



Media Representations Of Security Threats In India: A Critical Analysis

¹Akhilesh Dwivedi, ²Ayushi Tiwari

¹Research Scholar, ² Research Scholar

¹Department of Defence & Strategic Studies,

¹CSJMU, Kanpur, UP, India

² Journalism and Mass Communication,

²CSJMU, Kanpur, UP, India

Abstract: The role of media in shaping public opinion and influencing policy-making regarding security threats in India is of significant importance. This critical analysis delves into the impact of media portrayals on various security concerns, such as terrorism, intergroup violence, and cyber threats, shedding light on potential biases, sensationalism, and ethical considerations. The study aims to examine how Indian media frames security issues across diverse platforms like newspapers, television news, and internet sources. Factors like ideological biases, geographical locations, and ownership structures are investigated to understand the variations in media presentations. The analysis underscores the necessity of scrutinizing media's role due to several reasons. Firstly, it highlights the potential biases and inaccuracies in media coverage that can distort public perceptions and influence policy formulation. Secondly, it elucidates media's role in shaping public opinion, thereby influencing government policies on security matters. Lastly, it emphasizes the importance of maintaining ethical and professional standards in Indian media.

Index Terms - Media, security, social-media, public-opinion.

Introduction:

A major role of the media is to influence policy-making and to form public opinion in matters involving security risks. A significant role has been played by the media in influencing the general public's perception of various security risks in India, including terrorism, intergroup violence, and cyber threats. Yet, there are worries that media portrayals of security risks may not always be truthful, impartial, or fair and may help marginalise and stigmatise particular communities.

An evaluation of how Indian media portrays security risks is the aim of this study. This study will look at how various security concerns are framed by the media and how this framing changes across various media venues, including newspapers, television news, and internet news sources. The project will also investigate the variables, such as ideological slants, geographic locations, and ownership structures, that affect variations in media depictions.

For a range of causes, it is crucial to analyse how security risks are portrayed in Indian media. Secondly, it might be useful to spot any possible biases and mistakes in media coverage of security concerns that can have an impact on how the public perceives them and how policies are developed. Second, it can clarify the part played by the media in forming public opinion and influencing security-related government policies. Last but not least, it can provide light on the moral and professional standards of Indian media.

Media Representations of Security Threats in India

India's media depictions of security issues have drawn a lot of attention and discussion. In subjects involving security risks, such as terrorism, intergroup violence, cyber threats, and others, the media is vital in forming public opinion and influencing policy-making. There are worries, meanwhile, that media portrayals of security risks could not always be truthful, impartial, or fair and might further stigmatise and marginalise particular groups.

Understanding how the media defines and covers various security concerns may be learned via a critical examination of media depictions of security issues in India. This research can assist in identifying potential biases and mistakes in media coverage of security-related topics, which could have an impact on how the public perceives them and how policies are developed. It can also provide insight into how the media shapes public perception and affects government security policies.

Discovering how the media defines and covers various security concerns may be learned via a critical examination of media depictions of security issues in India. This research can assist in identifying potential biases and mistakes in media coverage of security-related topics, which could have an impact on how the public perceives them and how policies are developed. It can also provide insight into how the media shapes public perception and affects government security policies.

For instance, media organisations with a certain political or ideological slant may favourably report on security concerns that support their point of view and downplay those that do not. Similarly to this, media organisations headquartered in areas more vulnerable to certain security risks may be more inclined to cover these concerns in-depth than organisations based in areas where such dangers are relatively rare.

Media professionals and policymakers must comprehend these variations in how the media portray security risks in India. By preventing stigmatisation and marginalisation of particular groups, it can assist in guaranteeing that media coverage of security issues is fair, factual, and ethical. It can also offer insightful information about how the media might influence government policy and shape public opinion in the field of security.

Media Framing of Security Threats

How the media portrays and disseminates information concerning security dangers to its audience is referred to as media framing of security threats. Public opinion and policy-making may be significantly impacted by how the media portray security risks. The media may affect how the general public understands and perceives security risks, how the government reacts to such threats, and how particular groups are stigmatised and marginalised.

