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News Frames Terrorism: A Comparative Analysis of Frames Employed in Terrorism Coverage in U.S. and U.K. Newspapers

Zizi Papacharissi and Maria de Fatima Oliveira

Scholars have been increasingly concerned with portrayals of terrorism in mainstream and alternative media outlets following the September 11 and subsequent terrorist attacks in the United Kingdom and Spain. Communication researchers have examined public response and reaction to terrorist attacks, definitions of terrorism, policy questions, media portrayals of terrorism, and framing across different media and nations. This study undertakes a comparative framing analysis of media coverage of terrorism, as reported by prominent U.S. and U.K. newspapers, combining quantitative and qualitative methods. Findings revealed that the U.S. papers engaged in more episodic coverage and the U.K. papers in more thematic coverage of terrorism and terrorism-related events. The U.S. papers were consumed with presenting news associated with the military approach, whereas the U.K. papers were oriented toward diplomatic evaluations of terrorist events.

Keywords: *terrorism; news; framing; U.S. newspapers; U.K. newspapers*

Scholars have been increasingly concerned with portrayals of terrorism in mainstream and alternative media outlets. Although terrorism had previously received some scholarly attention, the political and policy ramifications of September 11 and subsequent terrorist threats or attacks on European Union, U.S., and Middle Eastern soil have prompted an immediate and voluminous response from scholars. Communication researchers have since focused on public response and reaction to terrorist attacks, definitions of terrorism, policy questions, media portrayals of terrorism, and framing across different media and nations (e.g., Greenberg 2002; Noll 2003; Norris et al. 2003; Venkatraman 2004). This study undertakes a comparative framing analysis of media coverage of terrorism, as reported by prominent U.S. and U.K. newspapers.

In the words of Walter Lippmann, the news is responsible for providing the “pseudoenvironment” upon which we rely to experience and understand events

we cannot observe directly. News frames are important in how these events are reported, as they reflect a process of recurring selection and emphasis in communicating perceived reality (Entman 1993; Gitlin 1980). Frames present a central part of how individuals cognitively comprehend and file events, and as such, are an important determinant of how a news story is told, especially in times of conflicting accounts and factual uncertainty. The focus on U.S. and U.K. media outlets thus allows a cross-cultural comparison of frames and media practices. This study engages cultural differences in the use of terrorist frames, in line with previous research on cultural difference in news practices (e.g., Semetko et al. 1991).

Several events contribute to the timelines and theoretical significance of this study. First, as interest in Middle East news is growing but foreign bureaus are shrinking, reliance on international press agencies and government sources for news reports increases. Framing of news events thus attains a new level of geopolitical significance. Second, frames present an important aspect of news storytelling, especially at times of political instability. The study's focus on comparative analysis of news outlets enable the examination of differing perspectives and processes on news reporting. The combination of a qualitative and quantitative approach also contributes to framing research, typically divided by either qualitative or quantitative methods, and thus characterized by interpretive inconsistencies. Finally, the focus on comparative frames on terrorism allows us to follow the cognitive thread between cultural differences in news practices and the internalization of terrorist events within a society.

Framing

Framing presents a meaningful, yet in Entman's (1993) words, fractured, paradigm for communication scholars, as it integrates influences from various disciplines. Frames can be located in four places in the communication process; within the communicator, the text, the receiver, and the culture itself. In the context of political and mass communication, frames influence how people understand, remember, evaluate, and act upon a problem (Reese 2001). For scholars within journalism, the most useful definition of framing comes from Entman (1993), who specified that:

To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described. (p. 52)

Still, the value of framing as an approach stems from the relevance it carries in neighboring disciplines. From a social anthropology perspective, Goffman (1974) defines framing as way of classifying that allows users to locate, perceive,

identify, and label everyday occurrences. Gitlin (1980) further elaborates on this definition, and understands framing as “persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol handlers routinely organize discourse” (p. 7). A methodologically oriented definition offered by Tankard et al. (1991) conceptualizes framing as “a central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, and elaboration” (p. 6), while a different one offered by Iyengar (1991) clarifies that framing is a process frequently relying on subtle modifications in the presentation of issues. So not only do frames determine how individuals perceive and file events, but how frames are defined by scholars also influences further analysis for frames.

Framing theory emphasizes the ability of any entity—media, individuals, or organizations—to delineate other people’s reality, highlighting one interpretation while de-emphasizing a less favored one. A frame then becomes the central idea around which attributes of events are organized within individual schemata. Frames guide the conceptual union of words and images and thoughts (Fairhurst and Sarr 1996; Gitlin 1980; McCombs and Ghanem 2001), upon which individuals rely to make sense of their surrounding environments. Messages are undeniably attached to the frames chosen to describe them. Thus, frames create a conceptual context that facilitates the apprehension, classification, and understanding of messages in accordance with individuals’ ideas previously associated with the frames adopted. Given the news orientation of this study, we employ Entman’s (1993) definition because it lends itself to the analysis of textual messages, especially in the news, and it connects news frames to causal interpretations, value judgments, and policy recommendations related to news coverage. We remain cognizant of other relevant definitions of framing, which broaden the scope of our research questions.

Applying frames to a crisis situation, such as a terrorist attack, may serve as a strategy with which to identify main causes and responsible agents, make moral judgments, and, finally, to suggest policy responses to the event. Consequently, the frames adopted by media to cover terrorism and the ones adopted by governments to report and respond to this type of action influence the society’s perception of this activity.

