



**Lokaverkefni til BA-gráðu í
stjórnmálafræði**

Terrorism and Mass Communications

How non-western terrorist groups are exploiting the internet and
western mass media

Sara Karlsdóttir Andreassen

Maí 2018



HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS
STJÓRN MÁLAFRÆÐI DEILD

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Lokaritgerð til BA-gráðu í stjórnmálafræði

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Félagsvísindasvið Háskóla Íslands

Maí 2018

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Ritgerð þessi er 12 eininga lokaverkefni til B.A.- gráðu í stjórnmálafræði.

Óheimilt að afrita ritgerðina á nokkrun hátt nema með leyfi höfundar.

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Kt. 210894-2769

Háskólaprent

Reykjavík, Ísland, 2018

Abstract

Due to the great rise of mass media, people today are exposed to news regarding terrorist attacks more or less daily. Needless to say, terrorist organizations such as Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and Al-Qaeda are well known today and acknowledged by the media as well as the citizens. Terrorists thrive on mass media and use it to achieve their sought after goals. With the great technological developments, terrorists are now able to distribute their messages and propaganda internationally, achieve worldwide recognition and reach out to a vast audience. There are several ways terrorist organizations exploit mass media and the internet for their own agenda. With access to the internet, terrorists are able to spread fear and propaganda easier than ever before, as well as broadcast their own videos. Today, terrorists are able to broadcast their own content and the audiences are therefore no longer receiving information or images as a third party, i.e. from the media. However, terrorist organizations depend on the mass media to reach a wider audience and generate fear. Consequently, this thesis will explore the terrorists' motivation for exploiting the mass media to their benefits, specifically western mass media. Communication theories such as Uses and Gratification, Agenda-Setting theory and Cultivation theory will be brought into play to understand how terrorists exploit mass media and the relationship between mass media and terrorists with an emphasis on the influence of the audiences.

Preface

This thesis is 12 ECTS unit final project towards a BA degree in Political Science at the University of Iceland. The thesis was written under the guidance of Brynja Huld Óskarsdóttir, an adjunct lecturer in terrorism at the University of Iceland, whom the author would like to thank for the constructive guidance, inspiring insights and superb collaboration. The author would also like to thank Anna-Mae Manning and especially Jack Ketcher for devoting their time to proofread the thesis and giving the author inspirational thoughts and guidance throughout the thesis. The author would also like to thank Þorgeir Logason for his immense encouragement. In addition, the author would also like to thank her parents for always believing in her and inspiring her to be the best she can be, as well as giving inspirational thoughts and endless encouragement throughout her University years.

Contents

Abstract.....	4
Preface	5
1. Introduction.....	7
2. The Role of Mass Communications.....	9
2.1. Uses and Gratifications.....	9
2.2. Cultivation theory	10
2.3. Agenda-Setting Theory.....	11
3. Defining Terrorism	13
3.1. Four Waves of Terrorism.....	13
3.2. Clash of Civilizations.....	14
3.3. The Terrorists Righteousness of Their Cause	15
3.4. Fear of Terrorism	16
3.5. Four most Threatening Non-Western Terrorist Groups Active Today	16
4. Terrorism and the Internet.....	18
4.1. Psychological Warfare	19
4.2. Publicity and Propaganda	20
4.3. Fundraising	20
4.4. Recruitment.....	20
4.5. The Islamic State and Social Media.....	21
4.6. Fighting Against Terrorism Using Social Media.....	22
5. Mass Media and Terrorism	24
5.1. The Audience	26
5.2. The Audiences' Emotion through Terrorism News	27
5.3. Effects of Television News Violence.....	27
5.4. Agenda-Setting after 9/11	28
Conclusion	30
References.....	33

1. Introduction

Terrorism is a term most people are aware of and is discussed significantly in the media. People are exposed to news regarding terrorist attacks more or less daily and needless to say terrorist organizations are well known today and acknowledged by the media as well as the citizens, greatly due to the rise of mass media. It is quite certain today that the mass media is a permanent part of our modern culture. Mass media is an essential part of everyone's life today and it has never been more accessible and is virtually unavoidable. Whether it's reading your morning newspaper, watching the evening news over dinner, listening to podcasts on your commute, scrolling through social media or searching the web, you are influenced by mass media on a daily basis and frankly, the influence of mass media today is inevitable.

Within the term terrorism lies the word *terror*. Terror originates from the Latin word *terrere*, which translates to "frighten" or "tremble". Terrorism has sadly been around for hundreds of years, though the term 'terrorism' wasn't widely used until late 1700s during the French Revolution's Reign of Terror. The Reign of Terror was a movement of hefty violence by the French state where between 16,000 to 40,000 citizens were killed. However, it wasn't until the digital age when terrorists had a breakthrough, mass media was a gift to terrorists. When many people hear the term 'terrorism' today, they think 'media'. Terrorists thrive on mass media and use it to their benefits. Through mass media, terrorists are able to distribute their messages internationally, get world recognition and reach out to a wider audience. Today, most people have unlimited access to the internet and are exposed to mass media every day. With increased technology, it's almost inevitable not to be exposed to mass media, people are constantly looking through their devices to get the latest news from events around the world. The people, as audiences to media, want to stay on the latest world events, especially tragic ones. Terrorist organizations have evidently taken advantage of the globalization of mass media to reach a wider audience and for the media exposure.

Terrorists today are living in the so called 'Fourth Wave' which relies on communication, to be able to cross borders easily, and accessibility to funding and weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). Furthermore, terrorist groups are very active on social media, such as Facebook and Twitter. Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) is one of the most active terrorist groups on social media today, with their platforms including YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, Viber and Facebook. Terrorists are known to release video recordings to broadcast their propaganda and horrific acts of violence, such as beheading their enemy. Even though people are aware that media coverage of terrorism is terrifying, people follow it to be informed of

possible attacks. Through media, terrorist are able to spread fear among their audiences. Consequently, this thesis will explore the terrorists' motivation for exploiting the mass media to their benefits, specifically western mass media. Communication theories such as Uses and gratification, Agenda-setting theory and Cultivation theory will be brought into play on how terrorists exploit mass media and how the relationship between mass media and terrorists are taking place with an emphasis on the influence of the audiences.

Since the digital age began, terrorist organizations have depended on mass media to deliver their messages to its audiences and generate fear. However, there are many ways terrorist organizations use mass media and the internet for their own agenda. The theories used in this thesis will address how the audience, mostly, are influenced by terrorist groups and their propaganda messages which will help understand how terrorist groups exploit mass media, as well as the internet.

