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The Truth About North Korean Media

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Communist North Korea is secretive, suppressive, and manipulative. North Korean media is strictly controlled by the government, and is therefore heavily biased. This study focuses on how North Korean media portrays the totalitarian government, its leader, and regional events in comparison to other global media outlets. This involves looking at coverage of nuclear weapons development, human rights issues, and neighboring states' relations from the North Korean perspective. The aim is to emphasize how news is framed, and the bias within North Korean media.

“Supreme Leader” CULT OF PERSONALITY

Kim Jong-un

Kim Jong-il

Kim Il-sung

North Korean media is strictly controlled by the totalitarian government. The flow of information in and out of the country is restricted, and information is presented in support of the regime. The Korean Central News Agency is the only source of information for all media outlets in North Korea, and is under state control.

A large percentage of media coverage supports the cult of personality surrounding the North Korean leader, directly employed as propaganda. Kim Il-sung was commonly referred to as “The Great Leader,” Kim Jong-il as “The Dear Leader” to be distinguishable from his father, and Kim Jong-un as “The Great Successor.”

Kim Il-sung particularly emphasized media influence to manipulate North Korean citizens and confuse the international audience. News is strategically released or withheld from the domestic population as well as the international audience. Framing, as well as implicit and explicit falsifications, are means of communicating the news.

A consistent theme in the media is the “threat” or “imminent attack” by the United States and other nations. This is to gain the support of North Korean citizens for the regime against the U.S., and essentially justifies all government action. The U.S. is specifically monitored in the media, and unfavorable actions towards North Korea, its leaders, or regime are condemned.

Framing

“As a property of a message, a frame limits or defines the message’s meaning by shaping the inferences that individuals make about the message. Frames reflect judgments made by message creators or framers” (Hallahan, 207).

References


Implications

Because of the North Korean government's direct and complete control of the media, the opinions in line with the regime underlie all news within the country. The government imposes a singular worldview on the citizens without allowing any exposure to other views and opinions.

Understanding the extent of government control over the media in North Korea reveals the corruption of the system, and how centralized the power is within the nation. The purpose of the North Korean media is to influence the citizens for the benefit of the regime, and thus objective news coverage does not exist.

It is important to learn the truth about the conditions in North Korea to understand what the reality is for North Korean citizens. With a more complete understanding, appropriate measures can be determined to effectively address negative implications in the future.

Nuclear Timeline

- 1994 Agreed Framework
- 1993 1st Missile Test
- 1994 Agreed Framework
- 2003 Withdraw from Treaty
- 2006 1st Nuclear Test
- 2009 2nd Nuclear Test
- 2014 5th Missile Test
- 2013 3rd Nuclear Test
- 2014 4th Missile Test
- 2006 2nd Nuclear Test