

Representations of Pakistan: A Framing Analysis of Coverage in the U.S. and Chinese News Media Surrounding Operation Zarb-e-Azb

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This study compares perceptions of Pakistan in the Chinese and U.S. news media, two countries with which Pakistan shares different types of relationships. The timing of this study—summer 2014—is crucial, because Pakistan’s most comprehensive military offensive, Operation Zarb-e-Azb, was under way against militants and terrorists along Pakistan’s northwestern border with Afghanistan. The news coverage of the largest wire services of both countries—the Associated Press of the United States and the Xinhua news agency of China—was analyzed for a period of two months commencing on May 15 and ending on July 15, 2014. It was observed that the news coverage of Pakistan by the Associated Press was decidedly different from that of Xinhua, particularly in addressing the terrorism threat, the economic consequences, and international relations. The results inform the frame-building process in the milieu of vested interests of international politics and have practical implications for the state and publicity machineries of Pakistan.

Keywords: framing theory, Xinhua, Associated Press, Pakistan, China, United States, Operation Zarb-e-Azb, terrorism threat, international relations, exploratory factor analysis

A country is an important unit of analysis for media, which acts as an image agent in forming perceptions of a country (Gartner, 1994). Since Pakistan has become an ally in the international war against terrorism post-September 11, it has become a prime target of terrorism itself and has witnessed a serious deterioration in law and order conditions, with suicide bombings; bomb blasts at public gatherings, mosques, and other holy places; and attacks on the military forces (Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency, 2008). According to an annual ranking of countries based on how they are described in the media (East West Communications, 2011), Pakistan is always in the bottom tier along with war-torn countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, and Syria, which implies the presence of negative connotations of Pakistan in the media. The objective reality can be considerably different from the media reality, because the media are capable of framing a news story by creating a pseudo environment distant from the reality of the outside world (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). This is particularly relevant for the media reporting of places that are less familiar to audiences, because the audiences cannot authenticate the veracity of such stories through personal experiences or other stories.

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This study aims to comprehend the comparative media perceptions of Pakistan in China and the United States via content analysis of the news stories within specific frames. I examine the stories' evaluative undertones and perform an interpretive analysis. Maintaining favorable foreign policy and good diplomatic relations with the United States and China is considered a priority for most countries around the globe. However, Pakistan has a different type of relationship with each country. China is perceived by Pakistan as a global counterweight to the United States and a more reliable ally over the long term. With the United States, Pakistan has recently shared tumultuous relations marked with common and clashing interests. Therefore, comparing the media perceptions in China and the United States should render a reasonable approximation of the characteristics of Pakistan's media representation in both countries.

The framing analysis of Pakistan in the Chinese news media has not been explored before, and most studies about the framing of Pakistan in the U.S. news media have centered on September 11 events (Khan, 2008), Pakistan-India conflict (Siraj, 2008), or in terms of an overall frame of the West versus Islam (Ali, 2009; Saleem, 2007). The timing of this study in summer 2014 is crucial, because Pakistan's most comprehensive military offensive, Operation Zarb-e-Azb, against militants and terrorists along Pakistan's northwestern border with Afghanistan was under way. Because Pakistan's role in fighting extremism and terrorism has been intensely scrutinized by global media, any differences in the news coverage of Pakistan and the media frames of such coverage can be meaningfully explored in the periods before and after Operation Zarb-e-Azb.

Framing Theory

Framing is a process of presenting a narrative to a target audience that promotes a desired interpretation of perceived reality by highlighting some aspects or issues while disregarding others and making connections among them (Entman, 2007). Communication scholars have conceptualized framing as a dichotomy between "frame in communication or media frame" and "frame in thought or individual frame" (Druckman, 2001, p. 228). The former usage refers to the words, images, and presentation style employed by an information disseminator (e.g., a media outlet or news agency) to relay information about an event or an issue to the audience. The decisions about which aspects of the information should be deemed relevant, salient, and appropriate (and vice versa) 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 dichotomy in the usage of the term *frame* is important in understanding the processes of frame building and frame setting (Scheufele, 1999).

Frame building centers on the dynamics of how information disseminators choose particular frames in communication, and frame setting refers to the influences of media frames on the individual frames and the psychological processes at work—that is, the interaction between media frames and individuals' prior knowledge and predispositions (de Vreese, 2005). The present study is set within the premises of the *frame in communication* process of frame building to help us understand the news frames concerning Pakistan in two diverse countries with whom it has different types of relationships, in the background of a military offensive initiated against antistate elements in its territory.

