of this media report in which it sought to explore the ways media publishers frame Surabaya Bombing in online news platforms. Furthermore, it specifically focuses on the news articles published in the Sydney Morning Herald and Tempo during May 2018. In achieving the goal, this media report will attempt to answer the following research question:

RQ1: " How did framing and coverage of Surabaya Bombing differ in the Sydney Morning Herald and Tempo?"

Furthermore, the rest of the media report is structured as follows: section 2 provides a review of literature that will overview the relevant research. The media report continues with an explanation of framing analysis that used as a method to analyse the news coverage. Then, an analysis based on a comparison of online news coverage between two media companies will be provided. Furthermore, it will focus on the portrayal of the bomber and how it relates to the stereotypes towards Islam in a broader context. Finally, the media report concludes that there is a substantial difference regarding media representation of the terrorist in the Surabaya bombings.

Terrorism and Media Reporting: A Review of Literature

Numerous studies have examined the framing practices within mass media landscapes. Specifically compare the Australian and Indonesian media, Mahony (2010: 744) argues that news framing leads to the misleading and stereotypical portrayal as seen in Australian media. This is due to the practice of eliminating particular details of important information. Furthermore, it is reported that the issue of racism and culture domination as the predominant element in Australia's media coverage about war on terror and the Islamic value of Indonesia. On the other hand, the author also emphasised that there was a moderate treatment from Indonesia's media perspective in which the author identified as an outcome of ' responsible' journalism (p. 750). It is concluded that such framing of Australian media is a manifestation of western point of view in which it contributes to the imbalanced representation of the ' Other' (p. 745).

Morin (2016: 1000) explores several categorisations of news framing from the perspective of context, the involved parties, and the exceptionality of an incident. From the contextualization point of view, media coverage of terror is divided into local violence and national terror in which it is also interpreted as a symbolic action that targets the nation or the government. The framing of involved parties is likely to position the whole nation as a victim and portrays the bomb victims in the location as heroes.

The dominant framing in the news articles about Muslims has been significantly influenced by the 9/11 incident. In the context of 9/11 tenth anniversary news coverage, it is identified that Australian media developed complex narratives in which it was similar to what US media (Ewart & Rane, 2013: 85). The similarity revealed the way in which they position themselves as a victim of the attacks. Furthermore, Harmon and Muenchen (2009: 20) identify a sense of personalisation in terrorism media coverage in the US context. The personalisation was identified in a way that only specific terms appeared as dominance in the news pieces. In addition, it is necessary to point out that within the news reporting of terrorism, the stereotypical image is not merely based on the religion but also the gender aspect. Nacos (2015: 447 – 448) observes the media mistreatment that predominantly appears in relation to gender stereotypes of terrorists. This occurrence indicates mistreatment in media framing based on exaggerated diction. Therefore, such indication also raises a question whether the powerful political domination might actually influence the framing and the ethical issues of media's role as the Fourth Estate.

Methods

This media report used framing analysis as a framework to design the methods. The aim of framing analysis is to understand how and in what way the essence of a certain issue is represented through mass media so that it can provide meaning to audiences (Scheufele, 2000: 306). To contrast the way media used a specific approach in the news articles as a means to portray the Surabaya bombings, two media publishers were chosen based on purposive sampling. Tempo as a local online newspaper from Indonesia was chosen to represent the national discourse of the issue, while Sydney Morning Herald was chosen as a representative from international perspectives.

Data for this media report consist of online news articles that were published in both news media platforms during the period of 13 – 14 May 2018. The data set is comprised of 3 news stories from each media publishers. This resulted in a total of 6 news articles that will be retrieved and analysed further in the next section. Furthermore, the news articles were chosen due to the trait of factual reportage of the bombing attacks and its focal point on the suspected bombers.