Security concerns are framed differently by the media based on their nature, location, target audience, and media outlet. For instance, how security concerns connected to terrorism are framed may be different from how dangers related to cybercrime or intergroup violence are framed. Similar to how media sources that serve distinct demographic groups or are regional vs national may frame security risks differently.

Focusing on the possible harm or risk that the threat poses are one way that security threats are frequently framed. The audience may feel fear and worry as a result of this framing, which highlights the dangers and negative effects of the threat. External influences including political objectives, ownership structures, and economic interests can have an impact on how security risks are portrayed in the media. For instance, news organisations with a certain political or ideological slant may present security issues in a way that advances their political goal or worldview. Similarly to this, corporate-owned media sites may present security issues in a way that appeals to more viewers or readers, even if it is not always true or impartial.

Media coverage of security concerns must carefully consider how security risks are framed. Public opinion, governmental policy, and the safety and security of communities may all be impacted by how security risks are framed. Hence, it is critical for media professionals to aim for accurate, fair, and ethical reporting and to be mindful of any biases and mistakes in how they frame security issues.

Comparing and Contrasting Media Sources-

Comparing various media channels can give important insights into how they present and cover security risks. Newspapers, television news networks, and internet news sources are just a few of the numerous media outlets in India. Different outlets could take diverse ways of reporting on security issues, leading to variances in how such dangers are framed in the media.

The ideological orientations of various media channels can be compared. It is well known that some media outlets in India have certain political or ideological viewpoints, which might affect how they report on security risks. A media organisation with a conservative or nationalist slant, for instance, would concentrate more on security dangers brought on by terrorism or international disputes, whereas one with a liberal or left-leaning slant might concentrate more on problems with social peace or social fairness.

The locations of various media outlets are another factor to compare. Media organisations situated in areas more vulnerable to certain security dangers may be more inclined to cover these topics in-depth than organisations headquartered in areas with comparatively lower levels of such threats. A media source with a local presence in a region with a history of communal violence, for instance, could pay greater attention to such episodes than one with a local presence in a location where such violence is more uncommon.

The institutional ownership of different media entities is a third topic of comparison. Large firms that operate media outlets may put business interests ahead of journalistic ethics, emphasising sensational or contentious stories above factual and impartial reporting. Media sources run by independent journalists or non-profit groups, on the other hand, could place a greater emphasis on moral and responsible reporting, even if it means forgoing possible earnings.

Comparing various media channels can offer insightful comparisons on how they present and cover security risks. Policymakers and media specialists may endeavour to ensure that media coverage of security concerns is accurate, balanced, and ethical by being aware of the potential biases and effects of various media outlets. Depending on a variety of elements, such as their ownership structure, geographic location, and ideological leanings, different media sources in India present the security issue in different ways.

Focusing on certain categories of security risks is one-way media outlets present the security situation in India. For instance, media with a nationalist or conservative slant may place greater emphasis on security dangers associated with border disputes, terrorism, or the Kashmir dispute, while media with a liberal or left-leaning may place more emphasis on problems associated with social peace or justice.

While reporting on security risks, media sources can use multiple frames or storylines to present the security picture. For instance, certain media outlets could portray security risks as an existential menace to the country, highlighting the possible harm or peril they could cause. Other media may take a more nuanced approach, focusing on the root reasons and motives of security risks, such as political or ideological issues, social or economic injustices, or psychological or emotional issues.

Depending on where they are located, media outlets may also present the security situation in India by emphasising various security risks. For instance, sources headquartered in areas with a history of intercommunal strife could emphasise such instances more, whereas outlets based in areas with a history of left-wing extremism might emphasise such concerns as the Maoist insurgency.

Depending on several variables, the security environment is presented in various ways by the various media channels in India. To get a more thorough and nuanced picture of the security situation in India, media consumers must be aware of these aspects and seek out information from a variety of sources.

