

# How media affect peoples perception of war and willingness to wage it literature ...

[Society](#), [Terrorism](#)



## **Literature Review covering Media and Politics**

### Introduction

Media and politics come hand in hand because they combine to convey information to the public. Media is defined as the channel in which information is stored and transmitted to the population. The media has been given different names such as mass media or the news media. The media has many advantages and disadvantages that could end up ruining the country and corrupting the youth. Politics is defined as the practice of influencing people so as to do their civic duty in the society (Safire, p. 566). By influencing people certain people are able to gain position of governance that will enable them to control people in the society. Through politics, political leaders impose their ideology to the people. The other work related to politics is that the political leaders are the ones who make the laws; they enforce the laws and are also responsible in causing wars because they are the ones who have the mandate to go to wars with other countries. There are different types of political systems which are used to define the accepted political systems in a country.

Politics brings about the government which formulates the executive, legislature and judiciary. The media becomes a very important tool for the politicians. This is because the media is used as a medium in which the politicians are able to pass their message to the people. The media is also used to project the movement of the politicians and the speeches made by the politician. The media can be used to create violence by the politicians through propaganda advertisement or promoting an ideology that will cause people to hate each other and fight. It is a fact that media has a general

effect to the public audience because it can influence people especially in this 21st century.

The two theories used in this research is the gatekeeping and framing theory. Gatekeeping theory is used in ensuring that the media does thorough investigation before it is processed and broadcasted to the public. The framing theory looks at how the media distorts information due to their biased beliefs and the influence the government has on it (Semetko, p. 99). The people in the world have become very visual to the point where the media has to find ways to cater to those visuals in order to have a more attractive viewed of news story. This sometimes has made the government question whether they should have restrictions because of the content of information being aired in the news. This paper will look at the different scholars who have talked about the impacts of the media over the years and how it is affecting the public's opinion most especially during the times of terrorism and war.

Violence and wars are usually politically motivated such as to undermine the credibility of the government or change the policies of the government. This people are able to justify why they have started these wars by claiming self defence or wanting to enforce justifiable laws. In this 21st century the world has seen so many changes due to the advancement of the social technology. This evolution changes is also taking place in the communication world especially the digital media. The news that is occurring all the world can be received to audience at a faster rate compared to the 19th and the 20th century this is due to gatekeeping theory (Shoemaker and Tim). According to

Hudson and Stainier in the book they wrote called war and the media they are able to enlighten people about how the media in the 19th century was very slow in conveying information during the wartimes. The victory of the waterloo in 1815 was only announced because a soldier who was still wearing the battle gear came and announced about the victory. Through the years the media has changed so much to the point they are showing video images of how the violence is taking place in the war between the US and Afghanistan (Hudson and Stainier).

Some of the media news that is able to cover these images is the ABC News and CNN. In the video footage the audience is able to watch how the war is progressing by seeing how buildings are being bombed, soldiers are engaging in gun fires with the terrorist and watching how the civilians are running for their lives. Sad enough the media has influenced and controlled the public's opinions when in times of war. There is no evidence to show that the media is the one directly responsible for prolonging the wars, curtailed the war or prevent the war. The one fact that all people believe and have evidence of is that the media is able to shape and alter the public opinion of the people or public. The public audience always listens to the information framed to them by the media and believed that it was true and unbiased instead of looking for more information. According to Ryan Guiboa he states that people should look beyond the information they are provided by the media meaning that for the media the news they sometimes cover is for the entertainment for people and the information is of a biased perspective (Guiboa).

## **Communication through the print media**

The newspaper is the first news media to have been used all over the world and has been able to influence the perspectives and the thoughts of people worldwide. One of the events that were printed in the newspaper that had a major political impact was during the Vietnam War when a little napalmed girl's photo was printed. This information was able to show the people about the innocent lives that the war was destroying and also the damages that the war was making. This reporting is what brought about the anti war campaigns that helped in stopping the war at that era (Niiler).

