

So, What is Terrorism? Framing and the 9/11 Attacks in Kenyan Editorial Cartoons

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In the wake of the 9/11 terror attacks in the US, terrorism has dominated international politics and media coverage globally. However, long before 9/11, the social and political space with regard to terrorism had brought with it unique challenges to media practitioners. Specifically, at the definitional level, the concept of terrorism has become not only contested but equally ambiguous and consequently, largely a factor of the context. This study probes how editorial cartoons in Kenya's leading papers framed the 9/11 New York attacks, one of the most significant political events of the last decade. Using the constructivist approach to framing and a semiotic approach, this study reveals that while these definitional continue to prevail, media frames reveal that a cultural and contextual understanding of terrorism exist; both in alignment and opposition to the 'so called official/international definitions.'

Key words: Terrorism, Framing, Culture, Context