In effect, definitions of terrorism and terrorist attacks are contextually shaped by the frames adopted by a specific society. For instance, the distinction between terrorists and freedom fighters is frequently blurred across political regimes (Cohen-Almagor 2005; Jackson 1990; Stohl 1988; Weimann 1985). Whereas the means of action employed by certain groups of interest may be outrageous in one society, these same strategies and procedures may be acceptable in several others. Frames associated with these strategies play a major role in how these acts are perceived. The following section examines media coverage of terrorism, with emphasis on work that considers media frames on terrorism.

The Media and Terrorism

Communication research has always been concerned with terrorism and violent acts, although more recently, in the aftermath of September 11 and subsequent attacks, it is characterized by a new tone of urgency and interdisciplinarity. For scholars interested in media coverage of terrorism, definitions of terrorism determine how research is conceptualized, executed, and employed in public policy. Norris et al. (2003) advised against maximalist definitions, which include theoretically irrelevant attributes, or minimalist conceptualizations, which exclude theoretically relevant attributes. To this point, Nacos (2002) pointed out the evolution of the term "terrorism," from its original connotation of violence perpetrated by the state, to its current meaning of political violence perpetrated by nonstate actors against civilians with the expressed intention of gaining publicity. This study adopts a definition that understands terrorism as "the systematic use of coercive intimidation against civilians for political goals" (Norris et al. 2003: 6). Within this framework, terrorist acts are reified in the presence of media who cover, and thus publicize, the terrorist act. Terrorist acts unfortunately possess elements sympathetic with news values, such as drama, visuals, sound bites, relevance, and general newsworthiness. In the contemporary era, terrorist groups display familiarity with news values and frequently are able to exploit media coverage to further their agendas.

Concurrently, Picard (1993) argued that while media coverage is not essential to terrorist objectives, it is nonetheless important, as it helps define the social meaning of terrorist acts and frequently "confers status" upon terrorists and their causes. For instance, Blondheim and Liebes (2003) found that the television coverage of the September 11 attacks resembled a "disaster marathon," that is, a particular genre of coverage that becomes central to how the event is experienced by the public and recollected later. For terrorists, television coverage becomes essential in terms of how the extent of their acts is reported and perceived. Similarly, the rhetorical progression of terrorism coverage influences the level of demonization or glorification that ensues for various parties within the public (Debatin 2002). Therefore, Picard (1993) noted, public perception of terrorism may be affected by rhetorical biases in how terrorist acts are described by the press. This is the starting point of most analyses of media coverage of terrorist acts, which consider how press coverage connects to public reaction and perception of terrorism and further translates into public policy. Several studies examine media and public responses to terrorist acts, investigating factors and conditions that mediate these reactions.

Media Coverage of Terrorism

A considerable amount of research is devoted to how different media cover terrorism, employing a multitude of approaches and foci. Dooley and Corman

(2002) examined Reuters coverage of September 11 and studied temporal patterns of influence to determine themes and patterns in coverage. They found evidence of a “stimulus-response” model, in which a triggering event, such as an attack, led to an institutional military and/or political response and subsequent sense-making of the societal impact of the terrorist act. A comparative analysis of U.S. and German news sources covering the September 11 attacks revealed that while diffusion of news was similar in both countries, U.S. reporters tended to emphasize patriotic interpretations while German reporters tended to focus on the need for international cooperation in addressing terrorism (Haes 2003). Conversely, a similar content analysis of U.S. television news coverage of the crisis revealed that early coverage emphasized news values over patriotic themes and democratic values, while subsequent coverage was mostly fact-oriented, with some analysis that matched objectives stated by executives in interview data (Mogensen et al. 2002).

In a different vein, Hart and Hassencahl (2002) investigated the use of metaphor in war time, as iterated through editorial cartoons in U.S. newspapers following the September 11 attacks. They noted that metaphor was routinely used to dehumanize the enemy, who was depicted frequently as animal or aggressor. Metaphor was also temporally linked to presidential rhetoric and policy directions. A different study compared television network news coverage to networked operated discussion boards to reveal that, while television offered a narrow set of interpretations of terrorist acts, online discussion boards featured a greater range of possible interpretations.

Public Response to Media Coverage of Terrorism

More researchers are interested in how the public is informed about terrorist events, and how the public then reacts or responds to the information received. Diffusion studies revealed that television presented the primary medium of diffusion during the September 11 attacks (Rogers 2003), followed by radio and newspapers (Stempel and Hargrove 2002). Full diffusion of the September 11 attacks occurred within three hours, with half the respondents learning the news from media and the other half from interpersonal sources (Hoffner et al. 2002). Respondents who learned the news from the mass media were more likely to feel anger than those who obtained the news through interpersonal sources (Hoffner et al. 2002). Overall, individuals were interested in factual information, as well as information about the cause, threat, and damage of the terrorist event, and had varied emotional reactions, based on gender, age, personality, and personal connection to the attacks (Seeger et al. 2002). Individuals also reported that television and interpersonal channels were more significant, followed by e-mail use for interpersonal communication (Greenberg et al. 2002). In other studies, the Internet was used primarily to

satisfy socialization needs, whereas television and radio uses were convenient and habitual (Ruggiero and Glascock 2002). For other countries, and specifically Germany, television news was the preferred medium for information immediately after the attack, although over time, respondents returned to prior media patterns of use. Cohen et al. (2003) examined how individuals connected to develop “dynamic storytelling systems,” using information obtained through interpersonal and mediated channels of communication, and identified an increase in community civic involvement following the September 11 attacks. Similarly, Kim et al. (2002) distinguished between micro-, meso- and macro-level storytellers within each community, based on education, income, home ownership, and immigration history. Katz and Rice (2003) found that individuals tended to use all communication resources in a “syntopian” manner, selecting, substituting, and complement media based on communication and social imperatives.