Instances

- Times of India - Times of India is a popular English-language newspaper in India with a centrist leaning. The newspaper often focuses on issues related to national security, especially terrorism and border conflicts. For example, the newspaper reported extensively on the Pulwama terrorist attack in 2019, which resulted in the deaths of 40 Indian soldiers.
- NDTV - NDTV is a popular television news channel in India with a liberal-leaning. The channel often covers issues related to communal harmony and social justice, as well as issues related to national security. For example, the channel has reported extensively on the human rights violations in Kashmir and the communal riots in Delhi in 2020.
- Zee News - Zee News is a popular Hindi-language television news channel in India with a conservative-leaning. The channel often focuses on issues related to nationalism and the threat posed by Pakistan and China. For example, the channel has reported extensively on the India-China border conflict in Ladakh in 2020.
- The Wire - The Wire is an online news platform in India with a left-leaning perspective. The platform often focuses on issues related to social justice and the impact of government policies on marginalized communities. For example, the platform has reported extensively on the impact of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC) on the Muslim community in India.
- The Hindu: India's The Hindu is a well-known daily that extensively covers security risks and their effects on the nation. On topics about national security, it frequently includes in-depth analysis and comments.
- News18: India's News18 news station reports on a variety of security-related events, such as terrorism, inter-communal violence, and border conflicts. It delivers real-time information and expert analysis on these subjects.

- India Today: The Indian daily publication India Today extensively covers security topics, including the nation's defence strategy, border conflicts, and counterterrorism initiatives. Interviews with experts and decision-makers on these problems are also included.
- Hindustan Times: Leading English-language daily in India, Hindustan Times, reports on a variety of security-related events, such as terrorist attacks, border conflicts, and cyber threats. It typically involves conversations with professionals and officials on these problems.
- Republic TV: Republic TV is an Indian news station that focuses on national defence and counterterrorism strategies in addition to security-related issues in real-time. Panel discussions with experts and analysts on these matters are frequently included.
- The Economic Times: An Indian business-oriented journal called The Economic Times examines security risks and how they affect the economy of the nation. It frequently includes analysis and discussion on topics about the defence budget and national security.
- The Quint: A diverse variety of security-related issues are covered by The Quint, an independent digital news outlet in India, including communal unrest, cyber threats, and national defence. On these topics, it frequently offers in-depth analysis and opinion.
- DNA India: A daily English-language newspaper called DNA India covers a variety of security-related issues, including terrorism, border conflicts, and defence tactics. On these topics, interviews with experts and decision-makers are frequently included.
- The Print: A variety of security-related issues are covered by The Print, an Indian digital news outlet, spanning border disputes, national defence, and counterterrorism initiatives. It frequently offers analysis and criticism of these problems from professionals and academics in the field.
- ABP News: ABP News is an Indian news outlet that broadcasts in Hindi and covers a variety of security-related topics, such as terrorism, intergroup conflict, and national defence. Panel discussions with experts and analysts on these matters are frequently included.

These are just a few illustrations of how various Indian media outlets present the security situation. The examples presented above are not all-inclusive, and media outlets in India are diverse and complicated, with a range of ideological leanings, ownership structures, and geographic locations, all of which can affect how they present the security environment.

Differences in Media Representations

The public's perception and the formulation of policies may be significantly impacted by differences in how security risks are portrayed in the media. How security concerns are framed differently by various media channels as well as the elements that influence these changes.

Media outlets in India cover security risks in a variety of ways, according to content analysis of these outlets. For instance, while certain media outlets prefer to stress the human cost of such dangers, others tend to concentrate on the political and ideological dimensions of security risks. Similar to how certain media outlets tend to overstate security risks' potential effects, others take a more impartial and nuanced approach.

The varying media sources' ideologies have a significant impact on these discrepancies. Media organisations with a certain political or ideological slant may favourably report on security dangers that support their viewpoint and minimise those that do not. One aspect that might affect how security concerns are portrayed in the media is geography. Media organisations headquartered in areas more vulnerable to specific security concerns, such as terrorism or intergroup conflict, may be more inclined to cover these topics in-depth than organisations based in areas with comparatively lower levels of such risks.

The ownership arrangements of media organisations may have an impact on how they cover security risks. Large companies or political groups that operate media outlets may be more likely to have an agenda or set of goals that direct their coverage of security-related problems.

