

The Power of Visual Arguments

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Which is the real China?



Images and Narratives

- Images may tell stories by themselves
- Images are often used to supplement stories
- The selection of an image has consequence
- Images should be carefully considered



Compare with the Previous Image



Images from Guantanamo Bay-- 2001



Guantanamo Bay--2015



ISIS Executing Hostages



Visual Images Matter

- **More instantly “grabbing” than the written word**
- **Create a strong emotional response**
- **People believe their own eyes**
- **Are likely to be better remembered**
- **Are subject to manipulation and distortion in the digital age**



Theories of Visual Argument

- Visual images tell multiple stories—Blair & Balthrop, 2015
- Majority of information the brain processes is visual—Williams, 2006
- Visual images function at a pre-cognitive level—Williams, 2006; Westen, 2007



VJ Day Image

- Visual images are subject to multiple interpretations

Dominant

Oppositional

Negotiated

Hall, 1973



What stories do these images provoke?



Syrian Refugees



Syrian Refugees



Syrian Suffering



Human Narrative Traits

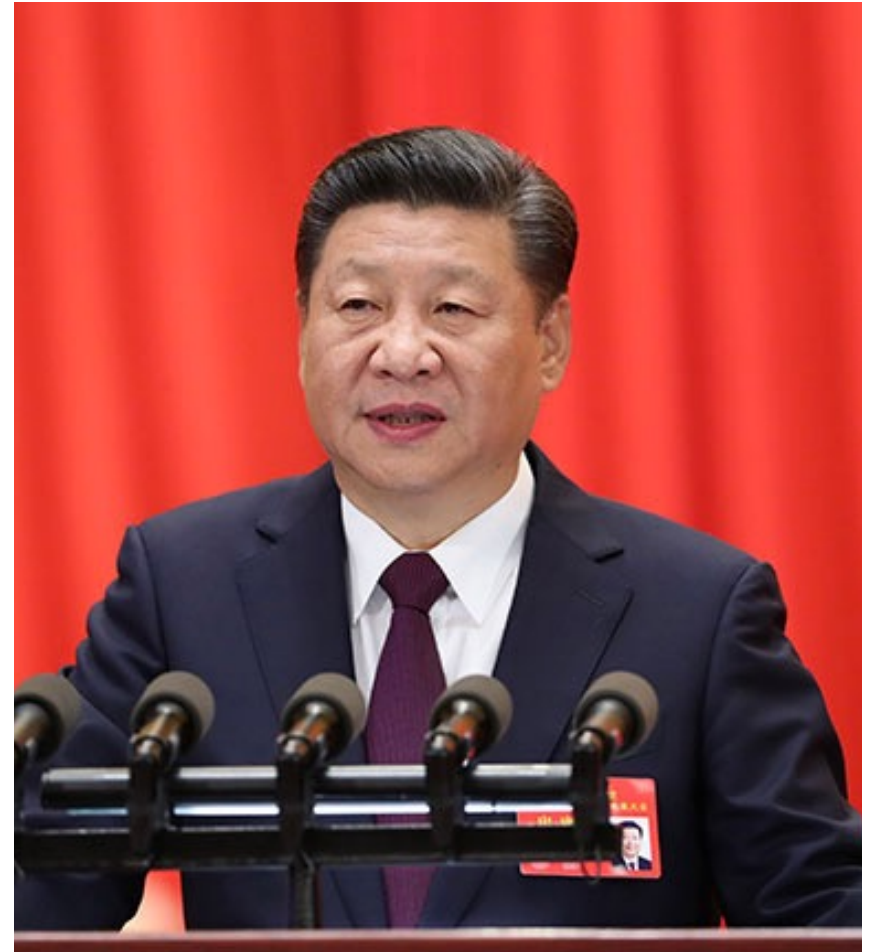
- We hold to notions of our own character
- We likewise have established notions regarding the character of others
 - **For example, the nature of defining people as terrorists when others see them as heroes or martyrs**



Emotion and Rationality Guide Decisions

- We do not attend to arguments unless they engender our interest, enthusiasm, fear, anger, or contempt
- Emotions are rational and a product of human evolution





Crafting an Image



Simple Image—Complex Meaning



Contrasting Images



US Presidents at G7 Meetings



Social Media Moves Images

- Images are shared within networks
- Like minded people make up networks
- Images can move rapidly to stir passions
- Images can be manipulated



Mememes



Viewers Construct the Meaning of Images



- Image 1



- Image 2



- Image 3



- Image 4



What did you see?

- Are these images positive?
- Are they negative?
- Are their meanings contested?
- How might each of these images be used as a resource in support of a narrative?
- How might they be used to offer a counter narrative?

Using Images to Support a Story

- Consciously select images to create or support your arguments
- Closely examine images for potential backlash consequences
- Recognize that different audiences may respond to visual images very differently
- Use images responsibly; do not mislead or distort



What is different in these images?



Tests of Visual Images

- Is the image accurate?
- Is the image relevant?
- Does the image provoke appropriate emotional response?
- Does the image mislead?