Other studies have considered how the public evaluates terrorist issues and related media coverage, based on individual characteristics. Baukus and Strohm (2002) compared gender differences in evaluations of the Gulf War and the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan coverage and found that men were more likely to endorse the use of force and military censorship. Noelle-Neumann (2002) surveyed German reaction to September 11 at different time intervals, and noted that the level of anxiety associated with the attacks decreased significantly over the span of a three-month period. Perse et al. (2002) investigated how respondents perceived media functions in the aftermath of the September 11 attack and reported that individuals rated the information-providing, explanatory, and solidarity-building functions the highest.

Framing Terrorism

Studies of how terrorist acts are framed attempt to bring these above two directions together by examining both how acts are covered and the potential impact of this coverage on the public. Specifically, Norris et al. (2003) proposed a model of framing processes for terrorist events that is located in social culture, out of which government, terrorist, and group frames emerge and interact to develop into the news frame, which then directly informs public opinion and ultimately connects to the policy agenda. Personal experience, interpersonal communication, and real-world indicators are all mediating factors that determine how influential the news frame will be on public opinion and the formation of public policy.

Framing analyses of terrorist events are thus focused on all or a combination of any of these elements. Through a detailed analysis of media coverage in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, Liebes and First (2003) discussed the role of the media in awarding certain issues involving terrorist attacks coverage, while

excluding others. Media attention and framing of the story allocates symbolic value and meaning to certain events, which are then referenced in cultural and political interpretations of these attacks. To this point, Cooke (2003) examined how local media coverage of terrorist events in Northern Ireland differed from that of foreign news coverage and how it affected how public affairs matters were approached and resolved. Local versus foreign coverage was also examined by Schaefer (2003), who compared coverage of the 1998 U.S. Embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania and the September 11 attacks in New York and Washington. They found that physical proximity and the local angle influenced local framing, whereas foreign framing was more influential upon international debates and worldviews.

Comparing coverage across media and countries, Jasperson and El-Kikhia (2003) studied framing of the war in Afghanistan, as reported through CNN and Al Jazeera news. This comparative analysis revealed that U.S. coverage often employed frames that reinforced the administrative position and patriotic messages. Al Jazeera coverage, on the other hand, did not concentrate as much on military and strategic issues, but rather frequently focused on alternative policy approaches and on the Afghani death toll. Nacos and Torres-Reyna (2003) investigated how Muslim Americans were portrayed in U.S. newspapers to find that when describing Muslim Americans, newspapers mostly employed episodic frames over thematic ones. Episodic frames focused on describing single events or occurrences and tended to involve the use of negative stereotypes. Thematic frames, on the other hand, provided more in-depth coverage that emphasized context and continuity and detracted from negative stereotyping. Rusciano (2003) studied all references to world opinion on the September 11 terrorist attacks in ten international newspapers to find great diversity and disparity, over consensus, in the frames offered to interpret these events in different countries.

Previous research thus suggests that coverage of terrorist events features thematic and episodic frames, which frequently emphasize negative stereotypes and military action over diplomacy and are prone to bias, depending on the nationality and mentality of the news organization. We apply these findings to the conceptualization of a comparative analysis of U.S. and U.K. newspaper coverage of terrorist events over a year-long period. By examining U.S. and U.K. content, we focus on the two Western military powers that are key players in Middle East relations and the targets of the majority of recent terrorist attacks. The U.S. and U.K. governments are also allies in several recent military efforts, so it should be interesting how the press covers policy approaches that share common goals.

This study is further grounded in previous research (e.g., Semetko et al. 1991), suggesting operative distinctions between the U.S. and U.K. systems resulting from different orientations toward the business of newsmaking.

Specifically, Semetko et al. (1991) found that the U.S. press features a pragmatic orientation, in contrast to the sacerdotal orientation of the British press. The U.S. press tends to cover events that have a demonstrable news and audience value, whereas the U.K. press covers events based on their inherent and accepted news value. These contrasting traditions stem out of institutional differences between the media systems, having to do with the audience-based, stratified U.S. system and the more partisan tradition of the U.K. press. Additional differences are associated with the ideology of the media organization, journalistic norms of balance and objectivity that differ in the two countries, journalists, notions of what roles are appropriate, the overall size of the news whole, the differing economics of the audiences, and different training that journalists receive in the two countries.

Semetko et al. (1991) examined how these differences manifested themselves in the context of national elections, and specifically in the choices made regarding how candidates and election events would be covered. Similar differences could unfold in the context of terrorism, in terms of how terrorism-related events are reported in the press of two country allies. Guided by Entman's (1993) definition of framing, this study examined how certain aspects of an issue are awarded greater salience so as to promote particular agendas and investigated how framing choices reflect differences or similarities in how the press in two leading military powers approaches the issue of terrorism. The study addressed the following two research questions:

RQ1: What are dominant frames encountered in U.S. and U.K. press coverage of terrorism?

RQ2: How do frames employed by U.S. and U.K. papers compare?

