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Operation Zarb-e-Azb in the Global Wire Services: A Framing Analysis



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Abstract: *Pakistan has become a victim of terrorism after its involvement in the ongoing war on terror. The country has lost thousands of civilians and security personnel in this American-led war. Though, Pakistan has always been treated negatively by the media organizations of elite nations. Operation Zarb-e-Azb was a combined military action of the Pakistan army against the armed insurgent groups in North Waziristan which was launched in the year 2014. The current study attempted to examine the framing of Operation Zarb-e-Azb in global wire services. For this purpose, AFP, AP and Reuters were selected. Through the technique of convenient sampling, a total of 300 news items from the entire period of operation were selected for analysis. Quantitative as well as qualitative content analysis and interpretive analysis have been used as a research design for this study. The results indicated that the global wire services framed the news stories of military operations in a positive way. The terrorism and militant threat frame was more dominant in global wires as compared to other frames. The results also revealed that the global wires framed this operation differently by representing the foreign policy and interests of their respective states.*

Key Words: Operation Zarb-e-Azb, Global Wires, Framing, AFP, AP, Reuters

Introduction

A news agency is considered an organization which gathers the news and presents them to all journalistic outlets. A wire service is an organization that collects, writes and delivers the news to radio, television, newspapers, magazines and other outlets including governmental and non-governmental organizations nationally and internationally (Snape, 2016). These wires do not publish these news stories but only distribute and sell them to their subscribers who otherwise

cannot afford to approach these news stories. Almost, the whole media have to rely on these sources except a few news organizations who have the resources to approach these news events. At the same time, the global news wires are the organizations whose main purpose is to gather and retail the news stories to the world's media including the governments and private institutions. News agencies are considered the most fascinating and glitzy source of information. They epitomize the national and

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international news in the most thrilling, credible and insignificant way in contrast to the other forms of media. These agencies have to work in a tough environment for manufacturing a news story more visible as compared to other media outlets by covering the world with the most experienced and professional national and foreign correspondents. The news wires from the elite countries characterize the issues of the deviant world as media imperialism, information dependency, agenda setting, ethnocentrism, cultural imperialism and inequality in the global communication order (Boyd-Barrett, 1998).

Pakistan has become a victim of terrorism after its involvement in the war against terror (PILDAT, 2008). Pakistan has lost more than 49,000 civilians and 15,000 security personnel in the American-led war on terror (Raja, 2013). In 2002, only two suicide attacks occurred which had reached 76 after seven years. At the end of 2013, more than 376 suicide attacks occurred while 5,714 claimed to be dead in these attacks (The Conflict Monitoring Center, 2013). The military institutions of Pakistan have betrothed in overcoming the armed militancy and terrorists especially from the northwest portion of Pakistan since 2004. Operation Zarb-e-Azb was a combined military action of the Pakistan army against the armed insurgent militant groups that were involved in terrorist activities. Pakistan has launched many operations in these adjoining areas before Zarb-e-Azb such as Operation Sher-Dil (Lion Heart) and Operation Raah-e-Haq (Right Path). The Operation Zarb-e-Azb was launched on the 15th of June 2014, against the armed militant groups in the North Waziristan Agency. The meaning of Zarb is 'attack' and Azb is the title of Muhammad's (PBUH) sword, which was used by the Prophet (PBUH) in the fight of Badr and Uhud. Therefore, the overall meaning of this operation is to attack with Prophet's (PBUH) sword. More than 30,000 army personnel took part in Operation Zarb-e-Azb, which is considered one of the biggest crackdowns against terrorists in the history of Pakistan where religious scholars also declared fatwas by ratifying this battle as a jihad against terrorism (Yousaf, 2015; Javaid, 2015). As a result, more than hundreds of thousand people had to be displaced from this region (Chaudhry,

2014). By September 3, 2014, a total of 910 terrorists were killed and 82 Pakistani soldiers had lost their lives in Operation Zarb-e-Azb (DAWN, 2014).

