

Terrorism in the Media

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The mass media play a critical role in shaping people's perspectives on issues affecting their lives. From dictating debates on political, economic, and social issues to influencing public perception of the country both at home and abroad, the media call the shots. For a government, being in the good books of the media is one of the most challenging tasks because what the media report on a government translates into how the common men view the government. A democratic government cannot afford a hostile media because the political cost of media's hostility can be immense. In this backdrop, media shoulders huge responsibilities while carrying out its routine work. Responsible reporting entails balanced coverage of issues. And the Pakistani media outlets have often overlooked journalism ethics in their pursuit to earn maximum viewership.

In Pakistan, the private media have grown exponentially over the past two decades, gradually emerging as the multibillion industry in which corporate interests routinely determine what goes on air and what gets the cut. The plethora of media houses compete with one another for commercial interests as well as favors from the state. Amid this profit-driven competition, the media ethics usually become a victim, and news channels resort to sensationalism to generate following among the public. One prominent tactic of the Pakistani media for hooking viewers was to show graphic contents containing disturbing scenes such as blood, bodies, or mutilated body parts etc. In other instances, reporters would run to funeral homes and ask victims' families to share their opinion on tragedies they were experiencing. Likewise, primetime news bulletins routinely blow issues out of proportions to create hype and sensation among the public.

Though the Article 19 of the constitution of Pakistan ensures press freedom however, broadcast media has misused the constitutional guarantee. As per the social responsibility theory, proposed by Dr. Robert Maynard Hutchison, Vice Chancellor of Chicago University 'freedom comes with responsibility'. But Pakistani media has time and again breached the ethic of social responsibility. It has become excessively commercialized and focused on quickest way to get high ratings for handsome revenues. In this race for profit maximization our media has

become ignorant and less considerate towards people directly affected by tragic instances.

Media has been targeting the grief stricken families, creating more hype and sensation which results in misleading the society. The insensitive coverage of Sahiwal incident is one appalling examples of blatant violation of media ethics. Moreover, various news channels used different frames while reporting the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) passenger plane crash. This present the dismal picture of broadcast media.

The broadcasters, to cater their corporate interests, have unduly emphasized certain news items. Media has become the hotbed for the spread of fake news. The Digital Rights Foundation, a non-government organization, in its report titled **"Sifting truth from lies in the age of fake news,"** noted that over 80% of population in Pakistan do not consider media a worth source of information. The report also noted that facts are properly not checked in the news room. The spread of fake news, distorted narratives, and sensing headlines have clouded the line between fact and fiction. The vocal defenders of free press have barley analyzed the rationale of media existence and sanctity of coverage.

Nevertheless, it is pertinent to note the role of media in promoting extremists messages. There is a link between media and growing violent extremism in society. An incident loses its potential to create terror without being broadcasted. Thus, media has been an instrument for extremists to project terror among people. A leading analyst and terrorism expert, Bruce Hoffman, has underlined the link between media and terrorism. He argued that

"without the media's coverage, the act's impact is arguably wasted, remaining narrowly confined to the immediate victim(s) of the attack, rather than reaching the wider 'target audience' at whom the terrorists' violence is actually aimed."

Terrorism coverage has been attractive subject for media as it leads to high rating. Media covering incidents of terrorism or extremism is not an issue but the problem lies in the means of reporting such instances. The news reporting about terrorism has traumatized

public by exaggerating threat perception and violent conflicts. Media rhetoric and its biasness toward certain groups has negatively affected the public perception. In a nutshell, media has enhanced the scope of extremist propaganda and activities and became a tool of advancing their goals without any expenses or risk. On one hand, terrorist needs media for free publicity of their cause, on the other hand, incidents related to extremism or terrorism fulfils the media appetite for shocking and sensational news to boost rating and maximize the profit. Regrettably, the media broadcasters have portrayed victimization relevant to everyday experiences.

In sum state needs to look at the extremist's exploitation of social media and devise a strategy to curtail the media related effects of

terrorism. The broadcasters' should maintain the objectivity for responsible reporting. They should impose certain limitations on themselves. Despite hounding victim's family, they should respect privacy. Moreover, government-media partnership is important to counter extremist's narrative. Content moderation is another important tool to counter disinformation. To this end there is a need of media convergence strategies. This will increase the interconnectedness of information, communications and technologies. Eventually reconditioning of the already established industry and work practices will enable the emergence of completely innovative and productive content.

HAVE YOU EVER...

SOCIAL MEDIA BINGO

BEEN ON ORKUT	STALKED SOMEONE	FOLLOWED-UNFOLLOWED MULTIPLE TIMES	ASL PLEASE	MADE FRIENDS WITH A STRANGER
MADE A FAKE ACCOUNT	CREATED EMBARRASSING EMAIL ID	NOT ACCEPTING YOUR DAD/MOM'S FRIEND REQUEST	WROTE A LONG POST	PLAYED FARMVILLE
SWIPED RIGHT BY MISTAKE	BLOCKED SOMEONE	CREATED ACCOUNT JUST TO CHECK SOMEONE	SENT A REQUEST TO FRIEND'S FRIEND	FORWARDED A MEME
TROLLED SOMEONE	GOT TROLLED		MADE A TIKTOK VIDEO	SENT A DM TO YOUR CELEBRITY CRUSH

YOUR TURN 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____