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Political Science and International Relations : Terrorism and Political Violence

Spens, Christiana

The Portrayal and Punishment of Terrorists in Western Media

Playing the Villain

- Develops an integrated method of intervisuality
- Examines scapegoating and narrative closure
- Shows how neo-Orientalism manifests in media portrayals of terrorists

This book explores how terrorists have been portrayed in the Western media, and the wider ideological and social functions of those representations. Developing a theory of scapegoating related to narrative closure, as well as an integrated, genealogical method of intervisuality, the book proposes a new way of thinking about how political images achieve power and influence the public. By connecting modern portrayals of terrorists (post-9/11) with historical and fictional images of villains from Western cultural history, the book argues that the portrayal and punishment of terrorists in the Western media implicitly perpetuates neo-Orientalist attitudes. It also explains that by repeating these narrative patterns through a ritual of scapegoating, Western media coverage of terrorists partakes in a social process that uses punishment, dehumanization and colonialist ideas to purge the iconic 'villain', so as to build national unity and sustain hegemonic power following crisis.

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