The media in this century is performing an indispensable role in contemporary globalization by manufacturing conceivable instantaneous communication. The globalization of news has profoundly designed the contemporary journalistic turf from the last one and half century where global wire services have played a key role in news gathering and scattering across the world (MacGregor, 2013). In this process, the elite media organizations perform a central role by fabricating the same circumstances, ensuring the possibility of globalization (Bielsa, 2008). According to Shoemaker and Reese (1996), the editors of the United States (US) news media argued that US media show biasedness while covering international news. It portrays the international news according to their foreign policy and interests. The coverage of other countries in America is discoursed according to the state policies towards other nations (Entman, 1991). Gans (1979) argued that the media of the West cover the stories of other nations which relate to their interests by neglecting others. The media of the US treat other countries more positively for their interests even in the time of military dictatorships (Said, 1997).

Orren (1986) discussed that there is a media state in a bureaucratic state where every government try to spend more money to circulate the news of different policies of the government in contrast to media organizations' efforts that dig and report the facts. Some consider US media as the new political party while the ancient conservative trends of political parties are gone. The media of the West serve the ideology of the state which directly supports the foreign policies of these nations. Chomsky (1997) said that the media of the dominant world is bound to serve the ideology and interests of the dominant class and institutions. This is why, the media of the US criticize the policies of Pakistan in the context of the war on terror by portraying Pakistan as a failed economy, failed state and Pakistan Army as a double gamer. According to Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Pakistan gives protection to some terrorist groups for defending

Indian proxies towards Kashmir (Iqbal & Zubair, 2014). Shoemaker and Reese (1996) argued that states control the media for their own interests where institutions of the governments pressurize media organizations to promote the stance of the state. Pakistan as well as its military institutions portrayed negatively in the Western wire services specifically after 9/11. Pakistan got more magnitude in the media, most specifically in Western media after becoming an ally of the US in the war against terrorism (Siraj, 2006).

Referring to these studies, a consensus could be drawn that Pakistan was always criticized by the dominant countries especially by Western countries and their media after 9/11 via secretly supporting many terrorist groups with the stance of differentiating good and bad Taliban. But after the start of Operation Zarb-e-Azb, Pakistan has a stance to act against these terrorist, militant and fundamentalist groups without any discrimination between good and bad. Ex-Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif stated,

“We announce that there will be no differentiation between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ Taliban and have resolved to continue the war against terrorism till the last terrorist is eliminated” (The Express Tribune, 2014).

In this context, where Pakistan directly follows the policies and stance of their allies in combating terrorism from this region, a dividing line was drawn after the start of Operation Zarb-e-Azb that how these global news wires frame operations. So the current study attempts to compare the direction of the coverage of Operation Zarb-e-Azb in AFP, AP and Reuters. The study would try to analyze the frames employed by the global wire services in reporting the operation of Zarb-e-Azb. The study would also examine the difference in news framing of Operation Zarb-e-Azb in global wire services.

Literature Review

A realm is the central component of revision for media which exerts as a mediator by instituting the perception of any state (Gartner, 1994). Pakistan is constantly considered in the category of war-torn, Islamic terrorists and militancy promoter countries which directly reflects its negative images in the global media (East West

Communications, 2011). However, the truth can be eminent from the media certainty. Media always try to establish different agendas by framing the specific contents for establishing a quasi-atmosphere, which is highly aloof from the authenticities (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). The traditional and topographical variances among states also control global news reporting. The negative treatment of deviant nations by the dominant media, which applies the terms terrorists, militants and extremists etc. for specific nations and their natives, invokes these metaphors in the thoughts of the audiences who use these mediums (Baran, 2004). Pakistan is always treated in the Western media in the same way by applying the frame of West versus Islam. Pakistan is continuously portrayed as a fundamentalist and radicalized Islamic state with socially, politically and economically unstable in the Western media (Saleem, 2007). The people of Pakistan are also treated as a threat to the regional integrity of this region because of their alleged connotations with extremist religious groups. In covering the religious facets of the Indo-Pak battle, Hinduism is always portrayed in a moderate way while Islam is always tinted as the most threatening religion and the grown cause of this conflict (Atre, 2013). The Western media frame Islam and Muslims negatively by labelling them as Islamic extremists and terrorists, ascribing negative implications to the entire Muslim population (Karim, 2003).