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 a public discourse (Scheufele & Iyengar, 2011). The perception is reference-dependent (Kahneman, 2003). Therefore, the manner in which a given piece of information is contextualized determines how the information is interpreted. In recent years, the framing literature has made a crucial distinction between an *equivalence frame* and an *emphasis frame*. The former category is based on the work of Kahneman and Tversky (1984) and refers to the framing of the exact same information in different ways that consequently evokes different attitudinal or behavioral outcomes. Emphasis frames, in contrast, refer to descriptions of the issue that emphasize its particular aspects—for example, moral versus economic arguments for or against health care (Entman, 1993). The present study is situated within the emphasis model of framing in studying the overall image of a country in terms of the evaluative undertones evidenced in specific news stories about various issues.

Dominant Emphasis Frames in the News Coverage of Pakistan

The cultural and geographic differences among countries also regulate the international news coverage (Galtung & Vincent, 1992). Negative coverage by the Western media that applies terms such as *extremists* or *terrorists* to the natives of a specific region conjures those stereotypes in the minds of people who use and hear them (Baran, 2004). Pakistan is often covered in the U.S. media in the milieu of the same cultural difference of an overall frame of the West versus Islam. There is also evidence of Pakistan being framed in the U.S. news media as a fundamentalist Islamic state (Saleem, 2007), a politically unstable country, and a base of religious terrorism (Ali, Jan, & Saleem, 2013). In the context of India–Pakistan conflict, Pakistan is portrayed unfavorably in the U.S. news media (Khan, 2008) and is framed more as a foe than as a friend (Siraj, 2008). Moreover, Pakistanis are framed as a threat to the territorial integrity of the subcontinent due to their perceived alliance with fundamentalist religious organizations. In discourse about the religious aspect of the India–Pakistan conflict, Hinduism has been downplayed and Islam has been highlighted, allowing for framing of an impression that Islam is more threatening in escalation of the conflict (Atre, 2013). When referring to Islam or Muslims, terms such as *Islamic fundamentalists* and *Islamic militants* have become part of the large frames for Western media coverage, attributing negative connotations to the whole population (Karim, 2003). The U.S. media particularly frames Islam in an orthodox, canonical way, against any kind of modernity, which reflects the cultural prejudices perpetuated toward Islam (Said, 1997).

A comparison of news framing related to Pakistan in the Chinese and U.S. media is important, because Pakistan shares different types of relationships with both nations. With the United States, Pakistan shares a transactional relationship based on interest rather than trust. Former U.S. secretary of state Hillary Clinton, in her book *Hard Choices*, expressed deep distrust in sharing intelligence information with Pakistan. Relationships between Pakistan and the United States plunged to a historic low in November 2011, when 24 Pakistani soldiers were killed by U.S. forces on the Afghan border, termed a “tragic accident” by the United States. Pakistan, as a consequence, stopped North Atlantic Treaty Organization supply lines and demanded a direct apology from the White House. An apology was not provided by the Obama administration, because it would hurt the reelection campaign; an apology to the country that “harbored” Osama Bin Laden would not be endorsed by public sentiment (Clinton, 2014).

According to the Pakistani state, it has endured huge socioeconomic costs since its alignment with the international counterterrorism campaign, a figure estimated to be \$69 billion ("Pakistan Lost," 2013). But popular belief in the United States is that Pakistan is just minting money in the wake of the war against terror, without providing the strategic advantages the United States is looking for in the region (Cohen & Chollet, 2007).

Pakistan and China, on the other hand, have a bilateral relationship spanning six decades. Both countries share strong economic cooperation, strategic alliances, and close military relations. China has made substantial investments in power projects, communication nodes, and infrastructure expansion in Pakistan, including the construction of Gawadar Port on the southern coast of Pakistan and a Pak-China economic corridor that will run from southwest China through Pakistan to the Arabian Sea ("China Agrees," 2014). Pakistan has played an important role in helping China build diplomatic relations with Muslim countries and bridge communication with the West by facilitating the first visit of U.S. president Nixon to China in 1972. Pakistan has supported China's position related to its sovereignty in Taiwan, Xinjiang, and Tibet and was furnished the same support by China over Kashmir.

Operation Zarb-e-Azb and the Framing of Pakistan

It is widely believed that the seeds of the current wave of terrorism and extremism as a security threat to Pakistan began in the 1970s and 1980s, when Islamization was used as a main tool in Pakistan's foreign policy to curtail Soviet influence in the region by allying with the United States (Murphy & Malik, 2009). Most of today's militant groups are reminiscent of the same era and form an umbrella organization—the Pakistani Taliban—based in the North-Western Federally Administered Tribal Areas of the country along the Afghan border (Yusufzai, 2008). The primary contention of these militant groups is that the representative democracy in Pakistan is not Islamic. The religious voting bank is one of the largest in Pakistan, and mainstream religious political parties are part of the country's political system (Qazi, Khan, & Khan, 2013)—implying that popular democracy in the country is essentially Islamic in its ideology. However, it is in the execution of democracy where the problem lies (Yousaf, 2015).