2. The Role of Mass Communications

Before the television era, Paul Lazarsfeld headed a team of researchers from Columbia University in 1940 where they surveyed people in Erie County, Ohio, once a month to determine how the media affected the people's preference to the upcoming presidential election. At that time, the magic bullet theory was widely accepted. It claimed people were directly influenced by the media, however, the researchers found little evidence that the people who were voting weren't influenced by what they read or heard. Political alterations at the time, i.e. people changing political parties, were quite rare and the media tended to merely strengthen the decisions of those people who had already made up their mind regarding the election. Whether you were a Republican or a Democrat, you would bypass news stories that revolved around the other party. The research in Erie County made media analysts acknowledge that friends and family influence messages by the media distributed to its readers. Their conclusion was that the people were influenced by print and electronic media through the two-step flow theory which meant that ideas flowed from mass media to opinion leaders and from them onto a wider population (Griffin 2012, 355).

The two-step flow theory emerged when medicine and agriculture grew to rapid scientific advancement. The theory accurately described the dispersion of innovation among American doctors and farmers during the 1950s, but modern television and internet use has made alteration necessary to the theory. After the theory was revised, the first step of media influence became the flow of information to a mass audience. The second step became validation of the message by leaders the viewer respects (Griffin 2012, 355).

The role of mass communication is vital when looking into how terrorists exploit mass media since the media has power to control its audiences and which events to cover. The three main mass communication theories that will be employed to understand how terrorism links to mass media are Uses and Gratification, the Cultivation theory and the agenda-setting theory.

2.1. Uses and Gratifications

The Uses and Gratification theory was proposed by scholar Elihu Katz. Although the theory first surfaced in the 1940's, Elihu Katz and Professor Jay Blumler wrote an essay in 1974 and have since then both been considered co-creators of the theory. The theory tries to make sense of that people consume an incredible amount of media messages daily for various reasons, and that the effect of those messages are different for everyone. People interpret media messages differently and absorb different aspects of a given message. The theory states that people

purposely use media for particular purposes. Scholars used to think that the audiences were submissive targets waiting for the magic bullet to strike that would affect everyone the same way. However, in Katz's Uses and Gratification theory, the people decide which type of media they would like to use as well as the effects they want to get out of the media message. According to the theory, media users deliberately choose the type of media they want to consume to gratify their psychological needs. People have needs that they seek to gratify through media use (Sparks 2012, 358-359). This still occurs today with people seeking certain media outlets which reinforces their' echo chambers, i.e. people who prefer to watch Fox News versus people who prefer to watch CNN. Some people have no interest following news around the world and are therefore not exposed to all the gruesome events that take place.

The Uses and Gratification theory therefore assumes people have needs which they seek to gratify through media use (Sparks 2012, 359). People choose what television program they watch in order to satisfy their needs. They avoid certain programs or channels, newspapers or websites if the message won't satisfy their needs.

2.2. Cultivation theory

Prior to the arrival of broadcast media, schools and faith communities were the main storytellers to the masses. However, today, a television can be found in most households with almost unlimited access for every household member.

Professor George Gerbner, dean of the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania introduced the cultivation theory. He began the research in the mid 1960s with the initiative of studying whether and how watching television could possibly influence viewer's ideas of what the everyday world is like. In its most basic structure, the cultivation theory indicates that television is accountable for shaping, or "cultivating" viewers' notion of social reality. Over time, people's perception of social reality faintly changes by the massive television exposure which will eventually change for our culture as a whole (Shanahan & Morgan 1999, 7).

The theory's main focus is violence in media. Gerbner dedicated most of his research to studying the cultivating impact of media violence and how violence was portrayed on television (Griffin 2012, 368). According to Gerbner, violence is fundamental to television. Gerbner once wrote the following, "Violence is the simplest and cheapest dramatic means to demonstrate who wins in the game of life and the rules by which the game is played" (Gerbner and more 1979, 180). Most people would be concerned that violent behavior on TV would

encourage young viewers to adapt aggressive behavior. Gerbner, however, was more concerned with that violence on TV would affect people's beliefs regarding the world around them along with the emotions connected to those beliefs. That is, if people were to believe that the world is overflowing with crime, they would most likely feel scared about the option to engage in such crime-filled world. His concern was that violence in television might convince viewers that the world around is in fact, dangerous. This would lead to viewers buying home security systems, guard dogs, double-bolt locks and even be in the possession of firepower for their own safety (Griffin 2012, 367). There's a disconnect between how the world exists and how it's perceived to exist, i.e. the fear of terrorism doesn't complement how this is the safest time period in world history.

2.3. Agenda-Setting Theory

Fear of media's influence on public perception is nothing new. As far back as 1922, Walter Lippman, a newspaper columnist was worried that the media had the ability to present images to the public. Lippman professed that the media act as a intercessor between "the world outside and the pictures in our heads" (Griffin 2012, 378). It was journalism professors Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw however, who later introduced the agenda-setting theory. Their statement was that we look to news professionals for an indication on where to focus our attention. The audience determines what they think is important from what the media determines as important.

In June 1972, five men broke in to the Democratic National Committee headquarters searching for unspecified information. Today, we are all acquainted with the incident which we know as the Watergate scandal. At the time, it was a local crime story that got two paragraphs on page 17 of the Washington Post. The editors however, gave the story elevated exposure even though the public didn't seem too interested in the incident. The following year, Americans started to show an increased awareness of Watergate's magnitude. By April 1973, 90 percent of Americans were familiar with the Watergate scandal. President Nixon protested, "I am not a crook", nevertheless, by spring of 1974, President Nixon was forced to leave office, since the majority of Americans along with their representatives believe he was indeed "a crook". This was a perfect example for McCombs and Shaw regarding the agenda-setting function of the mass media. They believe that the mass media has capacity to transfer the conspicuousness of items on their news agenda to the public's eye (Griffin 2012, 378).

McCombs and Shaw were aware that people aren't robots waiting to be programmed by the media. Some people would be more opposed to the media's political concerns than others. The professors resorted to the Uses and Gratification theory for a follow up study, in order to learn who are more vulnerable to the media agenda. They came to a conclusion that people who have a high need for direction regarding political views are more likely to have the willingness to be influenced by the media, others were merely thought to be curious. Today, McCombs and Shaw describe the powerful agenda-setting theory as;

The media may not only tell us what to think about, they also tell us how and what to think about it, and perhaps even what to do about it (Griffin 2012, 384).