Subsequently, the analysis of this media report will use a framework of agenda-setting, priming, and framing developed by Scheufele (2000). In the study, Scheufele explores the typology of framing that consists of ' frame-setting, frame-building, and individual outcomes of framing' (p. 306). To further nuanced the analysis, framing approach (eds D'Angelo & Kuypers, 2010: 21) will also be used to argue the practice of news framing specifically in the coverage of War on Terror issues. This approach emphasises the possibility to examine the issue from different directions from the particular

content to the ' cultural context of social values' (p. 37). Moreover, the data in this media report will be analysed based on the framing model developed by Pan and Kosicki (1993). This framework represents structural dimensions as traits of news framing from the viewpoint of syntactic, script, themes, and rhetoric (p. 59). However, it is important to highlight that this media report will only focus on the script and thematic structures to provide a more in-depth analysis.

Framing Analysis of Surabaya Bombings: Literal and Contextual Representation

Based on the thematic structures (Pan & Kosicki, 1993), it is pointed out that Sydney Morning Herald portrayed the case by focusing on the immediate response of Indonesian government (Sydney Morning Herald, 2018a). Furthermore, the media company incorporated statement from Indonesian President, National Police Spokesman, the leader of Indonesia's largest Islamic organisation, a former terrorist who works with Indonesian police (Sydney Morning Herald, 2018a), Indonesian Police Chief (Sydney Morning Herald, 2018b), and the parents of the suspected terrorists (Sydney Morning Herald, 2018c). Based on the analysis, it is identified that the Sydney Morning Herald tends to focus more on the statement from the authorised sources although the statement from the terrorists' parents was also included.

On the other hand, Tempo represented the issue as a recap of one-week event (Tempo, 2018a). The Surabaya bombing was a series of bombing attacks that occurred in several churches and police headquarters in the

capital city of East Java, Indonesia. The terror attack occurred as an impact of the previous clash in Indonesia's Mobile Brigade Corps. Tempo included the statement from Chief of Indonesia National Police (2018c) and the colleague of the suspected terrorists (2018b). This pattern of representation is often seen in news articles from Indonesian media company. In this sense, it is indicated that there has been a similar pattern used by Indonesia's mass media corporations to quote a statement from a single source, mainly government authorities such as the police and national counterterrorism agency (Mubarok & Diah, 2018).

In terms of the diction used in the news articles, it should be emphasised that the word choice of both media company were very different if it is analysed based on the script structures (Pan & Kosicki, 1993: 60). For instance, Sydney Morning Herald discussed the action that was inspired by Islamic State (Sydney Morning Herald, 2018a; 2018b; 2018c), even used the term ' Islamist militant' (Sydney Morning Herald, 2018a; 2018c) to refer to prisoners who were killed prior to Surabaya bombings. On the other hand, Tempo used a more indirect approach by solely mentioning that the suspected terrorists were a member of a local terrorist group (Tempo, 2018b; 2018c). Furthermore, there were no religion-related terms such as Islam, Islamist, and Muslims that can be found in the news articles published by Tempo. Mahony (2010: 748) highlights the tendency of Australian media in using terms that was associated with Islam at a broader level such as ' radicals', ' extremist', even referring to the fundamentalist Muslim groups in Indonesia as merely ' Muslim' and ' Islamic'.

However, the way the media frames the terrorism issue might be distinct from one to another in the context of media publishers in Indonesia. In this sense, there was a subtle different in terrorism news reporting although the majority of media in Indonesia clearly stated that terrorist action could not be associated with religion (Zakiah, 2015: 94). Equally important, Nevalsky (2015: 473) argues the distinct media treatment might be based on the location of media publishers. News articles published in developing countries are likely to be exposed to over generalised portrayals and negative stereotypes as the coverage tend to be limited. In this sense, news coverage in relation to terrorism shows bias in favour of developed regions. Accordingly, developing countries experience an issue of attempting to increase the global awareness as well as to mobilise support. Hence, this might be one of the major reasons of the homogenous portrayal as an existing pattern in media towards Muslims in Indonesia.