These disparities in how security risks are portrayed in the media have important ramifications. Biased or misleading news can have detrimental effects on public safety and security as well as contribute to the stigmatisation and marginalisation of particular communities. Media professionals and decision-makers should thus be aware of these distinctions and work towards fair, accurate, and ethical reporting of security issues.

Critical Analysis of Media Representations

A critical examination of media portrayals of security risks in India finds several problems that may affect how the population feels, how policies are made, and ultimately how secure the country is.

First of all, security concerns are frequently sensationalised in the media, with an emphasis on the dramatic and violent elements of security occurrences. The public may become alarmed and fearful as a result, which

may prompt calls for more stringent security measures and prioritisation of security matters above other crucial concerns. Such sensationalism can also cause certain groups to be stigmatised as the source of security problems, especially those who are already marginalised.

Secondly, media portrayals of security concerns frequently take a politicised approach, with various media sources presenting security occurrences in a way that suits their political or ideological stances. Due to a lack of impartiality and balance in reporting, the public may end up with inaccurate or incomplete information on security issues.

Thirdly, the prejudices and interests of media conglomerate or marketers occasionally impact how security risks are portrayed in the media. As a result, media outlets may prioritise certain security concerns or portray a particular perspective on security matters that may not necessarily reflect the actual state of security.

Fourthly, how security concerns are portrayed in the media may have an effect on how resources are allocated to security measures and how policies are made. Policy-makers may be persuaded to take actions that are not necessarily in the best interests of national security, but rather to appease popular demand or political expediency if media depictions are sensationalised or politicised.

A critical examination of media portrayals of security threats in India identifies several problems that may affect the general public's perception, policymaking, and national security. For media consumers to get a more accurate and nuanced view of the security situation in India, it is crucial that they are aware of these challenges and that they critically assess the information that is offered to them.

Stereotyping and Stigmatization

Stigmatization and stereotyping are two frequent problems that might appear in Indian media depictions of security risks. Stereotyping is the practice of generalising specific traits or behaviours to an entire population, sometimes based on incomplete or skewed data. On the other side, stigmatisation describes the designation of a certain group of individuals as inferior, dangerous, or undesirable based on their social, cultural, or religious identity.

Stereotyping and stigmatisation in the context of security risks can result in the development of unfavourable preconceptions about particular populations, such as Muslims, Dalits, or Northeasterners, who are frequently represented as being prone to violence or terrorism. Such unfavourable preconceptions can feed biases and prejudices against these populations, which can breed violence, harassment, and discrimination.

By presenting particular populations as the source of security problems, media portrayals of security issues can also contribute to the stigmatisation of those communities. For instance, there were instances of harassment and violence against Kashmiris residing in other areas of India following the Pulwama terrorist assault in 2019, who were assumed to be sympathetic to terrorists only because of their Kashmiri identification.

It is significant to emphasize that such stigmatisation and stereotyping can have negative effects on national security in addition to being unjust and discriminatory. Media portrayals can contribute to the marginalisation and radicalization of particular populations by perpetuating unfavourable perceptions about them, which feeds a cycle of violence and instability.

It is crucial for media outlets to be conscious of their biases and take measures to make sure that their reporting is fair and impartial to address the problem of stereotyping and stigmatisation in media depictions of security risks. This might entail using a variety of information sources, staying away from broad generalisations or stereotypes, and offering context and analysis to assist audiences to comprehend the complexity of security concerns. To prevent reinforcing unfavourable preconceptions and contributing to the stigmatisation of disadvantaged populations, it is equally crucial for media consumers to be conscious of the possibility of prejudice and to critically analyse the information that is offered to them.

Impact on Public Perception and Policy Making

Public perception and policy-making may be significantly impacted by media portrayals of security risks. Sensationalizing or politicising security occurrences in the media has the potential to instil panic and anxiety in the public, prompting calls for more security regulations and a prioritising of security concerns above other crucial matters.

At the same time, media portrayals may also affect how resources are allocated to security measures, which has an impact on policy-making. Policy-makers may be persuaded to take actions that are not inevitably in the best security interests of the nation, but rather to appease popular demand or political expediency if media depictions are sensationalised or politicised.