Method

The present analysis examined frames in reports on terrorist events combining quantitative and qualitative analysis. We combined computerized content analysis with discourse analysis and focused on the following newspapers: the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, the *London Financial Times*, and the *Guardian*, over a year-long period, including news reports, features, news analyses, and editorials (but distinguishing among these in our analysis). We selected these four papers because they feature high readership and are influential in setting the tone for coverage in their respective countries. These newspapers were also chosen over other local or middle-brow tabloid papers, because they were more likely to include broader and more coverage of terrorist events and related international news. Finally, these newspapers were selected because they present opinion leaders in their respective geographic regions, but also constitute a fairly comprehensive representation of different political and newspaper ideologies.

The sample was assembled by using the LexisNexis database to retrieve news articles from the four different newspapers. For each newspaper the following keywords were used to yield the most comprehensive sample: terrorist attacks and Iraq, terrorist attacks and Israel, and terrorist attacks and Afghanistan. Articles from June 2006 to June 2007 were analyzed. News summaries and reviews of books, films, plays, and other artistic events were excluded. Duplicate articles were also excluded. All articles included were screened to verify they were fit for inclusion, thus yielding a sample of 107 articles, 39 from the *New York Times*, 40 from the *Washington Post*, 15 from the *London Financial Times*, and 13 from the *Guardian*.

Computerized Content Analysis

The entire sample of each newspaper was analyzed using centering resonance analysis (CRA), a mode of computer-assisted network-based text analysis that represents the content of large sets of texts by identifying the most important words that link other words in the network (Corman and Dooley, 2006; Corman et al. 2002). The news articles were transformed into .txt files and, to avoid unnecessary noise, the name of the newspaper and the article's section, length, authorship, and load date were excluded. The headlines were preserved.

CRA calculates the words' influence within texts, using their position in the text's structure of words (Dooley and Corman 2002). This influence is based on words' coefficient of betweenness centrality, defined by Corman et al. (2002) as "the extent to which a particular centering word mediates chains of association in the CRA network" (p. 177). As Dooley and Corman (2002) stated, "words with high betweenness, and thus influence, add coherence to the text by connecting strings of words that otherwise would not be connected" (p. 123). The results of aggregating the possible centers or nodes (the most influential words) in a message denote the author's intentional acts regarding word choice and message meaning.

Based on these concepts, the news articles were analyzed to detect the most influential words in each newspaper's coverage of terrorism. The concept of resonance also allows us to compare sets of text to detect similarities and differences. As Corman et al. (2002) stated

The more two texts frequently use the same words in influential positions, the more word resonance they have. The more word resonance they have, the more the communicators used the same words, and the more those words were prominent in structuring the text's coherence. (p. 178)

The analysis proceeded in three consecutive steps, first analyzing word concentrations within each paper, second conducting a comparison of papers from

the same country, and third proceeding to an across-country comparison of coverage.

An exploratory cluster analysis was also conducted via *CrowdAd* yielding a single factor. These results indicated that media coverage of terrorism centered around the same events and themes, yet distinguishable differences were present. Based on these similarities, the 150 most influential words present in at least three of the samples examined were factor analyzed. Using SPSS, a principal components factor analysis was conducted to extract the broad themes adopted by the newspapers investigated.

Discourse Analysis

Qualitative textual analysis techniques (e.g., Fairclough 1995, 2000; van Dijk 1997) pursue a deep explanation of meaning by observing and recording patterns present in a mediated text. The qualitative analysis sought to verify, expand, and illuminate the quantitative findings of the content analysis. This study examined discourse (as defined by Wood and Kroger 2000 and Fairclough 1995) as a text, using the Wood and Kroger definition of discourse as “all spoken and written forms of language use (talk and text) as social practice” (p. 19). Therefore, the aim of this textual analysis was to understand the “systematic links between texts, discourse practices, and sociocultural practices” (Fairclough 1995: 17). In identifying frames, we used Capella and Jamieson’s (1997) criteria for recognizing and classifying frames, which specify that: (a) frames should have “identifiable conceptual and linguistic characteristics,” (b) they should be “commonly observed in journalistic practice,” and (c) they should be “reliably distinguishable from other frames” (p. 47).

The sample for discourse analysis was assembled through a composite approach. Articles were selected from different months to compose a period of ten days (starting on a Friday—June 9, 2006—the first article available). They were also chosen so as to reflect all themes of terrorism coverage accurately, including terrorist attacks and Iraq, terrorist attacks and Israel, and terrorist attacks and Afghanistan, using weights to represent each category with relation to its size of the news whole. The same strategy was used to ensure that the sample was proportionately representative of editorials, news reports, analyses, and/or features.

The articles were then read over, several times, to identify frames using the framing definition and criteria employed in the study. Notes were taken regarding language use, tone, number of sources, thematic tendencies, focus of the article, and differences or similarities in the coverage. Epithets, terms, and metaphors were recorded so as to identify whether use of them was repetitive and suggestive of a particular frame. Finally, notes and findings were categorized

and analyzed, in light of previous research on frames and terrorism, to determine what general framing orientations were present. The combined approach of quantitative and qualitative analysis should expand the validity and reliability of the findings and also inform an understanding of how differing methodological approaches confer or differ on framing.

Results

Quantitative Trends

The CRA produced maps of each newspaper's sample, yielding different configurations that revealed similarities and differences across the sample. The maps indicated the association between words as well as the words' degree of betweenness centrality. Words were arranged on the maps based on how influential or central they were, with lines that depicted levels of associations among words.