Said (1997) argued that the Western media predominantly frame Muslims and Islam in a conformist and canonical means, which is contradictory to any type of innovation, and highly imitates cultural and ethnic prejudices towards Muslims and Islam. The US has a relationship with Pakistan on interest rather than trust. Hillary Clinton uttered high suspicion in sharing intelligence information regarding the Abbottabad Operation and the killing of Osama Bin Laden with Pakistan (Clinton, 2014). Pakistan has spent enormous socioeconomic expenses, approximately \$70 billion since its alliance with the United States in the war against terrorism. However, a prevalent concept in the US is that Pakistan gets a lot of funds from the US for taking action against the militants and terrorist organizations but Pakistan is just

making money by not taking any serious action against these terrorist networks (Cohen & Chollet, 2007). The roots of the recent surge of Islamic militancy, extremism and terrorism as security threats for Pakistan emerged in the '80s when Islamization was considered the foremost instrument in the foreign policy of Pakistan for restricting the Russian influence in this region by linking with the US (Murphy & Malik, 2009). Many terrorist groups were established in the same period in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), who lately claimed that the political system of this country is not Islamic. It is also seen that the major religious parties of the state are also part of this current political system, which muscularly suggests that the prevalent democratic system must be Islamic in its nature. This also considers the core cause of this recent conflict (Yousaf, 2015).

Various studies have been done on these variables where most of the researchers believe that Western media portray the international news according to the foreign policy and interests of the respective state. Iqbal and Zubair (2014) conducted discourse analysis on Pakistan Army construction in the Western media by using the corpus modus model. They selected two pronounced magazines i.e. *Time* from the US and *The Economist* from the UK. It was concluded that Western media promote the ideology of the dominant class and portray the stance of elite institutions such as the CIA. Siraj (2006) observed the picture of Pakistan in American newspapers in the context of change in relationships after the 9/11 attacks by using the technique of content analysis. He selected a population one year before and one year after these attacks for understanding the stance of US media. The study resulted that Pakistan got more favourable space in the post-terror attack era as compared to the pre-9/11 era. Framing theory was applied for approving the hypothesis of the study. Ali, Jan, and Saleem (2013) examined the treatment of Pakistan in US media through content analysis. They selected *Time* and *Newsweek* magazines for understanding how US magazines portray Pakistan. The study revealed that both magazines portrayed the image of Pakistan more negatively. It was analyzed in the study of Yousaf (2015) that the US designed the

news of the other nations according to the foreign policy of their state while Pakistan was represented as a failed state.

Theoretical Framework

The theory of framing has been used as a theoretical framework for this study. Framing is reproduced as a procedure of promoting a narrative to explicit addressees which provide required explanations of an apparent reality by stressing some features of the story and ignoring others, and establishing associations with them (Entman, 2007). The researchers in media have explained this notion as a negation between media frames and individual frames (Druckman, 2001). The earlier practices of framing in communication refer to the usage of images, words and presentation styles of a story or an event employed by information disseminators such as media channels, newspapers and news agencies etc. for transmitting news of an issue or an occasion to the audience. The judgments about which features of the information should be deemed relevant, salient, and appropriate, are made by the information disseminator and are evident in the resulting frames. The frame in thought, or an individual frame, refers to what an individual receiver of information believes to be the most relevant, salient, and appropriate aspect of information (Chong & Druckman, 2007). This dissimilarity in performing the frame is indispensable to comprehend fabricating and locating frames (Scheufele, 1999). A framing effect as a communication effect is not due to differences in what is being communicated, but, rather, it is caused by variations in how a given piece of information is presented in public discourse (Scheufele & Iyengar, 2012). This study is based on the emphasis model of framing for understanding the overall picture of a country with regard to the evaluative connotations that are demonstrated in particular news stories about numerous issues.