Furthermore, how various security concerns are viewed and prioritised can be influenced by media portrayals. Media organisations could, for instance, prioritise some security risks, like terrorism, while ignoring others, like cyber security or environmental security. This might lead to a lack of focus on and funding for crucial security concerns that are not as publicised or sensationalised.

Bias and misinformation are two additional effects of media portrayals on public perception and policy-making. Media sources may have their own goals, interests, or prejudices that might affect how they report, resulting in the public being given inaccurate or partial information. This may lead to incorrect policies and actions that may weaken national security due to a lack of knowledge of the true nature of security threats. Public perception and policy-making may be significantly impacted by how security risks are portrayed in the media. Media outlets must be conscious of their obligations and make sure that their reporting is fair, accurate, and unbiased. At the same time, decision-makers and the general public must assess the information provided by the media critically to avoid being influenced by sensationalism or prejudice. We can create more effective policies and procedures that improve national security while defending the rights and interests of all people by fostering a better understanding and awareness of security issues.

Implications for Media and Journalism

The critical examination of media portrayals of security issues in India has significant ramifications for journalism and the media.

First and foremost, media outlets need to be aware of their obligation to report properly and impartially. To achieve this, journalists must do in-depth research, consult a variety of informational sources, and offer a fair analysis of the problems at hand. To assist viewers to comprehend the complexity of security concerns, they also need to steer clear of sensationalism and partisanship and offer context and analysis.

The second issue that media outlets must address is prejudice and discrimination in their reporting. Media depictions of security risks can reinforce stereotypes and stigmatisation of particular populations. Media outlets should thus actively try to detect and overcome these biases to ensure that their reporting is fair, accurate, and impartial.

Thirdly, news organisations must encourage broader knowledge of security issues, especially those that are less well-known or sensationalised. As a result, they must be more proactive in their reporting on a wider variety of security concerns, such as those posed by cyberspace or the environment, and they must inform the public about the different elements that fuel such dangers.

Fourthly, media organisations need to take action to gain the credibility and confidence of their viewers. Public trust in the media has decreased as a result of the prevalence of false information and fake news. As a result, media outlets must respect the highest standards of journalism, which include fact-checking, verification, and being open and honest about their sources and procedures.

The necessity for media organisations to report with responsibility, fairness, and objectivity is made clear by the critical study of media portrayals of security issues in India. Media outlets may play a significant role in boosting national security and defending the rights and interests of all people by encouraging greater understanding and awareness of security concerns and by addressing issues of prejudice and discrimination.

Implications for Policy Making

The critique of media portrayals of security issues in India also has significant policy-making ramifications. First and foremost, decision-makers in policy need to be aware of how media portrayals affect public perception and demand. Public panic and dread can be stoked by sensationalised or politically charged reporting, leading to calls for stricter security measures that might not be sufficient to handle the true security issue. As a result, policymakers must carefully assess the situation and develop evidence-based, efficient, and balanced solutions.

Second, policymakers must make sure that their responses to security threats are not merely influenced by media portrayals but rather are based on a thorough knowledge of their nature and dynamics. To do this, they must interact with a variety of informational sources, such as professionals, civil society groups, and impacted communities, and incorporate their viewpoints and insights into policy-making.

Thirdly, decision-makers must make sure that laws and regulations are in line with the norms and precepts of human rights. Security measures should be proportionate to the real security danger and should not infringe upon fundamental human rights and liberties. To guarantee that policies and measures are created and carried out in a way that protects human dignity and rights, policymakers must be aware of the possible effects of their policies and measures on human rights.

Fourthly, decision-making procedures need to be made more transparent and accountable by policymakers. As a result, they must interact with the media and civil society groups and regularly inform the public about their policies and initiatives. Policymakers may increase public confidence in their decision-making processes by encouraging greater accountability and openness.

The necessity for policymakers to adopt a thorough and evidence-based approach to policymaking is highlighted by the critical study of media depictions of security risks in India. Policymakers may create policies and procedures that improve national security while defending the rights and interests of all people

by interacting with a variety of information sources, embracing human rights principles, and fostering openness and accountability.