The print media was very famous in the older days but in this 21st century it has lost its value because people have other ways of getting news faster like the television and the internet or social media. An article that was written by Jim Naureckas called when doves lie in 2003; it states that the New York Times content is being controlled by Washington DC. He believes that the New York Times had a different view before the war in Iraq and that's were opposing the invasion of Iraq. A few days later another article was written which agreed with the government that the war to Iraq should start (Naureckas).

Naureckas also stated that the New York Times was exaggerating the support that the George W. Bush Iraqi policy had among the citizens in the United States. This kind of framing reporting was used as a means to show how unified the citizens were in support of the American troops being sent to Iraq (Naureckas). Many people believe that by the media reporting events that will increase supporters is a way for them to unify the nation. According to Hudson and Stainer the medias newspaper has been simplified in a way

that since it is competing with other medias they find any story and write it without further research to find if the information is credible or not. It is well known that the government is the one that controls most print media therefore, most of the information that is printed is in accordance to the government especially with regards to war or terrorism (Hudson and John). Many people also believe that the polls conducted during the Iraq war was a distortion of the truth because according to the polls most people in America were in support of the Bush policy for war in Iraq.

### **The public opinion**

It is a fact that most politicians are always seeking for ways in which they can be elected or be re-elected. This means that the politicians always act in ways that will make them popular in their constituency in order for them to be re-elected. This at times makes them make decisions that are not in accordance to their beliefs. The public opinion polling was formed in order to measure the popularity of a politician or policies made by the government. According to martin Shaw, the public opinion polling firms are created by the politicians in conjunction with the media and other interest groups. The polls that are shown by the mass media are what influence the perception of other citizens especially when it comes to topics about war (Shaw).

### **Media's role in response to terror**

According to Meadow there are four different types of terrorism such as the psychic, war, political and criminal. The political terrorism is referred to as the use of threats of violence in order for a one to secure their political gains. Wilkinson also states that there are many reasons that bring about

international terrorism such as political gains by other countries; the terrorist group are seeking attention and publicity, the terrorist are trying to free their college who has been detained in another country (Meadow). The terrorist may be in need of acquiring more fire arms and thus they may need financial help. The terrorist may just want to weaken the country's economy and culture. The terrorist use the media to convey their needs to other governments. It is definite that the terrorist get a certain satisfaction when their terrorist activities are being broadcasted in the media. This is apparent when there was a shooting and hostage taking of people at the Westgate mall when the Alshabab used the social media to take responsibility. Osama Bin Laden also used the media so as to take responsibility on some of the terrorist attacks and explain reasons why they committed this acts. According to Minear, the media coverage of how innocent people are suffering it has made many people who are watching to help those in need by providing relief to them and also question the government on the stand it is taking on that particular problem and whether it is going to solve it. The media without knowing is sometimes responsible in causing terrorism. This is because at times it is been used by terrorist in order to acquire their goals. There are other times when the media is used to help victims of terrorist attacks by taking them to safety if they are near them. The coverage about the existence of terrorist organization is beneficial for the people and they are also able to learn what causes this terrorist organization (Minear et al).

## **Role of the media on the international scene**

According to Minear, Scott and Weiss they refer the media as the crisis triangle because it involves the humanitarian organization, the government and the media. The combinations of these three institutions then it can bring about international crisis and the response from the people. The humanitarian organizations and other human rights organizations use the media since it's very influential when conveying information to the public in order to make the government to act. A good example of this fact is when the newspaper and the television showed how the Kurds people were living in deplorable conditions where they were starving and freezing. This got the attention of so many people especially in America that they asked the congress to try and help the people in Kurds (Minear et al). The US government responded about this using the secretary of defence said that the way the media depicted the images of the people from Kurd is what made the problems in Kurd more urgent. The government was able to act quickly and helped some of the people. It is a fact that the media was able to influence both the public and the government to do some action and help the needy.

According to Allan Stoehr, the media is doing a great job in covering the war in Afghanistan and that it should continue to being aired. This is because when the audience is being exposed to the casualties who are civilians and the faces of the victims appears on screen then the audience will start having the mentality of having peace. He also believes that with the evolution of technology then the media will continue to convey information to the public more often and at an even faster way. The international news



has enabled the American society to see the war from a different perspective and thus is able to judge for themselves without biasness. It is true that the evolution of media has enabled the coverage to be able to check whether the government is working the right way and also check if the government institutions can be reliable for the people (Stoehr).