The *New York Times* map presented a smaller number of words, highly interconnected. *Iraq*, *terrorist*, and *attack* were grouped at the very top of the map, as highly influential. In the middle of the map, two other groups of words were composed, the first by the words *American*, *government*, *president*, and *security*, and the second by *official*, *military*, *intelligence*, and *Israel*. Both groups seemed to complement each other, grounding a theme recurrent on the *New York Times'* news articles: the role of intelligence agencies to maintain security in the United States and other countries. Surprisingly, *war* and *United States* appeared at the very bottom of the graph.

Conversely, at the *Washington Post* network map *United States* was situated at the very top of the graph, being connected to the words *president*, *Al-Qaeda*, and *attack*. The words *Iraq*, *war*, and *Bush* (President George W. Bush) formed the second group of central words and were located just below the top group. In the middle tier, the terms *terrorism*, *terrorist*, *American*, *people*, *government*, *nation*, and *security* were all connected, suggesting that terrorist events, in the *Washington Post* coverage, were typically presented in terms of their consequences for national security and the American public. Where governmental actions and security issues were considered, the consequences to the American people were also of primary importance.

The *Financial Times* map illustrated the newspaper's focus on market issues. Its network was the only one where the word *market* was positioned at the top of the map. The map was composed by several words not highly interlocked, indicating less frame density and greater variation in the approaches taken to cover terrorist-related events. The words *U.S.* (United States), *Iraq*, and *world* were placed at the very top of the map, being the most influential ones, and were connected together by the word *war*. The middle portion of the map was filled by words that reflect an effort to broaden the audience's understanding of terrorist

events and contextualize coverage. For example, *group*, *political*, *violence* form a string of words linked to the following sequence: *British*, *Muslim*, *country*, *power*, and *market*. The words *terrorist* and *attack* formed another group, which was connected to *America*, *Al-Qaeda*, and *Afghanistan*. Overall, these patterns suggested a more international and broader scope in the paper's coverage, referring more frequently and specifically to all the international players involved.

Finally, the *Guardian* network map reflected a more nationalist focus. While the *Financial Times* seemed to focus on terrorism from a global market standpoint, the *Guardian* focused on covering terrorism from a distinctly British standpoint. Thus, *British*, *London*, *attack*, and *terrorism* were all placed at the very top of the map, followed by the second group of most influential words, composed of *war*, *Iraq*, and *security*. This string of words was connected by *war* to *President Bush*, suggesting that, despite the newspaper's focus on Britain, terrorism matters were by and large perceived to be connected to the United States and the U.S. government. In the middle of the map, words such as *conservative*, *republican*, *police*, *policy*, *media*, and *press* reflected the newspaper's effort to address agents and policies associated with terrorism, thus depicting coverage that considered a broader spectrum of factors involved in terrorist events and international relations.

On the second stage of the analysis, the network maps were compared based on the words' coefficient of betweenness centrality to detect similarities and differences between sets of text. The comparison between sets of texts highlighted their most central shared words as well as the ones unique to each map, thus revealing differences and similarities.

In the comparison of the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* maps, words in common revealed U.S.-centered coverage of the issue, divided in the following groups: *attack*, *Sept.* (September), and *terrorist*; *Al-Qaeda*; *administration* and *President Bush*; *homeland*, *national*, and *security*; and *Afghanistan*, *Iraq*, *terrorism*, and *war*. Nonetheless, the unique words marked dissimilarities on the newspapers' language use and frames. For example, the *New York Times*' sample focused heavily on people, producing a map filled with names corresponding to political personas and characters involved in the events. These are elements that indicate a more dramatic approach to coverage, centered on character, source, and political backstage, which resurface in the discourse analysis. On the other hand, the *Washington Post*'s unique words pointed toward a more issues-oriented approach. Some of its most central unique words were *combatant* and *enemy*; *Islamic* and *radical*; *Al-Qaeda*, *leader*, *member*, and *Iraq*; *policy*, *troop*, *United States*, and *war*; and *Geneva Convention*.

The comparison between the *Financial Times* and the *Guardian* showed that both newspapers shared words central to their descriptions of terrorism, the war in Iraq, and the policies and consequences to this situation. Some of those shared words were *attack*, *terrorism*, and *September*; *terror*, *war*, and *Iraq*; *Tony*

Blair; *Osama Bin Laden*; and *President George Bush and administration*. The *Financial Times*' unique words reflected the market and finance orientation of the paper. In addition to that, the unique words also reflected a concern over the impact of this on the British people, and included *financial* and *world*; *oil* and *price*; *British* and *citizens*; *community* and *intelligence*; and *conference* and *peace*. The *Guardian*'s unique words presented the newspaper's concern over a potential major attack to Britain and clustered around *British*, *security*, and *source*; *major* and *attack*; *east* and *London*.

Finally, all newspapers were combined into two different sets of texts, converted into two different network maps, and then compared. The shared words indicated that, for both countries, the newspapers analyzed revealed basic similarities in their word choice, frames adopted, and themes covered. Predictably, the shared words reflected a focus on terrorist attacks, military action, and the wars on Iraq and Afghanistan. Some of the words that represented these issues were *attack* and *terrorist*; *President George Bush and administration*; *homeland*, *national*, and *security*; and *Afghanistan*, *Iraq*, *terrorism*, *terror*, and *war*.

The unique words, on the other hand, drew attention to the fact that, despite many similarities, the newspapers employed unique frames. Whereas the U.S. newspapers were greatly focused on specific events, the British adopted a global standpoint to analyzing terrorism as a complex condition, instead of focusing on isolated acts of terrorism. The British newspapers' unique words indicated a concern with the financial consequences of terrorism as well as with issues of torture and British Muslim citizen's rights. The American newspapers' unique words, however, centered on specific episodes of terrorism, clustering around the following words: *Guantanamo Bay*, *human rights*, *ground zero*, *bombing suicide*, and *secret service*.