The Prejudice and Stereotypes towards The Suspected Terrorists

The Surabaya Bombings case gained a massive coverage from national and international media. The attacks undoubtedly have an adverse impact on Indonesia's citizens in particular as well as the global society in general. Moreover, the suspected terrorists in a series of bomb attacks in Surabaya were families including their children. For this reason, many news articles displayed the family photo of the suspected bombers. However, it is identified that there is a distinct approach in how the media presented the picture of alleged terrorists in the church attack. While Sydney Morning Herald published a news article with a normal family photo (Sydney Morning

Herald, 2018c), Tempo instead showed the photo differently by blurring the faces of the children (Tempo, 2018c).

According to Scheufele (2000), this can be categorised as an individual outcomes of framing. In the context of representation, this frame raises a question of ethics, bias, as well as objectivity that regulated in journalism code of conduct. In this sense, the bias in news framing might have an impact on an unbalanced framing in the news stories (Adam, 2011: 346). Although it is acknowledged that journalists and media corporations often experience dilemmas in terms of providing content, it is necessary to emphasise the responsibility of journalists to participate in educating the public. In these regards, it is necessary to respect the privacy of the children despite the fact that all suspected terrorists have died in the attacks. For this reason, journalists should reconsider the importance of providing information that benefits their audiences and not merely aim for news attractiveness to gain more profit due to the agenda-setting of a media corporation. They should be aware that the action performed by these children were not based on their own will but rather due to the doctrine of their parents.

In the context of stereotyping, the practice of it in mass media encompasses a distorted image and homogenous portrayal as its elusive character (Pickering, 2011). Furthermore, the presentation of victims and heroes in the news coverage of Australian media raises substantial questions about the actual relations between Muslims and the West (Ewart & Rane, 2013: 88). In addition, Mahony (2010: 745) argues that Australian media coverage regarding terrorism might perpetuate the stereotypical portrayal of Muslims in Indonesia in which Muslims are most likely to be associated with the

terrorist group. While it seems that the news articles have already maintained neutrality and have sustained the journalism standards, it is imperative to examine that such news articles demonstrated an imbalanced voice. Mahony (2010: 746) identifies the necessity to avoid the homogenous portrayal such as showcasing the whole Indonesian citizens as the ' Other' and omitting the fact whether they are Muslims or not.

While the religion stereotype seems dominant in the Australian media coverage, the cultural stereotype in terms of gender turns out to be apparent in the news articles. For example, the female terrorist is described as a ' woman who wore normal hijab, not fully covered like…. if she was radicalised' (Sydney Morning Herald, 2018c). Nacos (2005: 436) reveals a visible indication of societal gender towards female terrorists. In this sense, the treatment of media towards them is likely to concentrate on " the physical appearance frame" (p. 438) and " the family connection frame" (p. 440). In the physical appearance frame, the familiar images of female terrorists have been presented negatively. Likewise, the female terrorists often associated with how she socialises with her relatives and how she gets along with her neighbourhood. This means that media also treats the family backgrounds of terrorists as a news value that might attract more news readers.

Conclusion

This media report has identified the different of framing and coverage within two media corporation is Australia and Indonesia, namely the Sydney Morning Herald and Tempo. Using the recent case of Surabaya bombings as

its focal point, this media report has examined the practices of stereotyping in terms of religion, culture, and also gender. It is identified that the terms used by Sydney Morning Herald were likely connect the bombing attacks to the negative prejudice towards Islam, while Tempo did not link the case to a broader context of Islam and Muslims. In these regards, the portrayal of a particular society group in news articles might be homogenous and misrepresented.

The presentation of topics, images, and the chosen words in news stories depict the way the media frames certain issues. Furthermore, the portrayal of terrorism attack in mass media might vary due to the agenda-setting of media corporations. It is also important to highlight the dominance of power behind this portrayal. In these regards, further study needs to be conducted to reveal the logic of this framing by conducting an in-depth interview with journalists from both media. It is necessary to investigate this since an unbalanced framing might have an impact on misinformation due to simplified representation in which it often found in war on terror news.

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