Since 2001, Pakistan has been severely hit by a series of terrorist attacks by militants and antistate elements in the form of rocket assaults, bomb explosions, and suicide hits claiming the lives of 49,000 civilians and 15,000 security personnel (Raja, 2013). Two suicide bombings occurred in Pakistan in 2002, and this number rose to an all-time high of 76 in 2009. Between 9/11 and the end of 2013, Pakistan was hit by suicide bombers 376 times, claiming 5,714 lives (Conflict Monitoring Center, 2013). Pakistan's military has been engaged in armed conflict against the militants since 2004 in the northwest part of the country bordering with Afghanistan, in pursuit of the international war against terrorism. Before Operation Zarb-e-Azb, Pakistan successfully launched military offensives in the adjoining regions against the Taliban militants and insurgents in, for example, Operation Rah-e-Haq ("right path"), also known as the first battle of Swat region, and Operation Sher-Dil ("lion heart"), also known as the battle of Bajaur agency.

Operation Zarb-e-Azb is a joint military offensive of the Pakistan army that was launched on June 15, 2014, against the armed insurgent militant groups involved in terrorist activities in Pakistan who are

hiding out in the North Waziristan tribal belt at the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. *Zarb* means "attack," and *Azb* is the name of the sword of Prophet Muhammad that was used in the battle of Badr and Uhud. Thus, the operation name means "attack with the sword of Prophet Muhammad." The Islamic clerics in Pakistan declared a fatwa, endorsing the operation as a jihad against terrorism. Up to 30,000 soldiers are taking part in the operation, thought to be one of the most comprehensive crackdowns against the militants by the Pakistan army ("Pakistan Army Launches," 2014).

As a result of the operation, Pakistan has witnessed one of the largest internal displacements of civilians in the country's history, with more than one million fleeing the conflicted zone (Chaudhry, 2014). By September 3, 2014, 910 terrorists were reported to have been killed, 82 Pakistani soldiers had lost their lives, 27 arms- and explosives-making factories had been destroyed, militant strongholds had been cleared, and the state's judicial writ had been imposed ("Army Says," 2014).

There is reason to believe that, after the initiation of Operation *Zarb-e-Azb*, Pakistan would gain favorable coverage in the international news media, particularly in Western media outlets. Before Operation *Zarb-e-Azb* was launched, there was tremendous pressure on Pakistan to crack down against the militant wings in North Waziristan, and Pakistan often was accused of harboring and shielding the military wings of the Haqqani network, terming it a "veritable arm" of Pakistan's intelligence agency (Qazi, 2012). Therefore, it is of pivotal interest to examine the frames and the evaluative tones in both Chinese and U.S. news media that are associated with Pakistan's role in combating terrorism in its latest military offensive. Based on the preceding discussion, the following research questions are asked:

RQ1: Do news frames related to Pakistan significantly differ in their coverage in Xinhua and the Associated Press with respect to visibility?

RQ2: Do news frames related to Pakistan significantly differ in their coverage in Xinhua and the Associated Press with respect to the evaluative tones?

*RQ3: Do news frames related to Pakistan significantly differ in their coverage in Xinhua and the Associated Press with respect to visibility and the evaluative tones in the periods before and after Operation *Zarb-e-Azb*?*

Method

Research Design

This study employs a combination of two research methods (He, Xianhong, & Xing, 2012). First, a content analysis focuses on the news coverage of the two largest wire services in both countries: the Associated Press of the United States and the Xinhua news agency of China. Second, I performed an interpretative analysis of the content analysis to better understand the stipulated relationships foregrounded in the research questions. Xinhua is the state press agency of China, which operates as a mouthpiece of the Chinese Communist Party in disseminating the policies of the central government and addressing the social issues conforming to the party guidelines (Ma, 2005). The Associated Press is the

primary nationally oriented news service in the United States and one of the largest news media organizations in the world (Wu, 2006). Both news agencies are essentially the leading source of news in their respective countries and principally adjudicate the news agenda for their audiences and other media outlets.