Further patterns of convergence or divergence were observed by conducting an exploratory principal components factor analysis on the 150 most influential words present in at least three of the four samples examined. We also wanted to see how and whether the factor analysis results would corroborate the comparative analyses. No rotation was adopted and, following the recommendation of Dooley and Corman (2002, 2004), only factors with eigenvalues of at least 4.0 were included. Words with loadings below 0.60 were discarded, resulting in a final roster of 131 words. The analysis resulted in three factors, explaining 100 percent of the variance.

Factor 1 ($\alpha = .95$) was composed by almost half of the roster of words, or sixty items. It focused on numerous aspects of terrorism and the war in Iraq and covered political and social aspects of terrorism and the so-called "war on terror." It included names of political actors (*Blair*, *Cheney*, and the *President*), partisan positions (*conservative*, *party*, and *republican*) and descriptive information on terrorist-related events (*foreign*, *flight*, *bomber*, and *plot*). Because of the play-by-play coverage that it corresponded to, this factor or frame was associated with episodic coverage of news.

The second and third factors produced lower reliability, and thus are useful to this analysis through an exploratory framework. Factor 2 ($\alpha = .68$) also compiled numerous words—fifty-four items. Whereas still diverse in scope, the words composing this factor were closely related to the war in Iraq and the terrorist attacks in the United States, Britain, and Spain. Moreover, factor 2 included words reflected some opposition or deliberation of the dominant policy path, such as *democratic*, *democrat*, *Internet*, and *committee*. Because of the trend to cover multiple opinions on terrorism, this factor or frame was associated with thematic coverage.

Finally, factor 3 ($\alpha = .52$) seemed to describe a more specific issue. Being composed by words such as *bomb*, *terrorism*, *terror*, *detainee*, *Army*, *evidence*, *police*, *intelligence*, and *media*, this factor reflected coverage of torture, human rights, and media or public response to terrorism. This word grouping indicated a preoccupation with government policy, military issues, humanitarian concerns, and diplomatic tendencies, indicating framing choices that were divided between military solutions and policy suggestions. The groupings seemed to indicate two alternate routes associated with terrorism: military use or diplomacy. These findings are further discussed and integrated with the discourse analysis, which was conducted concurrently and separately but yielded findings aligned with the quantitative results.

Qualitative Trends: Episodic versus Thematic Structure

Iyengar (1991) proposed that most news coverage adopts episodic or thematic frames, especially when coverage concerns long-term recurring issues or elections. Episodic frames usually are event or case oriented and focus on hard news and concrete, isolated instances. Episodic frames tend to be more drama oriented, visually compelling, and compatible with the economics of the news cycle. Thematic frames, on the other hand, emanate from specific instances, but focus on providing context and background for the issue at hand. Thematic frames are less descriptive and more analytical. Use of one type of framing does not exclude use of the other, but typically, one type tends to dominate the other. According to Iyengar, “episodic framing tends to elicit individualistic rather than societal attributions of responsibility, while thematic framing has the opposite effect” (pp. 15-16). Similarly, Cappella and Jamieson (1997) argued “the effects of episodic framing on attributions of responsibility occur through a process of automatic trait attribution implying personal rather than situational responsibility and not a process of retrieval of concrete, specific behaviors portrayed in the news” (p. 84).

Within the present comparative sample of terrorism coverage, the tension between episodic and thematic frames was prevalent. While no newspaper was exclusively episodic or thematic within its approach, there were marked tendencies in the coverage of each paper. Out of all the papers considered for the

qualitative analysis, the *New York Times*' coverage made more frequent and repetitive use of several elements associated with episodic framing when discussing terrorism-related issues. Specifically, the *New York Times*' coverage was characterized by the use of strong negative epithets when describing terrorists, making reference to terrorist-related actions, including, but not limited to, "deadliest," "vicious," "indiscriminate," "opportunistic," "chaotic," "jihadist," and other similar adjectives. Terrorist suspects or perpetrators were typically introduced with the term "terrorist" preceding the first and last names. The language employed to describe policy actions related to terrorism was equally blunt and strong, revealing a negative tone. For instance, journalists made mention of "choking off terrorist networks," "corrupt government structures," and frequently dehumanized terrorist perpetrators by not ascribing any motive to the terrorist attacks. Use of metaphors (e.g., "David and Goliath") was also frequent and aimed at creating a dramatic tone, emblematic of episodic reporting.

Overall, the *New York Times*' coverage was saturated with elements of drama, whether it was in the context of a news report, editorial, or news feature or analysis. Coverage was focused on hard news and single events, with an occasional tendency to make frequent references to "insider" or "backstage" dealings. The latter was especially prevalent in reports of Democratic presidential candidate debates with regard to terrorism and interviews of government officials and the vice president. However, while it would be expected that such reporting would focus on Washington insider dealings, this coverage focused less on issue-related insider information and more so on personality-related aspects of politicians' responses. Several scholars (Capella and Jamieson 1996, 1997; Patterson 1993, 1996) have identified this focus on the political persona as the "character" frame, which typically reveals a tendency to be consumed and almost enamored with insider politics, as iterated through political persona rhetoric and interactions. Typically observed in election news coverage, the "character" frame, in this context, led journalists to focus too much on political candidates' character, tone, expression, and emotional reaction as they responded to terrorist-related questions and less so on their actual take on the issue at hand. Tellingly, the quantitative analysis supported these findings by producing word groupings that revealed the episodic approach of the *Times* and the tendency to personalize issues by focusing on characters and political personas.