McCombs and Shaw referred news editors who set the agenda to "gatekeepers of political dialogue" (Griffin 2012, 385). The audience therefore may not have a complete control over what information are being distributed to them and moreover influenced by. The Agenda-Setting theory relates to terrorism on the grounds that media has the power to control what we see and what we think about certain events, i.e. terrorism. They have the power to influence our opinion on terrorism.

3. Defining Terrorism

Bruce Hoffman's definition of terrorism will be used when discussing the term terrorism. In his book, *Inside Terrorism*, Hoffman defines terrorism as; "the deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence or the threat of violence in the pursuit of political change. All terrorist acts involve violence or the threat of violence" (Hoffman, 2006, 40).

By differentiating terrorists from other forms of criminals and fighters and irregular warfare, we are able to identify terrorism as violent or something that threatens violence, carried out by a subnational group or non-state entity and is designed to have future psychological consequences further than the immediate victim or target. Terrorism is designed to produce power where there isn't any or to strengthen power where there is little. Through media exposure caused by their violence, terrorists want to acquire the leverage, influence and power they otherwise lack to achieve political change on either local or international level (Hoffman, 2006, 41).

Within the term terrorism lies the word *terror*. Terror originates from the Latin word *terrere*, which translates to "frighten" or "tremble". The term terrorism was first invented during the French Revolution Reign of Terror which began in 1793 and lasted until 1794. The Reign of Terror was a movement of hefty violence by the French state where between 16,000 to 40,000 citizens were killed. The Jacobins, a group of rebels during the Reign of Terror, used the term terrorism when depicting their own actions in the French Revolution. The French National Convention stated publicly in September 1793 that "terror is the order of the day" (Matusitz, 2013, 2). In 1794, frontrunner of the French Revolution, Maximillien Robespierre, proclaimed that "terror is nothing other than justice, prompt, severe, inflexible" (Matusitz, 2013, 2). Terrorism was defined for the first time in 1798 when the French enhanced the dictionary Académie Française where the term terrorism was defined as 'government of terror' (Matusitz, 2013, 2).

In the following chapter, terrorism will be defined to a greater extent whilst also looking at fear of terrorism and a brief intro of the four most threatening non-western terrorist groups that are active today.

3.1. Four Waves of Terrorism

After the terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001, David C. Rapoport developed a theoretical framework for modern terrorism by dividing terrorism into four waves known as *The Four Waves of Terrorism*. In the 1880s, the first wave emerged that is today

known as the 'Anarchist Wave' which lasted for about 40 years. The second wave was the 'Anti-Colonial Wave' which began in the 1920s and had for the most part disappeared by the 1960s. Later that decade, the 'New Left Wave' emerged but was dissipated in the 90s. The final current wave is known as the 'Religious Wave' which began in 1979 and is likely to proceed in the following years (Rapoport 2002, 2).

The first wave, the 'Anarchist Wave' can be traced back to Russia during the 1880s. The anarchist wave was triggered by discontented reform movements and assassination campaigns against government officials. Consequently, these alternate political assassinations of terrorism spread into the Ottoman Empire with the Armenian revolutionaries and from there into the Balkans. The second wave emerged after World War II as nationalist rebels wanted fortitude from the winning states of the war and from colonial powers. However, by the 1960s, most colonies had gained independence which led to a drop in terrorism. Main terrorism tactics used during this wave were hit and run, especially against the government police force. The third wave of terrorism was characterized with a revolutionary spirit. The United States of America became the primary target for many terrorist organizations, one example is the Vietcong invading Americans. One of the main tactics by left-wing terrorists during this wave was airplane hijacking, averaging a hundred airplane hijacking annually. These dramatic terrorist attacks gained a great magnitude of media coverage (Rapoport 1999, 501-502).

The 9/11 attacks intensified the Fourth Wave of terrorism, for both the United States as well as nations worldwide. The wave is represented by the religious justification for killing, international scope, horrific tactics and weapons, and the reliance on technology of the modern day. The Fourth Wave relies on communication, to be able to cross borders easily, and accessibility to funding and weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). Terrorism had reached a global phase in the Fourth Wave where use of any weapons is justifiable. 'The others' become a legitimate target and no peculiarity among targets should be acknowledged (Matusitz, 2013, 12).

3.2. Clash of Civilizations

The Clash of Civilizations proposed by Samuel Huntington speculates that cultural and religious disparity between civilizations worldwide has emerged to be the main source of terrorism today. According to Huntington, the rivalry of superpowers is replaced by the clash of civilization. He wrote that, "In this new world the most pervasive, important, and dangerous conflicts will not be between social classes, rich and poor, or other economically defined

groups, but between peoples belonging to different cultural entities” (Huntington 1996, 28). Thus, his theory emphasizes on religion and its core to terrorism, i.e. that religion has become the main reason for violence.

This can be detected in the Fourth Wave effortlessly as the new terrorism. Terrorists seek to cause radical changes and want to cause a Clash of Civilizations. Religious terrorists usually create their own community and are not afraid of upsetting their supporters with the attacks they execute. To them, they are only accountable to God (Matusitz 2013, 12).

Terrorists today may not even deny responsibility for their horrific acts. As Morgan wrote in his article *The Origin of New Terrorism*, “Today’s terrorist don’t want a seat at the table; they want to destroy the table and everyone sitting at it” (Morgan 2004, 30). Morgan’s statement reflects perfectly on how terrorism is seen today, terrorists engage in horrific events to gain worldwide attention through media and for their messages to be heard.

3.3. The Terrorists Righteousness of Their Cause

In this propaganda war with terrorism, terrorists persistently stress that their violent acts are justified and righteous. During the last two decades however, the claim of justice comes from their religious views. Ideas like those of the pro-Iranian fundamentalist terrorist, which is that the acts of violence are orders from God and that death caused by struggle against the non-worshipper or the opponent leads to paradise. These principles have important consequences. Firstly, terrorists justify their violence by claiming that they are soldiers of liberation in a just war or freedom fighters whilst denying any statements that their violent acts are crimes or murder. Secondly, as a result of their belief in their own righteousness, terrorists portray their opponents as corrupt tormentors beyond redemption. The terrorist believe they have a duty to kill them because they’re corrupt tormentor beyond redemption, and anyone who resists or gets in the terrorists way will be killed as well. Thirdly, the terrorist organization deems they’re fighting a Manichaeism struggle, which was a major religious movement founded by the Iranian prophet Mani and thrived between the 3rd and 7th century. Using forces of domination, they believe that they are entitled to kill anyone who are not with them or joining their forces, perceiving them as traitors (Wilkinson 1997, 55). Manichaeism generally implies the struggle between good and evil, which is a very powerful organizing principle for any group. If you believe the opponent is evil, Manichaeism allows you to justify violence.