Research Questions

RQ-1: How did the global wire services frame Operation Zarb-e-Azb?

RQ-2: How did the global wire services differ in framing Operation Zarb-e-Azb?

Research Hypotheses

- H1:** Operation Zarb-e-Azb was framed positively in the global wire services.
- H2:** The frame of terrorism and militant threat will be more dominant as compared to other frames.
- H3:** There will be a great difference in news framing of Operation Zarb-e-Azb in the global wire services.

Methodology

The study has applied both quantitative and qualitative research approaches. Firstly, researchers used content analysis for assessing the evaluative tone of news stories regarding Operation Zarb-e-Azb in the top three international wire services AFP, AP and Reuters. Secondly, the researchers executed an interpretive examination approach for analyzing manifest contents for generalizing the proposed relationship which is highlighted in the research questions. The framing literature reflects vital distinctions between the equivalence and emphasis frame. The equivalence frame focuses on Kahneman and Tversky (1984) work which refers to the meticulous information in diverse ways that subsequently arouses different behavioural and attitudinal results. On the other hand, the emphasis frame refers to the description of the problem that emphasizes its specific aspects such as moral versus economic opinions for or against health care (Entman, 1993). Emphasis framing technique is considered as a persuasion practice where emphasis is positioned on those particular facets of an explanation that boost certain explanations of the expressive framework, and depress certain others (Schutz, 2013). This research is based on the emphasis model for understanding the overall picture of Operation Zarb-e-Azb in expressions of the evaluative connotations that are demonstrated in particular news about numerous subjects. The model of Semetko and Valkenburg(2000) has been applied to analyzing the framing of Zarb-e-Azb in international wire services. The technique of emphasis framing has also been used for analyzing the news stories containing different frames of Operation Zarb-e-Azb in these wire services.

Population and Sampling

The population for this study is the news items that have been presented by the international wire services world media outlets regarding Pakistan. The three news agencies i.e. Agence France-Presse (AFP) of France, Associated Press (AP) of the United States, and Reuters of the United Kingdom have been selected for this purpose. All the news items distributed by these three wire services related to Operation Zarb-e-Azb have been selected from the starting date i.e. June 15, 2014, to the ending date of Zarb-e-Azb i.e. February 22, 2017 (DAWN, 2017). The researchers have applied the technique of convenient sampling to limit the excessive number of news stories regarding the issue. A total of 300 news stories from AFP, AP, and Reuters have been selected for the analysis where 100 news stories from each news wire were selected. The relevant data has been accessed from LexisNexis. A single news item has been taken as a unit of analysis.

Operationalization of Variables

To analyze the framing of Operation Zarb-e-Azb in the global wire services, six news frames have been generated that relate to this issue. These news frames are the terrorism and militant threat frame, economic consequences frame, domestic politics frame, social frame, international relations frame and human rights violations frame (Yousaf, 2015). A total of thirty questions have been designed as coding indicators to analyze the framing. A minimum of three questions were considered necessary to analyze the selected frame(Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000).

A. Terrorism and Militant Threat Frame

- Does the story suggest that Pakistan carries out massive operations in tribal regions against militants and terrorists?
- Does the story suggest that the launch of Operation Zarb-e-Azb is a great step towards the elimination of terrorism from this region?
- Does the story criticize the efforts of Operation Zarb-e-Azb?

- Does the story overall appreciate the efforts of Operation Zarb-e-Azb?
- Does the news classify Pakistan as a victim of terrorism and militancy?