Xinhua's Chinese Web portal (http://info.search.news.cn/search_adv.jsp) was used to retrieve news related to Pakistan. The query entered was "Pakistan" in corresponding Chinese characters 巴基斯坦. The news articles from AP were found using the LexisNexis database by inputting the search term "Pakistan." Date limitations were applied to the sample. A first period, beginning on May 15 and ending on June 14, 2014 (both days inclusive), constitutes the month before Operation Zarb-e-Azb. A second period beginning on June 15 and ending on July 15, 2014 (both days inclusive), comprises the period after Operation Zarb-e-Azb. The news content is not randomly disseminated over the years, months, or days (Peng, 2007), and news coming from Pakistan is usually event based, receiving coverage in the international media only after its occurrence. Therefore, to achieve the research objectives, all the events in the month before and the month after Operation Zarb-e-Azb need to be examined to gauge the media pulse. The unit of analysis was the news story. A news story was characterized as a semantic entity with at least one story demarcated from another by a change of topic (de Vreese, Peter, & Semetko, 2001).

A deductive approach was used to study the framing of Pakistan in the Chinese and U.S. news media by predefining relevant frames as content analytic variables to authenticate the extent of their occurrence in the news (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). As a result, five news frames related to Pakistan were generated: a terrorism threat frame, an economic consequences frame, a domestic politics frame, a social frame, and an international relations frame.

Terrorism threat frame. Acts of terrorism have always found relevance in the communication research because they possess elements that enhance news value, such as drama, visuals, sound effects, and general newsworthiness of the story (Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2008). Since the 9/11 attacks, the Western media in general has recourse to a "war on terrorism" frame, which allows it to place global news events—especially those within the domain of conflict—in an overall narrative (Norris, Kern, & Just, 2003). The personification of the war on terror frame in the media has been endorsed to such an extent that it is often employed to characterize general social conditions beyond terrorism (Reese & Lewis, 2009). Although news reporting on contemporary terrorism has heightened public concern of the risks confounded by terrorism, it has also led to stereotypical thinking about the terrorist threat, which often leads to demonization of Muslims and Islam in general (Woods, 2011).

Economic consequences frame. This frame includes all the news concerning the economic consequences for a country of an event, issue, or problem (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). Economic consequences is a common news frame (Neuman, Just, & Crigler, 1992). The severity of an event may heighten its economic consequences. Operation Zarb-e-Azb involves high economic costs; its successful execution and an expected rebuttal from extremist forces implies that the law and order situation could either get worse or improve in the due course of the operation.

Domestic politics frame. This frame focuses on the political impact of the war against terrorism in Pakistan's democratic set-up, the seriousness and competence (or lack thereof) of the government in addressing the issues of radicalism, extremism, and sectarianism, and improving the standard of living among common Pakistanis. The domestic politics frame has been employed to focus on political figures and religious leaders who had significant influence on policies during World War II and on the policies of Al-Qaeda and the Taliban (Maiko, 2012). This frame is particularly predominant when the host country confronts public relation problems that are intrinsically political in nature (Yao, 2010).

Social frame. Stories related to the social life, culture, art, and people of Pakistan during the recent wave of terrorism and religious extremism are included in this frame. The social frame is a prominent frame in the news coverage of issues that profoundly affect the lives of common people (Sern & Zauddin, 2012).

International relations frame. This frame includes stories that pertain to the diplomatic relations of Pakistan with other countries. International relations has been a dominant frame in the media scholarship of global issues, such as global warming (Brossard, Shanahan, & McComas, 2004). The news media of a host country is expected to characterize more vibrantly a foreign country with which it shares historically cordial diplomatic ties (Yu & Riffe, 1989). Strategically significant conflict impacts on the political dynamics of the regions and in the arena of international relations because of the ever-present danger of spillover effects of the terrorist attacks in other regions of the world.

Analysis

Twenty-two questions were developed: five questions each for the *terrorism threat* and *social* frames and four questions each for the *domestic politics*, *economic consequences*, and *international relations* frames. A minimum of three questions was deemed necessary to measure each frame (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). To increase the possibility of discovering latent frames, the coders were not aware of which questions coincided with which predefined frames. The occurrence of frames was measured by simple yes (1) or no (0) coding categories. For example, a news item titled "Panic, Uncertainty Grip Pakistan as Karachi Airport Under Attack" (Xinhua, June 9, 2014) was coded yes on all five questions describing *terrorism threat*, on three questions concerning *social*, and two questions regarding *international relations*, and coders answered no to the rest of the questions. For another news story, "China, Pakistan Vow to Strengthen Anti-terrorism Cooperation" (Xinhua, May 22, 2014), coders answered yes to three questions characterizing the *international relations* frame, two questions for *terrorism threat*, and one question construing *economic consequences*; the rest of the questions were coded no.