3.4. Fear of Terrorism

According to Richard Jackson, a lecturer in International Security at the Center for International Politics at University of Manchester, terrorism is now considered the greatest threat to western security since the threat of superpower confrontation at the peak of the cold war. Many citizens in America and Europe agree that their number one security concern is the danger of terrorist attacks, people are also generally quite anxious about the risk of air travel, public transport and large public gatherings since these spots often attract terrorist attacks. However, the actual risk of being caught in a terrorist attack is miniature. Statistically, the risk of being killed in a terrorist attack is close to the risk of being killed by DIY accidents, lightning strikes or bee stings (Barker 2002, 37). Conversely, In Jackson's book *Writing the War on Terrorism*, he claimed that Britain's Chief scientists, Dr David King, argued that global warming is a much more threat to humanity than terrorism (Jackson 2005, 93).

The arbitrary mass casualty terrorism that we are constantly reminded to expect is actually exceptionally rare. As Jenkins put it, "terrorists want a lot of people watching, not a lot of people dead" (Jenkins 1998, 230). The existing fear for terrorism, however, did not begin with the 9/11 attacks as many people assume, it began in the early 1980s when authorities began to use the word 'terrorism' to describe acts of violence which they had previously called hijackings, bombings, assassinations, kidnappings and sabotage. Due to this new classification of the acts of violence, it appeared there was a new outbreak of terrorist violence. The media implemented the same term to the acts of violence and news stories about terrorism quickly became a principle to television and print media news (Jackson 2005, 95).

3.5. Four most Threatening Non-Western Terrorist Groups Active Today

In 2015, four terrorist groups were accountable for 74 percent of all casualties from terrorism according to data collected by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), a Department of Homeland Security Center of Excellence led by the University of Maryland. The listed groups were the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Boko Haram, the Taliban and al-Qaida. In 2015, ISIS exceeded Boko Haram as the deadliest terrorist group, given that ISIS carried out attacks in 252 different cities in 2015 and was accountable for 6,141 fatalities that year. Whilst Boko Haram was accountable for 5,478 deaths during that same year, with a 18 percent reduction of the number of fatalities. Al-Qaida had a 17 percent reduction in the number of deaths in 2015, given that the group was accountable for 1,620 deaths that same year. The Talibans on the other hand were accountable for 4,502 deaths in 2015 which comes

to a 29 percent increase of fatalities which the group is accountable for. Together, these terrorist groups were accountable for 17,741 fatalities in 2015 (Global Terrorism Index 2016, 49).

In addition to being engaged in war and armed conflict, these terrorist groups are also engaged in conflicts with either government or other non-state groups. For that reason, the total casualty counts are to a large extent, higher than merely their casualties through terrorism (Global Terrorism Index 2016, 51).

The Global Terrorism Database (GTD) classifies terrorism as “actions outside the context of legitimate warfare activities” (Global Terrorism Index 2016, 53). By that, the number of fatalities as mentioned above are only acts carried out by non-state actors and which are different to international humanitarian law, for example, targeting civilians was classified as terrorism. Government actions were not counted in the GTD, the acts of sub-national actors were only included in the data (Global Terrorism Index 2016, 53).

4. Terrorism and the Internet

Terrorist groups use social media and other internet platforms in several ways, mainly for operational communication, intelligence gathering, sharing technical information, recruiting, training, etc. Social media platforms are increasing steadily, which terrorist organizations use to their advantage. The Simon Wiesenthal Center identified in 2014 that there were more than 30,000 forums, websites and social media accounts which promote terrorism in the United States as well as abroad (Hossain 2018, 140). Those numbers have gone up significantly since 2014 and just last year, Twitter took down around 300,000 accounts in the first half of 2017. From 2015 to 2017, Twitter took down more than 935,000 accounts promoting terrorism (O'Brien 2017). Islamist extremists in the United Kingdom are known for using YouTube to distribute their messages, sharing speeches, propaganda and political events. The Islamic State (ISIS) are prominent profile users of social media, particularly on the Twitter (Hossain 2018, 140). Cyber terrorism expert, Evan Hohlmann, wrote in 2006 that social networking tools are responsible for 90 percent of terrorist activity on the internet, such as inspiring attacks (Hossain 2018, 141).

There are several ways terrorist use the internet to their advantage. The United States Institute of Peace gathered different ways in which modern terrorists use the internet, such as a weapon for psychological warfare, publicity and propaganda, recruitment and mobilization, fundraising, and planning coordination. Some ways in which terrorist groups use the internet replicates the way traditional political organizations use the internet, for example, raising funds and distributing propaganda. On the contrary, some ways are much more abnormal, such as hiding instructions and coded messages or encrypted files (Weimann, 2004, 5).

Al-Qaeda was quick to recognize the major potential of the internet, in favor for building a global movement. Osama Bin Laden once wrote in a letter to Taliban leader Mullah Muhammad Omar in 2002, "It is obvious that the media war in this century is one of the strongest methods; in fact, its ratio may reach 90 percent of the total preparation for the battles" (Klausen, 2015, 3).

Twitter made it possible for terrorist groups to connect together and operate in numerous theaters of warfare. Additionally, Twitter connects them with tactical support groups beyond the combat zone, reducing geographical restriction. Propaganda has continuously been significant to terrorism. Terrorist favor strong control of the message they want to broadcast, but they lack the direct control of mass media. Print media and television have in the past

trusted in convincing the media into carrying out the communication by means of presenting of attacks. Social media has completely abolished the terrorists' reliance on media, overturning the relationship between the terrorists' and media, by making the media reliant on the jihadist-run social media (Klausen, 2015, 4).

4.1. Psychological Warfare

Terrorism has often been conceived as a form of *psychological warfare*, and terrorist groups have used this method for years to generate fear. The terrorist groups would spread disinformation, intended to distribute fear and feel of helplessness. Terrorist groups are also keen on broadcasting horrifying images, such as the murder of the American journalist Daniel Pearl by his captors. His death was recorded on videotape and replayed on several terrorist websites. Al-Qaeda has been proficient in spreading fear on the internet since the September 11 attacks in 2001. The organization has placed a great deal of announcement of a large attack on U.S. targets in the near future. The media covered these warnings a great deal, which facilitated to generate fear and insecurities among audiences (Weimann, 2004, 5).