Conclusion

In India, the public's view of security risks is significantly shaped by the media. The media has the power to either strengthen or weaken national security through its depictions of security risks. The media can occasionally politicise or sensationalise security issues, propagate stigmatisation, and prejudice, and emphasise some security problems over others, according to a critical review of media depictions of security threats. These portrayals may significantly affect how the population feels, how policies are made, and how the country is seen.

The critical critique, however, also draws attention to ways in which the media might contribute to improving national security. Media outlets may address issues of bias and discrimination, foster openness and accountability, and encourage increased knowledge and understanding of security dangers. Media organisations may support evidence-based, efficient, and proportionate policy-making that promotes human rights and freedoms by upholding the highest standards of journalism and interacting with a variety of information sources.

As a result, media outlets must report on security issues in India in a responsible, impartial, and fair manner. They can do this to improve national security and protect all people's rights and interests.

Recommendations

Based on the critical analysis of media representations of security threats in India, the following recommendations are suggested:

- Promote ethical journalism: While reporting on security issues, media outlets should uphold the ethical norms of journalism, such as honesty, fairness, and objectivity. Sensationalization, stigmatisation, and stereotyping may all be avoided in this way.
- Foster diversity: Media companies ought to support diversity in reporting and give a voice to a range of viewpoints, including those of impacted communities, subject-matter specialists, and civil society groups. A more complex knowledge of security risks and their effects may result from this.
- Encourage critical thinking: Media outlets should promote media literacy among their consumers and foster critical thinking. By doing so, viewers will be better equipped to assess the authenticity and dependability of media portrayals and help stop the spread of false information.
- Enhance collaboration: Media organisations should work together to advance a more thorough and fact-based knowledge of security issues, as well as with other stakeholders including specialists, civil society groups, and policy-makers.
- Promote transparency and accountability: To regularly inform the public of their policies and initiatives, policymakers should encourage more accountability and openness in their decision-making processes. They should also interact with the media and civil society organisations. By doing this, they may increase public confidence in their decision-making procedures.
- Safeguard human rights: To safeguard human dignity and rights, policies and actions should be created and carried out in a way that is consistent with human rights norms and principles. This can aid in preventing laws and procedures that restrict fundamental freedoms and rights for people.

Media organisations and decision-makers may improve national security while defending the rights and interests of all Indian people by putting these ideas into practice.

References

- Sultan, M. (2000). Globalisation, Media And The Kashmir Dispute. *Strategic Studies*, 20(4), 160–184. Accessed from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45182260>
- How Mass Media Influence Our Society. (2019). National Institute of Mass Communication & Journalism, Ahmedabad. Retrieved March 15, 2023, Accessed from <https://www.nimcj.org/blog-detail/how-mass-media-influence-our-society.html>
- Arias, E. (2019). How Does Media Influence Social Norms? Experimental Evidence on the Role of Common Knowledge. *Political Science Research and Methods*, 7(3), 561–578.
- Kukreja, D. Air Marshal. (2016, November 23). Media and national security. *Indian Defence Review*. Retrieved March 15, 2023, from <https://www.indiandefencereview.com/news/media-and-national-security/>
- Mohanty, A. (2022, August 30). Role of Indian media in National Security Strategy. *iPleaders*. Retrieved March 16, 2023, from <https://blog.ipleaders.in/role-of-indian-media-in-national-security-strategy/>

- Abraham, Rhea. (2012). Media and National Security. March 16, 2023, from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/334131117_Media_and_National_Security
- Pandalai, S. (2016). The 'Social media' challenge to national security: Impact and opportunities: A conceptual overview | Manohar Parrikar institute for defence studies and analyses. Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses | Retrieved March 16, 2023, from <https://www.idsa.in/monograph/social-media-challenge-to-national-security>
- Soin, K. (2021). Media and its utility in shaping public opinion for national security. USI – Welcome to The United Service Institution of India. Retrieved March 18, 2023, from <https://usiofindia.org/publication/cs3-strategic-perspectives/media-and-its-utility-in-shaping-public-opinion-for-national-security/>