The remaining three papers were markedly different in their approaches, with some variation. The *Washington Post* was less episodic in its orientation than the *New York Times*, although it also contained some event descriptions that employed literary elements to convey a sense of drama. Overall, the use of epithets and metaphors was less frequent and less dramatic, as compared to that of the *New York Times*. For instance, in describing the capture of terrorist suspects or reporting on terrorist suicide attacks, the *Post* tended to make less frequent use of stereotypical terms and adjectives. Its use of epithets was less dramatic

and more pragmatic, meaning that adjectives were used to describe and not to attach an emotional tone to the event reported. The overall tone was more dry and focused on more detached retelling of events and facts occurring in historical sequence.

The *Financial Times* coverage exhibited similar characteristics and was further removed from the episodic structure. Word choice, for editorials as much as news reports, was simple and plainly descriptive, and epithet use was sparse, perhaps because of the market orientation of the paper. The overall tone was more tempered, and the focus of the reporting was strictly factual. Like the *Washington Post*, the *Financial Times* made occasional reference to insider politics, but unlike the *New York Times*, whenever this occurred, it was for the explicit purpose of providing context and depth to the coverage. Overall bias was less visible, and there was a noticeable effort to use words carefully, so as to avoid stereotyping and unjustifiable conclusions. Terrorist suspects or known terrorists were frequently referred to as “alleged” conspirators. Similarly, terrorist plots or plans reported in the news carried the “alleged” characterization, which was notably absent from similar coverage of these events in the U.S. papers. The overall dry and tempered tone was emblematic of content that was less readable and lively, but also not as infused with elements of drama and emotion. Reporters here were less consumed with conveying the mood and more with providing facts, as reported by a variety of sources, even in the context of feature pieces.

The *Guardian* followed a similar, thematic approach in its reporting, engaging in “just-the-facts” reporting from a removed perspective. This detachment was clearly demonstrated in minimal and careful use of epithets. The *Guardian* and the *Financial Times* both made less frequent use of U.S. government sources and frequently included editorials and features contributed by internationally acknowledged foreign ministers or professors. An interesting diversion in reporting modes was that British journalists frequently made mention to the work of other colleagues or news sources, such as the *New Yorker*, using them to evidence or broaden the scope of the reporting. Overall, the thrust of editorials and analysis within U.K. papers was geared toward understanding situational and international factors that underlie terrorist tendencies and behaviors. Both U.S. papers (the *Washington Post* less so) were less likely to refer to international or historical factors in analytical pieces or editorials and, when doing so, typically reverted to government sources, opinions, and analysis. The tendency to associate events or policy with a person or character is emblematic of episodic coverage and was prevalent in the U.S. papers included in this sample. In contrast, the focus on the interaction between a complex set of factors so as to analyze international affairs is symptomatic of thematic frames and prevalent in the higher brow U.K. papers included in this qualitative sample. Tellingly, an editorial analysis of Prime Minister Blair’s approach to Middle East politics and related terrorist events appearing in the *Guardian*,

which could have focused on character, was centered away from that and around an analysis of international factors and intervening situations and contained no reference to inside politics.

The thematic versus episodic structure captures several similarities and differences in the tone and orientation of the coverage that were evident in the sample. Interestingly, the CRA results pick up on the same differences in the coverage of the papers, revealing word groupings that reflect event-oriented, episodic coverage for the U.S. papers and international-scope, thematic coverage for the U.K. papers. However, several additional differences, related to how stories were focused and themes that were pursued, were noted. Previous research has characterized such differences by categorizing them under government, policy, or political/economic frames (e.g., Jasperson and El-Kikhia 2003; Nacos and Torres-Reyna 2003; Schaefer 2003). This study also identified some frame use associated with coverage of military or other government policy, detailed in the following section.

Military versus Diplomatic Framing

The comparative analysis of terrorism-related coverage in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Financial Times*, and the *Guardian* was characteristic of policy trends and developments in the corresponding countries, but also of slight differences in policy approaches. In the United States, a country that has followed military policy in the Middle East as a result of or in response to terrorist attacks, discussion of policy and terrorist events carried a military thrust. Thus, coverage in the *New York Times* made frequent mention of successes and failures of the military approach, military goals, military death tolls, civilian casualties, and policy and political developments in relation to the military approach. Though less critical of U.S. government policy, the *Washington Post* was similarly focused on military action, reaction and analysis in its reporting. The *Post* was less critical and more prescriptive in its analytical and editorial pieces, assuming the role of policy consultant. The *Post* would also make references to insider dealings in passing and in matter-of-fact manner, where as the *New York Times* frequently delved into analyses of insider politics. Both papers mostly made use of U.S. government sources, and made little reference to how other countries were reporting on the same events.

This systematic reference to and analysis of military approaches was emblematic of the tendency to report and interpret current events through a military lens, depicting a military frame. Events and occurrences were reported in relation to overall military strategy. Editorials and features were structured around the progression of military policy. Sources were employed and referenced as they related to the military frame. Even though both papers were critical of the administration in their editorial and analytical pieces, their analysis did not exist outside the frame of military analysis, nor did it delve

into alternative approaches. It was guided by tracing, reporting and critiquing dominant government (military) policy.