B. Economic Consequences Frame

- Does the story suggest that Pakistan has invested huge money to get rid of militancy and terrorism?
- Does the story reflect that Operation Zarb-e-Azb plays a key role in administrative reform and economic development?
- Does the story reflect that the successful efforts of Operation Zarb-e-Azb attract foreign investors to invest in Pakistan?
- Does the story reflect that militants attack national and foreign delegations and traders, threatening them to leave and not invest in Pakistan?

C. Domestic Politics Frame

- Does the story reflect the transaction among rising people's contentment with administrative institutions?
- Does the news contracting with increasing people's unhappiness with administrative associations?
- Does this news add that most of the political and sacred festivities are arranged because the country has to fight and eradicate militancy?
- Does the story reflect that Operation Zarb-e-Azb is established to eliminate terrorists without any differentiation/discrimination between good and bad Taliban?
- Does the story engage the enhancement of security conditions after initiating Operation Zarb-e-Azb?

D. Social Frame

- Does the story reflect religious extremism and fundamentalism in Pakistani Society?
- Does the story reflect that Operation Zarb-e-Azb greatly helps in countering violent extremism in Pakistani society?
- Does the news depict Pakistani civilization as broad-minded towards fundamentalism?

- Does the news represent Pakistani civilization as fanatical towards fundamentalism?
- Does the news reflect people's satisfaction with Operation Zarb-e-Azb?

E. International Relations Frame

- Does the story reflect that international countries appreciate Pakistan for successfully launching Operation Zarb-e-Azb, and stand with Pakistan in its struggle against violent extremism?
- Does the story reflect that the relationship of Pakistan with other nations become stronger after the start of Operation Zarb-e-Azb?
- Does the story reflect the frame that this operation is a long-standing demand of Pakistan's Western allies including the United States because of the presence of Al-Qaeda affiliated Haqqani network there?
- Does the story suggest that Pakistan own many militant, radicalized and fundamentalist organizations for Kashmir and Indian proxies?

F. Human Rights Violations Frame

- Does the story reflect that there have been repeated reports of civilian deaths, but the military tightly controls access to the conflict zone?
- Does the story raise concerns about the casualties who died in the operation?
- Does the story reflect concerns about the transparency of this operation?
- Does the story raise concerns about the resumption of executions and the introduction of military courts?

Analysis

The evaluative tones of news content regarding Operation Zarb-e-Azb were categorized as positive, negative and neutral (Wang & Wang, 2007).

- H1:** Operation Zarb-e-Azb was framed positively in the global wire services.

Table 1

Case Processing Summary

Item	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
News Agencies *						
Evaluative Tones of the News Story	300	100.0%	0	0.0%	300	100.0%

Table 1 shows a total of 300 news stories that represent the sample of this study for examining

the evaluative tones of Operation Zarb-e-Azb in the global wire services.

Table 2

*News Agencies * Evaluative Tones of the News Story Cross Tabulation*

Item		Evaluative Tones of the News Story			Total
		Positive	Negative	Neutral	
News Agencies	AFP	51	31	18	100
	AP	52	29	19	100
	Reuters	57	29	14	100
Total		160	89	51	300

Table 2 indicates that Reuters presented more positive news stories regarding Operation Zarb-e-Azb. More than 57% of news stories from Reuters were distributed positively while the AP stands the second by circulating 52% positive news stories. The AFP stands at the last by giving 51% positive news regarding Operation Zarb-e-Azb. At the same time, it was also analyzed that AP and Reuters disseminated negative news stories equally while AFP portrayed this operation more negatively by presenting 31% of news stories. In terms of neutrality, AP is at the top by distributing 19% of stories while AFP stands at second by giving 18% neutral news stories. Reuters comes at the last in presenting this operation as more neutral by circulating only

14% of news stories. The analysis suggests that the results support the first hypothesis of this study that these international news agencies framed Operation Zarb-e-Azb positively. In designing the rationale of this study, it was analyzed that the media from the dominant nations frame the international contents according to the foreign policy of their states (Entman, 1991; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). So this hypothesis also supports the studies of Shoemaker and Reese, and Entman.