In February 2015, the Islamic State released a video of the execution of Moaz al-Kasasbeh, a Jordanian air force pilot who was being held hostage. Moaz al-Kasasbeh was unaware that the Islamic State militants were about to burn him alive until they poured petrol all over him. An anonymous jihadist, a former IS militant, confirmed the story in a documentary that aired on Al Arabiya in February 2017. The IS militants zoomed in on al-Kasasbeh's face where it is apparent that the Jordanian pilot had no idea what was about to happen. The video, titled 'Healing the Believers' Chests', a 22 minute film, showed the Jordanian pilot walking by himself in front of masked IS fighters, and later on locked in a cage with a trail of petrol leading up to him. The militants used four different high tech video cameras to film the horrific event from different angles, showing the Jordanian pilot collapsing to his knees as he is being burned alive. Jordanian officials assured their citizens that they would retaliate harshly and were quick to execute two Iraqi militants with ties to the Islamic State (Daily Mail 2017). The brutal video went viral and the event was covered by the media in almost every country. The video can still accessed on several news websites today, such as Fox News, BBC News in addition to Youtube. This particular event, shows that the IS are not afraid to go the extra mile to showcase their beliefs and generate extreme fear, sadness and anger among the audience.

4.2. Publicity and Propaganda

Before the digital era, terrorists relied on television, radio or the print media for attracting attention. These conventional media outlets, however, have a variety of stages of editorial selection that terrorists can seldom reach. No such threshold can be found on terrorists' own websites. The internet has greatly expanded opportunities for terrorists to secure publicity. Terrorists can now manipulate how the audience sees their own image and the image of their enemies. They have direct control over the content of their messages which they distribute on the internet. The majority of terrorist sites do not commemorate their violent acts. Instead, terrorist groups call attention to two different issues; the constraint placed on freedom of expression and the troubles of a fellow member in a terrorist organization who is now a political prisoner. These issues are targeted to bring forth sympathy from Western audiences who value freedom of expression and are against measures to silence political opponents, in addition to be a powerful message to the terrorist groups' own supporters (Weimann, 2004, 6).

4.3. Fundraising

Same as political organizations, terrorist groups use the internet to raise funds. Terrorist groups are able to gather personal information that has been entered in online questionnaires and order forms, to recognize users with empathy towards a specific cause or issues. These users are then typically sent an email by an organization that supports the terrorists goals but operates legally and generally have no direct ties with the terrorist organization itself, and ask the individuals to make a donation. For example, a Texas based charity called the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development, collected funds to benefit the terrorist group Hamas. The U.S. government confiscated the charity's assets in 2001 after linking its ties to Hamas. Furthermore, Al-Qaeda has continuously relied heavily on donations and the groups fundraising network is more or less built upon foundation of charities, nongovernmental organizations, as well as other financial institutions that operate internet-based chat rooms and forums (Weimann, 2004, 7-8).

4.4. Recruitment

Terrorist groups also use the internet for recruiting and mobilizing their supporters to be more engaged in their activities or support their causes. Terrorist groups are able to attain information about the users who visit their websites. Users who are frequently visiting the terrorist groups' website and seem the most interested in the organization's cause are then contacted. Terrorists

also roam online chat rooms and cybercafés in order to find prospective members to their organization, especially young people (Weimann, 2004, 8).

Some individuals, however, use the internet to publicize themselves to terrorist organizations. For example, in 1995, a student named Ziyad Khalil enrolled at Columbia College in Missouri, as a computer science major. He became a part of a Muslim activists groups on campus and developed ties to several radical groups as well as operating a website that was in favor to the terrorist group, Hamas. Due to his immense internet activities, he became noticed by Bin Laden and his lieutenants. Khalil became Al-Qaeda's supply officer in the United States which required Khalil to arrange purchases of satellite telephones, computers, as well as other electronic devices to help with surveillance and communication within the terrorist group. Terrorist groups, however, generally go searching for potential recruits rather than waiting on individuals to present themselves to the organization. When terrorists groups find potential recruits through chat rooms for instance, they brainwash them with religious verdicts and anti-American propaganda, in addition to giving them training manuals with instructions on how to be a terrorist. (Weimann, 2004, 8).

4.5. The Islamic State and Social Media

One of the most active terrorist groups on social media today is the Islamic State (IS) with their social platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Viber, etc. In 2014, the Brooking Centre for Middle East Policy discovered that between September and December that year, around 46,000 to 70,000 Twitter accounts belonged to active IS supporters, with an average of 1,000 followers in each account. By using social media, the terrorist organization is able to spread propaganda across the world, in addition to recruiting new potential members, communicating to their supporters and finding potential funding amongst supporters (Hossain, 2018, 141).

One of the main reasons for the use of social media by terrorist groups, specifically on twitter, is to strengthen the group's unity as well as distributing propaganda among the audiences. Along with distributing propaganda and messages to the public through Twitter, ISIS is also known to release video recordings to broadcast their propagandas and atrocious acts, such as beheading their enemies. The government makes a great effort in removing the suspected Twitter or Facebook accounts of a terrorist group, however, once an account is removed, a new account is immediately opened by the terrorist group and all their previous friends and followers are moved to new account (Hossain, 2018, 142).

ISIS has been dedicated to use Youtube, Twitter and Facebook specifically, attracting thousands of views, comments, forums and posts. Through Youtube, ISIS began its 'one billion campaign which implored Muslims to join ISIS. The videos that were broadcasted gained a large audience and were accompanied with the words: 'Proudly support the Muslim cause' (Awan, 2017, 139). The videos were also translated into several different languages and broadcasted in different countries such as Algeria, Libya and Egypt. Isis has a central media centre of it its called 'Al Hayat Media Centre', from which messages are sent and their propaganda broadcasted. ISIS has been known to show videos of ISIS being fighters with morals, i.e. helping to protect civilians, helping the injured and visiting injured fighters in hospitals and hand out sweets to children. Furthermore, ISIS had released an app, 'The Dawn of Glad Tidings', which was free to download and enabled users to be up to date with the latest news from the organization as well as follow tweets, links, hashtags, images, comments and videos posted on their personal accounts. It can be argued that social media sites are being exploited by ISIS and other terrorist organizations as a worldwide cyber war tactic in places like Syria. By being active on Twitter, terrorist groups are able to seem more powerful than they actually are (Awan 2017, 139).

