

**Politics, Terrorism and the News Media:
A Case Study of Saudi Arabia (2006-2007)**

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ABSTRACT

With the enormous development of communications and the transmission of national news to all parts of the world in seconds, it has become important to consider the treatment of national crises in the media and the challenges that may be encountered in the production of news during such crises. This is especially important in relation to the transnational problem of terrorism. This study chooses to examine the ways in which the Saudi Arabian national media have treated terrorism news between the period 2006-2007, given the complex position of Saudi Arabia in relation to Islamist terrorism.

Therefore, it will focus its theoretical part on examining the political, economic, ideological and social factors that may affect the shaping of news production, and on terrorism news in particular. Then, it will move on to studying the different theories of news framing, and the framing of terrorism news. Then, the empirical part will be focused on content analysis of different news-related stories of terrorism, taken from different Saudi sources, based on Iyengar's theory of news coverage, as well as our own set of categories in order to reveal a deeper explanation of news coverage of terrorism in the Saudi media.

This importance of this study comes from the fact that very few studies have focused on examining the performance of the Saudi news media in the rise of terrorism. We hope that this study can help Arab Gulf media in testing and improving the performance of their news media coverage, especially now that incidents like terrorism and the Arab Spring have shown wide public discontent towards the efficiency of news coverage during such events. We also hope that the results of the empirical part can help in shaping a new policy that provides a better vision and framework for news production, as most of the media organisations in this part of the world are state-owned and their methods of news production have arguably not reflected public needs.

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PREFACE

News media is major part of media studies in the Western world. In times of national crises, researchers work to help news producers in making information valuable and helpful to the audience. Obviously, people want information. They turn to news sources to know what is happening and information help them understand what might happen. In fact, there is a paucity in news media research in the Middle East. We need to understand the ways in which the Arab news media frame national crises news so that it can affect the audience understanding and interpretation of issues. With the escalation of terrorism and other unprecedented issues that create a serious national threat, we come to the point that this part of the world confronts a real challenge in the ways that news media operate.

Saudi Arabia and its war against terrorism is an example. Therefore, we will have the opportunity to look at the historical, economic, social and psychological aspects that may affect the production of terrorism news. We should explore the reasons behind the formation of the terrorist groups, their ideology and their relationship to the system. Additionally, we will examine the ways in which the Saudi news media deals with terrorism news and the way in which media itself is being used by the terrorist groups.

In fact, it will not be easy to delve deep into the Saudi system, organisations and society. It will be hard to analyse any media content, and also hard to survey the thoughts of people in a closed polity such as Saudi Arabia, but we will try to have this study completed as far as practicable. To this end, we hope to draw from this research is that the combined effects of journalistic, economic, organisational, and, most importantly, political pressures that news organisations experience, have an effect on the content of the news; and that the audience's understanding to such news can differ from what the government aim to disseminate to its audience.

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