The approach of the U.K. papers was markedly different. Finding an article focused on military reports or progress in its entirety was difficult within this sample. Most editorials, analyses, or reports from the *Financial Times* and the *Guardian* employed a broader, diplomatic frame. The overall use of government sources or references to the government was minimal and casual. The use of insider information was negligible and included only if it served a demonstrable purpose. The scope of the reporting was more international, frequently including the reactions and orientations of other countries, including the United States. The tone of the analysis was more professorial, and editorials and analyses were frequently authored by Middle East Foreign Ministers or internationally acclaimed professors.

The two U.K. papers were more cognizant of policy and press tendencies in other countries and frequently referred to them in their reporting. More importantly, all reports, analyses, and editorials introduced events from a diplomatic point of view and tracked current events within the overall progression of diplomatic plans. References to military plans and casualties were made in relation to the evaluation of diplomatic courses of action pursued. Analysis frequently made mention of economic, social, and cultural factors, all elements absent from the military frame. The *Guardian* sample, specifically, contained no reference to the military at all, which, given the composite nature of the sample, reflects the tendency to employ the diplomatic frame almost exclusively. These similarities and differences among all papers were depicted in the factor analysis conducted with the centering resonance framework, which produced factors indicating episodic and thematic frames. The military versus diplomatic frame is over two approaches that could be used to deal with the same issue: military use or diplomacy.

Discussion

This study focused on investigating frames employed when covering terrorism and terrorism-related events in four different newspapers in the United States and the United Kingdom. The study objective was to identify and compare frames adopted, as they could potentially be associated with different news traditions and policy directions in the two countries. The research design combined quantitative and qualitative methods, so as to address methodological inconsistencies associated with the coding of frames and so as to compare wider samples with an appropriate level of depth to the analysis.

Our primary research question was concerned with frames employed, and both methods yielded findings that were similar and complementary, thus enriching our data and aiding our interpretations. The computerized content

analysis initially revealed word groupings that pointed to event-oriented coverage for the United States and context-oriented coverage for the U.K. papers. A similar tendency was identified in the discourse analysis, which had been conducted separately, with the U.S. papers engaging in more episodic coverage and the U.K. papers in thematic coverage. Specifically relating to the U.S. papers, the *New York Times* frequently tried to personify the coverage by relying on coverage of political personas and characters involved in the issue and using more dramatic language. The *Post*, on the other hand, was equally episodic in its coverage, but less dramatic in its word choice, and more likely to tell stories from the point of view of the people, rather than the political players involved. The U.K. papers, on the other hand, were clearly thematic in their approach, adopting a tempered tone and focusing on all international players and factors involved in terrorist coverage. The *Financial Times* was more market oriented in its approach, whereas the *Guardian* only occasionally delved into analyses that considered the effects of terrorism on the British people. Both sets of data revealed a third tendency to align with either pole of a third policy frame, structured around the diplomatic or military policy choice. The U.S. papers were dominated by coverage of the military approach, whereas the U.K. papers produced coverage around diplomatic evaluations of terrorist events.

There are several possible causes for the differences in coverage. An obvious factor is national government policy. Even though both countries are invested in military efforts in the Middle East, the U.S. government has a history of advocating a military solution, while the U.K. government has maintained both a military and diplomatic argument. Regardless of government stance, the U.K. press, however, devoted more space to diplomatic presentations and evaluations of news events, thus placing those options on the table. The U.S. press, on the other hand, delved more into presentations and evaluations of military strategies, thus inadvertently excluding diplomatic alternatives from the public forum. Both the quantitative and qualitative analyses reflected a tendency for U.S. papers to rely on U.S. government and military sources, and for the U.K. papers to select from a wider and global array of source experts. Such localized versus globalized tendencies in reporting events that carry the ambiguity of terrorism inform the public in a manner that paves the way toward specific policy solutions. While this study did not investigate the connection between framing and public perceptions, the implications are clear and could be further pursued in future work. Within this context, it would be interesting to explore connections between national identity, public expectations from the press, and the history of public opinion and press coverage on the Middle East in the respective countries, especially since the United States has a history of military involvement in the area, while EU countries are typically divided and reluctant to employ military action.

The differences in coverage noted are not novel, in that previous research has indicated the tendency of the U.S. press to be locally focused and the

international press more diplomatically oriented (e.g., Jasperson and El-Kikhia 2003; Nacos and Torres-Reyna 2003; Rusciano 2003). Similarly, researchers have argued that the pragmatic orientation of the U.S. press imposes the episodic orientation, filled with event-focused coverage and drama. In contrast, the sacerdotal orientation of the U.K. press allows coverage that is not as audience friendly, for it omits elements of drama, but is more thematically focused, because it presumes obligatory coverage of all aspects of an issue, no matter how dramatic or news friendly they might be (Semetko et al. 1991). So these differences are explained by government policy, institutional tendencies, and the dominant journalism paradigm in each country.

The most substantial finding of the study, however, is the alignment of news frames with corresponding policy in the two nations, pointing to the symbiotic relationship between the policy agenda and the press. In this two-directional relationship, influence is mutual and simultaneous, in that the news process is set in motion via the policy solutions that governments advocate, and the fact the policy solutions gain public prominence as they are featured, sometimes exclusively, on the media agenda. As a result, the U.S. media agenda, as portrayed by these opinion-leading newspapers, excludes coverage of military alternatives. The U.K. media agenda, as reflected through the influential papers chosen, presents its reading public with broad coverage of policy alternatives. The effect, in Entman's (1993) words, is one that inadvertently highlights particular aspects of perceived reality, so as to promote particular perspectives and exclude others.

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