4.6. Fighting Against Terrorism Using Social Media

Social media has allowed terrorists to become more organized and able to frequently carry out various terrorist acts, not only targeting the Western world but also other countries, for example, Bangladesh and Pakistan in South Asia. The world sees a high number of terrorist attacks that keeps on increasing as there are no universal regulation that could possibly control the cyber world, moreover, the internet is too decentralized and complex to be regulated continuously. Small terrorist groups that are bound in their home towns, for instance, are becoming involved with larger international terrorist organizations, as a result of the growing central role of social media. With that said, it's safe to say that there is an immediate need to pass a law on social media terrorism, and for the government to contemplate USA's recent 'The Combat Terrorist Use of Social Media Act 2016' along with UK's 'Investigatory Power Act 2016', in the fight against terrorism. In addition, countries need to take into account the right to freedom of speech, right to freedom of expression along with the right to privacy, which are all fundamental issues in order to sustain the basic human rights around the world (Hossain, 2018, 147-148). In 2012, the United Nations (UN) articulated that they're unable to pass a treaty that could regulate the internet or social media across the globe at the World Conference of International Telecommunication, in order to potentially prevent or control social media

terrorism. However, in 2011, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) embraced new strategies which focused on the immediate threat of cyber terrorism (Hossain, 2018, 150.)

The most suitable way to prevent social media terrorism, and could be an extremely effective strategy, is to increase people's awareness. If the general public is aware of the problem, the government would find it easier to track down suspected individuals, who are attempting to promote terrorism and influence the public on social media platforms. Most people aren't even aware of terrorists using social media, for instance Twitter. National governments won't be able to single-handedly prevent terrorism on social media since the social media users are rapidly increasing. Governments need to make sure that their law enforcements and intelligence units are well prepared with technological appliances in the fight against terrorism. In addition, the government needs to be sure that people's right to privacy is protected in the midst of it all, along with freedom of expression and freedom of speech. Training facilities should also be a priority for the government to these agencies and intelligence units, that way they're able to successfully deal with any crisis (Hossain 2018, 148-149). These methods could be used in order to prevent how terrorists are exploiting social media to their advantages.

5. Mass Media and Terrorism

The mass media has advanced the war on terrorism, especially after the terrorist attacks on the U.S. that killed 2,996 people on September 11, 2001. The horrific event and continuous media coverage distributed fear amongst survivors and an uncertain future. The media coverage on the 9/11 attacks promoted stereotypes and excessive ethnocentrism, which resembled the vision that numerous westerners had of the Viet Chong during the Vietnam War. The Vietnamese were portrayed as Asians who ‘didn’t value life’ (Altheide 2007, 292).

According to Kaiter, all major leadership groups in the U.S. see eye to eye that the media has more influence than any other group in the society, which becomes useful for terrorist organizations since they use media to acquire national and international attention. In the early 1970s, studies showed the surfacing of a new mode of terrorism, the media-oriented terror. (Kaiter 2015, 428-429). As Brian M. Jenkins wrote in his analysis of international terrorism, “terrorist attacks are often carefully choreographed to attract the attention of the electronic media and the international press. The hostages themselves often mean nothing to terrorists. Terrorism is aimed at the people watching, not the actual victims. Terrorism is a theater.” (Jenkins 1975, 4).

The televised display is essential to modern guerrilla terrorism. The extremists who coordinated the 9/11 attacks evidently knew that the first attack on the twin towers would produce a nation-wide, real-time audience for the second attack, when the second plane crashed into the twin towers. According to critics, a range of goals were accomplished throughout the choreographed attack such as fear, anger and thirst for revenge throughout the U.S. The attack revealed American vulnerability, generated political polarization all over the world, which is precarious for humanity, but politically valuable to factors on both sides in the succeeding ‘war on terror’ (Kaiter 2015, 429).

Terrorist cautiously select their target location to achieve the best lighting in mass media, for example, the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the attacks in Paris in 2015, which left 129 dead as well as the recent attacks in Barcelona in August last year, where a 22-year-old terrorist drove a van into pedestrians on Las Ramblas. In addition to gaining attention of societies through mass media, terrorist also use the media platform to propagandize their political views, to inform the audiences and opponents on their motives behind their acts and to justify violence. Terrorists want to be recognized as legal world leaders by the international community, since the media give terrorist equal media time to legal politicians. Therefore, mass media is an

important tool for terrorists, since it allows them to reduce unevenness between them and their opponents in the actual war, to generate fear as well as to justify their actions and reach to a larger audience (Gareeva 2016, 22). Paul Wilkinson claimed that terrorism is a psychological weapon which relies on the distribution of threat in society and that terrorism is not able to survive without publicity and advertising (Wilkinson 1997, 56). As long as mass media exists, terrorist organizations will hunger for what former Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher claimed as ‘the oxygen of publicity’ (Wilkinson 1997, 53). The freedom of mass media allows terrorists to influence society and to control it. In the fight against terrorism, however, the media has enormous potential to gain national and international attention to the problem. With that being said, the media should play a more active role in the fight against terrorism as well as being on guard against terrorists trying to manipulate them.

The media is an open society whilst being aggressively competitive market, it constantly desires to break the news and provide the details of an event. Thus, it’s safe to say that the media are bound to react to terrorist propaganda of the deed, since it is striking terrible news. As a result, the media and terrorism are in a symbiotic relationship (Wilkinson 1997, 54).

According to Wilkinson, terrorists use the media for four main purposes, especially through television, radio and print media. Firstly, to transfer the propaganda of the deed and to create as much fear as possible among their target groups. Secondly, to gather more support for their cause among the public, nationally and internationally, by highlighting their arguments as righteous and the foreseeable victory, their victory. Thirdly, to dictate the responses of the government that their anti-terrorist measures are essentially authoritarian and counterproductive, and lastly, to provoke and gather potential supporters whilst increasing their recruitment numbers, raising funds and inspiring future attacks (Wilkinson 1997, 56).

A Brazilian terrorist, Carlos Marighella, published the *Minimanual of the Urban Guerilla* in 1969. Marighella is one of the most leading ‘theorists’ of modern terror and has become the influencer for several terrorist movements worldwide. The manual converses several different ways of how terrorists are able to benefit from the mass media for their own goals. Marighella claimed that, “to inform about the revolutionist’s actions is enough for the modern mass media to become an important tool of propaganda and that the psychological war is a technique of fight, based on direct or indirect usage of the mass media” (Peresin 2007, 7).