H2: The frame of terrorism and militant threat will be more dominant as compared to other frames.

Table 3

Case Processing Summary

Item	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
News Agencies * Frame	300	100.0%	0	0.0%	300	100.0%

Table 4*News Agencies * Frame Cross Tabulation*

News Agencies	Frames						Total
	Terrorism and Militant Threat	Economic Consequences	Domestic Politics	Social	International Relations	Human Rights Violations	
AFP	40	4	21	12	15	8	100
AP	47	5	21	0	22	5	100
Reuters	47	7	21	7	10	8	100
Total	134	16	63	19	47	21	300

Table 4 indicates that the terrorism and militant threat were used 47 times each in AP and Reuters while AFP used this frame 40 times in their news stories. The terrorism and militant threat frame was used more as compared to economic consequences, domestic politics, social, international relations and human rights violations frame. The analysis shows that the results also support the second hypothesis of this study that the terrorism and militant threat frame was used more dominantly in contrast to other frames in all global wires while framing Operation Zarb-e-Azb. The domestic politics frame remained in second place which shows that the international wires appreciated the progress in domestic politics of Pakistan by discussing the improvement in the law and order situation of the country, growing people's satisfaction, and the consensus of political and religious parties in combatting extremism and terrorism from the region. In addition, the international relations frame persisted at a third place which shows that the relationship of Pakistan with other countries especially with its allied nations in the war against terrorism after 9/11 has become stronger by appreciating the efforts of Pakistan in eliminating terrorism from this region without differentiating the good and bad Taliban metaphor.

H3: There will be a great difference in news framing of Operation Zarb-e-Azb in the global wire services.

The results indicate that all news agencies framed Operation Zarb-e-Azb differently. There was great variance in framing Operation Zarb-e-Azb in these international wire services. But overall three frames were more dominant in these news wires i.e. terrorism and militant threat,

domestic politics, and international relations frame. The revealed results also support the third hypothesis of this study. In general, it is ratified that the West reflected a great change in their policy towards Pakistan by presenting the military operation, domestic politics and the military institutions more positively in their news stories.

Conclusion

The current study attempted to analyze the framing of Operation Zarb-e-Azb in the global wire services i.e. AFP, AP and Reuters. The researchers draw a dividing line after an unusual development from the government of Pakistan for combating terrorism and extremism in this region without differentiating between good and bad Taliban (The Express Tribune, 2014). After introducing an unpredictable policy from Pakistan, the West also focused to dig into the realities behind this policy by reporting and covering this operation. This study used two research methods i.e. the content analysis technique of Wang and Wang(2007), and the interpretive content analysis technique of Semetko and Valkenburg(2000) for analyzing the evaluative tones and frames employed by the global wire services. The research pertains to framing theory by spotlighting the emphasis framing model for analyzing the media contents. According to Entman(1991), the media of the dominant nations conform and frame the news of other countries according to the interests of their states. The elite media portray the other states more positively when they work in the interests of the elites. The media of the dominant world is bound to serve the elite agenda while neglecting others (Chomsky, 1997).

Pakistan was portrayed more negatively in the elite media after 9/11 but after the start of this operation, a great change was seen in the global wire services which distribute more than 90% news to the whole world. The study concluded that the global wires framed the news stories of military operations more positively. The evaluative tone of news stories was more positive in all news wires but Reuters gave more positive space to this Operation Zarb-e-Azb as compared to others. The results also showed that the terrorism and militant threat frame was more

dominant in the global wires in contrast to the other frames. It has also been concluded that all the global wires framed this operation differently by representing the foreign policy and interests of their respective states. Overall, a great change was seen in the status quo in the global wire services while covering Pakistan and its security institutions after the start of Operation Zarb-e-Azb. This highly endorsed the notion of Said (1997) that the media from elite countries frame other countries more positively when they serve the elite agenda and policies in their nations.

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