### **Negative aspect from scholars**

According to Minear the US was able to come to the rescue in Somali in 1992, because of the pictures shown of children dying of hunger and this was due to the civil war that existed in that country. The other reason that made them send help was because of the pressure the government was getting from the humanitarian organization to act and help these children. This help backfired when some of the US people who had gone to help the children were killed and their pictures were shown on the media which resulted in all Americans in Somali to exit. The troops who had been sent by then president Bush were ambushed by the Somali militia and most of them were killed. The coverage and images of the casualties prompted the humanitarian organizations that had earlier on pressured the government to send people to help the children in Somali to return back to their country (Minear et al).

The president had to return the solders back to the US for good. This shows that just because the media shows some very horrific pictures they should investigate further before distributing any information to the public. This is because the media has a lot of influence on not only the public but also the humanitarian organizations that look for anything that will need help without

investigating further and pressuring the government. The other person who believed that media is a negative influence when it comes to war was Martin Shaw (1996) by stating that just because the media lied to the people that the troops who had gone to Somali were okay when everything was not right (Shaw).

There are other scholars who also believe that the media misinforms the citizens about a war. This was experienced in Kenya when there was a shootout and hostage taking in Westgate. The news being aired at their local news was distorted because the government was misinforming the people of what was really happening at the mall. So there are different stories of what happened inside that mall between the Kenyan troops and the Alshabab organization (Gauntlett). In other cases the media could make it easy for the family to find out that their loved ones in the military are either dead or missing before the military officials could inform them. Sometimes this information could be false thus the families would worry over nothing. There are some images of the war that are very disturbing in that if the children stumble upon this news they would end up being very traumatized. The children might end up wetting their beds out of fear of going to the toilet on their own or others would fear going outside their compound meaning they have become claustrophobics. In Kenya after the 2007 general election there are some media personnel's who used the media to promote violence a good example was the KASS FM host Sang who is now facing criminal charges at the International Criminal courts at the Hague (Meadow, 231).

There are other cases where scholars and the government think that the media is bad influence to the society because of the programs that are being

aired on television. Most programs promote violence without any censorship therefore, children became exposed and they grow thinking that violence is “cool”. This has made some countries in Asia and some other parts of the world to control their media so that the younger generations will not be exposed to so much violence. The media also is used in depicting some certain areas that is mostly occupied by the blacks as an area where all they know is violence. This has made other people to fear going to this areas and made the policemen to shoot most people in this area thinking that they are embers of gang groups. This means that there are many people in these areas that are not connected to any gangs but became victims of violence because of the media (Balkin).

## **Conclusion**

The media has changed over the years due to the progression of the technologies. The two theories used in this research are the framing theory and the gatekeeping theory. The print media was the one that was used first before all the other news media. In this 21st century the print media had started to lose its value. In the 19th and 20th century, it was the newspaper that was used to convey information from the government to the people. When there was war the media were not able to gain access to the information therefore, they had to wait until they heard something from the government. They were also very thorough when it came to their investigations. In the modern society the print media will report anything they think will be of some sort of entertainment in order to get people to buy their newspapers. The other form of news media such as the television and

the social media is what has influenced people a lot about the perception of war in this age. After the September eleven terrorism attack the media have become biased in that the public has started to think the same as they do. According to Minear the government is controlling the New York Times therefore, they wrote more about the policy of the then President Bush on war in Afghanistan. They also framed their own polls which stated that the people were in approval of this policy. This made people believe that most Americans wanted that policy therefore; it altered their perception on it and thus agreed with it. There are different types of terrorism which are the political, criminal, war and psychic. The political terrorism is aimed at removing a certain leader to replace with another for political gain. There are many reasons for terrorism such as political gain, wanting to get famous, wanting for one of their friends to be released and need for money and fire arms. All these reasons require the media in order for them to be heard. This sometimes raises the question whether the media is an instrument of causing war or not. All in all the media is an instrument that is very influential in that it can either aid in promoting war or stopping it.

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