Terrorism therefore, may become a violent act that is created intentionally to seek attention and then, through the publicity, communicate a message to an audience (Peresin 2007, 7).

It's apparent that for terrorists to achieve the maximum capabilities of their actions they need to provoke fundamental political change by spreading terror and fury. However, the mass media gains significant profit when informing about terrorism, such as kidnappings and hostage crises. The fact that the news are dramatic, viewer ratings could rise drastically as well as gain great public attention, therefore, media companies gain a great profit (Peresin 2007, 7).

It is evident that terrorists are aware of the control of persuasion that the media holds. Terrorists rely on media for their attacks and messages to be distributed. If mass media and terrorism were narrowed down significantly, the main purpose for terrorists' exploiting the mass media would be to generate fear among citizens around the world.

5.1. The Audience

The most essential part to any mass communication is to understand the audience. By definition, an audience is a faction of people who participate in a media event, either passively or actively. By participating passively, people are either watching a show or being a target to a message sent out by the sender, by participating actively, however, people are engaging in the event or providing feedback to the messages. Participating in a discourse with a human audience suggests that terrorists try to promote change. For instance, they may attempt to change policies, to intimidate a specific action, avert the ratification of a policy, to gather support and empathy, to persuade individuals into behaving a specific way or to force the audience into inaction (Matusitz 2013, 77).

The theory of Uses and Gratification, as mentioned before, speculates that the audience is more important than the actual attack or message. Terrorism is a public act which is directed to the psychological and emotional state of the audience who are observing the horrific act of violence. The terrorist's intent is to generate a state of anxiety and horror within the audience. Terrorists carefully reflect over the potential audience before an attack is perpetrated. The significance and allocation of the audience are proof to the power of terrorism as a method and to the terrorists' goals to have as many people watching the attack as well as the aftermath. The dead are a part of the audience according to terrorists, they do not, however, represent the core audience. According to John Williams, there are two stages of audience that exist; the direct audience and the indirect audience. Direct audiences are the targets of physical violence, usually innocent civilians, whilst the indirect audiences are the intended audience of the

terrorists. Generally, the intended audiences are never physically struck by terrorism (Matusitz 2013, 78-79).

5.2. The Audiences' Emotion through Terrorism News

The Uses and Gratification theory suggests that people seek to gain a sense of existential security and to be in contact with relevant events and conditions around the world as well immediate surroundings. People use media to gain insight into oneself by gaining insight into those we admire, using them to represent our behavior and strengthen our own personal values. According to the theory, people need to have an emotional origin, thus evaluating the use of media in expression of the gratification of social and psychological needs. People seek to identify with others as well as gaining a sense of belonging to the community (Miller 2005, 85). Therefore, people feel a need to follow horrific terrorist attacks in order to empathize with the survivors or the remaining family of a victim, in order to attempt to identify with their emotions and being a part of a bigger society. For example, the terrorist attack in Barcelona last year made headlines far and wide, but especially in Europe. As many Europeans would feel the attacks was 'close to home' and perhaps have ties to Spain in many ways, therefore seek to watch or read news regarding the attack to identify with the society and to gratify their psychological needs.

On the other hand, the Uses and Gratification theory also implies during particularly stressful times in the event of terrorist attacks, people might tend to channel surf away from news reports to a more lighthearted television programs to those who are most sensitive to heightened death possibilities (Miller 2005, 85). For instance, citizens in European countries who are more lighthearted would find it difficult to watch news of a beheading that would take place in the Middle East as it would not satisfy their need of gratification which they are looking for when choosing a television program.

5.3. Effects of Television News Violence

As mentioned before, the Cultivation theory, in its most basic form, indicates that television shapes how people perceive the real world, i.e. the theory is responsible for 'cultivating' viewers' opinion on social reality. For example, after 9/11, people had a stronger negative opinion towards their Islamic peers.

A study published in 2004 named *Examining Effects of TV News Violence on College Students through Cultivation Theory* explored relationships between viewing television news coverage of the 9/11 attacks and perception of violence carried out by people outside the United

States, negative personal emotions and if it changed their attitudes toward their Muslim peers. The study was conducted on 234 college students, merely six weeks after the 9/11 attacks. By examining the results, the authors were able to show that the more time an individual spent watching television news coverage in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, the more negative personal emotion students held in regards to their Muslim peers and were likely to reject developing friendships with them (Mosharafa 2015, 33).

The media has a powerful ability to shape our views of society, countries, race and gender. Furthermore, before the digital age, terrorists weren't able to reach an audience as large as today. The print media and radio merely had written news stories about terrorist attacks and even a few pictures of the events that were carefully chosen by editors in fear of the pictures being too gruesome for its audience. Today, terrorist organizations are able to broadcast their own videos and pictures to the world in its most gruesome form where no details are being filtered for the audience. The people watching are now becoming audiences, not audiences through a third party.

5.4. Agenda-Setting after 9/11

As previously mentioned, the Agenda Setting theory is fundamentally, the media informing the audience of what is important. The media decides what to broadcast and terrorists are fully aware of how media coverage of terrorist attacks generates fear to the audience, thus, they plan attacks in places that would surely get a lot of media attention in order to reach a larger audience. As Hoffman argued, "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" (Hoffman 2006, 174). Journalists and editors have the power to control the importance and material of readers' belief around the attacks.

Looking back at the case of 9/11 in the United States, Al-Qaeda and Osama Bin Laden wanted to deliver a commanding threat to the American government, demanding that foreign policies in the Middle east to be changed in its administration. The 9/11 attacks hardened the partition between the terrorists and Americans, whilst both sides grew larger in terms of manpower (Matsaganis 2005, 387). Former President Bush, warned the world that "you are either with us or against us" (Cable News Network, 2001). Three years after 9/11 and as the war in Iraq continued, terrorism dominated most political communications. After the 2004 election in the U.S., the allusion of threat seemed to disappear from the media's daily agenda,

that is until the London bombings a year later in July of 2005, where as the threat level heightened to Code Yellow (elevated) to Code Orange (high). However, the change only involved the public transportation systems within the U.S. (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2005). Many would argue that the Bush administration had managed to maintain the entire country in crisis mode up to five years. That being said, the administration used terrorism to justify the prevalence of their foreign policy. Since 9/11, terrorism has dominated the administrations agenda. As in the case of media relevance, the administration became the main source of information that was accessible to the media. The media, therefore, became vastly dependent on the administration's agenda (Matsaganis 2005, 387).

The audience became the administration's targets for their perception of politics and terrorism in the Middle East, specifically the war in Iraq. Moreover, the administration led the public to believe that Saddam Hussein was stockpiling weapons of mass destruction to justify the war on Iraq. The media was at that time highly dependent on sources from the administration, as they were their only source (Matsaganis 2005, 388).

Due to the aftermath of 9/11, the media had to rely on Bush's administration for sources and information, thus the governments' agenda became the media's agenda and from there to the people who were following the news. The audiences at the time were therefore not exposed to the whole truth, merely to what the media wanted the audience to know and what the government wanted the audience to perceive as the whole truth.

Conclusion

It is obvious that mass media as well as social media plays an important role for terrorist organizations, especially with increasing number of terrorist activities. Terrorists are able to communicate with their followers and their donors for funds through mass media and social media platforms. ISIS and Al-Qaeda are especially prone to using the internet to expand their operations, i.e. by recruiting new members from across the globe and distributing materials for training purposes as well as materials for bombs. Al-Qaeda was one of the first terrorist organizations to exploit the internet and further their influence to audiences, ISIS, however, has completely transformed modern terrorism with their role in social media today. ISIS has been specifically keen on using YouTube, Twitter and Facebook to further their goals. The terrorist group began its' one billion campaign through YouTube, plying Muslims to join ISIS.

When looking into why terrorists are exploiting social media today, especially Twitter, it's evident that their main purpose for operating social media accounts is to strengthen the group's unity and to spread propaganda messages to the public. Governments are attempting to take down social media sites operating by terrorist groups, though little is achieved since they are quick to open new accounts and their previous followers follow to their new account. One way to prevent terrorist groups to spreading on social media and achieving their goals is for the media and the government to inform the public of the problem. That way, the public could take an active role in combating terrorism on social media.

Terrorist organizations have spread their messages throughout history, first by retelling that an event took place and claiming credit for it, and later through the technological developments that had taken place. Terrorists are using the internet as a weapon for psychological warfare, publicity and propaganda, recruitment and mobilization, fundraising, and planning coordination. The groups are able to reach a far wider audience than ever before, thus influencing more people and gaining more supporters with their propaganda. Terrorist organizations today are extremely dependent on mass media. It is safe to say that if there were no oxygen of publicity, no news media's, no front-page headlines, terrorists would not be able to achieve their sought after goals.

Terrorists are able to achieve the maximum capabilities of their actions through mass media and the internet in order to provoke fundamental political change. As Wilkinson mentioned, terrorists use the media for four main purposes; to spread propaganda and create fear, gather more support for their cause among the public and influence people, to dictate the

responses of the government that their anti-terrorist measures are essentially authoritarian and lastly, to gather potential supporters, raising funds and increasing their recruitment numbers.

The audiences are carefully thought over in advance before the actual attack is perpetrated. To the terrorists, the victims' identity is not specifically important, just as long as they are a part of a larger group and the attack sends the anticipated message. Terrorism needs the media, if terrorists didn't have the media to broadcast their attacks, the cause of the terrorist groups would be unknown. On the contrary, the media gains significantly more viewers when an act of terrorism is covered. Thus, terrorists choose locations and victims that are likely to gain the most news coverage, since the media chooses events that are newsworthy.

When looking at the relationship between mass media and terrorism, it is clear that the audiences are what matters the most. Through the theories discussed in this thesis, readers are capable of seeing that the audiences play a vital role. All three theories discussed before, the Cultivation theory, the Uses and Gratification theory and the Agenda-Setting theory can be merged together when identifying how terrorist groups exploit mass media. In hindsight to terrorism, editors of media companies decide what events to broadcast and how to broadcast them which reflects the Agenda-Setting theory, the viewer then chooses to be exposed to certain events in order to feel empathy for victims and to feel a greater belonging in a society, which reflects the Uses and Gratification theory, whilst the content broadcasted shapes the viewer's opinion of the events and the social reality which reflects the Cultivation theory. The location of a terrorist attack is incredibly important as it determines how much news coverage the attack will get. Terrorists are aware that it is more likely an event will be broadcasted if the targeted location is in a public place and if the location is a well known spot, the event will get endless news coverage. For example, the terrorist attacks in London, Paris and Barcelona got a lot more news coverage than terrorist attacks in Kabul, Afghanistan, almost certainly because terrorist attacks are a rare sight in these European countries as well as the attacks being carried out in public spaces, therefore getting worldwide media attention. As Jenkins argued, terrorists do not want a lot of people dead, they want a lot of people watching.

The 9/11 attacks in the United States shaped the country's view of Muslims immensely, as well as other countries in Europe and Asia. The event was at the top of the agenda for the government, thus getting almost 24/7 news coverage in the media and almost inevitable for U.S. citizens not to be exposed to the tragic news. People would also want to follow the news

about the event in order to empathize with the victims and their immediate families, as the Uses and Gratification theory implies. However, the audience had become the targets of Bush's administration for their perception of politics during the aftermath of the 9/11. The media were more or less not getting any information outside the administration and were therefore highly dependent on the government to provide information and sources. Thus, the government's agenda became the media's agenda which is then broadcasted to the audience. The Agenda-Setting theory reflects on the media's agenda and the people who decide what is to be on the agenda to broadcast, which reflects on the government and media situation in the United States after 9/11. The audiences were not exposed to the whole truth, merely what the media wanted the audience to know and what the government wanted the audience to perceive as the whole truth, for example, the media led the public to believe that Saddam Hussein was stockpiling weapons of mass destruction in order to justify the war on Iraq.

Questions arise whether media coverage of terrorism should be banned, however that goes against the First Amendment written in the Constitution of the United States of America. The First Amendment prevents Congress from writing any laws prohibit the free exercise of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of the press and the right to peaceably assemble. Banning media coverage of terrorism cuts against civil liberties and arguably helps do the work of the terrorists themselves. Additionally, it's not entirely clear what practical effect banning media coverage would do in the fight against terror groups.

Terrorism is known to be the number one security concern for many citizens in America and Europe. People are therefore quite fearful about the risk of air travel, public transport and large public gatherings since these spots have been known to attract terrorist attacks in the past. The risk of being caught in a terrorist attack however, is quite miniature. As Dr David King argued, that global warming is a much more threat to humanity than terrorism.

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