The evaluative tone of news content was identified as negative, positive, or neutral according to Wang and Wang's (2007) categorization scheme, where negative = -1, neutral = 0, and positive = 1. News content was operationally defined as negative when the primary aspects of the host country suggest unreliability, weakness, instability, danger, insecurity, untrustworthiness, and inefficiency in managing its political, cultural, economic, administrative, and societal activities. For example, a news story titled "A Look at the History of Militancy in Pakistan" (AP, June 9, 2014) was coded as negative. Positive news was operationally defined as stories in which the primary aspects of the host country indicate reliability,

progress, stability, prosperity, security, trustworthiness, and efficiency in managing its political, cultural, economic, administrative, and societal activities. For instance, a news story titled "Woman Heads Police Post in Largest Pakistan City" (AP, June 15, 2014) was coded as positive. Neutral news is operationally defined as news in which the primary aspects of the host country are poised between positive and negative sides. A story titled "Pakistan Refugee Crisis Creates Polio Challenge" (AP, June 28, 2014) was inscribed as neutral.

The items were coded by two research associates. The intercoder reliability was established by independent coding of 10% of the items by both research associates regarding the framing orientation and the tone of the news content. The results were tested by calculating Krippendorff's alpha (KALPHA). The KALPHA ranged from 0.66 to 0.92 and measured intercoder reliability by taking into consideration not only the observed disagreement between the coders but the expected disagreement—that is, $KALPHA = 1 - (\text{observed disagreement} / \text{expected disagreement})$ (Krippendorff, 2011). The KALPHA values for evaluative tone were 0.83 and for framing categories 0.80, indicating satisfactory reliability.

Principal component analysis with a Varimax-rotated solution was employed, explaining 61.20% of the variance of the framing items arranged into five distinguishable clusters, as shown in Table 1. Only those items with factor loadings above 0.40 were retained (Han, 2007); as a result, four items that either did not cluster appropriately or possessed lower factor loadings were omitted. The eliminated items were: "Does the story relate Pakistani citizens involved in violence or crimes/good works that affect other countries?" (*international relations*); "Does the story relate social inequalities and injustice as a root cause of terrorism in Pakistan?" (*social*); "Does the story involve Pakistan's trade and economic agreements with other countries now or in the future?" (*economic consequences*); "Does the story concern the counterterrorism policy of the Pakistani government?" (*domestic politics*). The intercorrelation among the five frames ranged from $r = -.38$ ($p < .001$) between *terrorism threat* and *domestic politics* to $r = .30$ ($p < .001$) between *international relations* and *domestic politics*, and the alpha reliability coefficient ranged from 0.63 for *international relations* to 0.84 for *terrorism threat*, with a satisfactory overall coefficient of 0.77. Multi-item scales were formed by averaging the unweighted scores on the individual items in each of the five frames (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). The scale values for each frame ranged from 0 (frame not present) to 1 (frame present).

Table 1. Principle Component Analysis (Varimax Rotation).

| Frames | Factor loadings | Eigen-values | Alpha reliability | Variance explained |
|---|-----------------|--------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Terrorism threat | | | | |
| Does the story suggest that urgent action is needed against terrorist elements? | .737 | | | |
| Does the story categorize Pakistan as a victim/accomplice of the terrorist elements in the society? | .732 | 4.04 | .840 | 22.441% |

| | | | | |
|---|------|------|------|---------|
| Does the story suggest Taliban/militants as enemies of the state and of the world as a whole? | .722 | | | |
| Does the story criticize/appreciate the lack/presence of sufficient measures taken by Pakistan against terrorism? | .716 | | | |
| Does the story categorize Pakistan as a country in crisis due to a terrorism threat? | .663 | | | |
| Social | | | | |
| Does the story reflect how the lives of common Pakistani citizens are affected by terrorism? | .674 | | | |
| Does the story portray Pakistani society as socially intolerant/tolerant toward fundamentalism? | .669 | 2.41 | .647 | 13.373% |
| Does the story refer to the treatment of socially vulnerable groups, such as minorities and women? | .583 | | | |
| Does the story refer to the meaningful contribution of Pakistan in international festivals, games, and cultural shows? | .476 | | | |
| Economic consequences* | | | | |
| Does the story refer to economic losses/gains now or in the future attributable to terrorism in Pakistan? | .825 | | | |
| Does the story mention the costs involved in Pakistan's indulgence in the war against terrorism? | .779 | 1.96 | .770 | 10.864% |
| Is there a reference to economic consequences of pursuing or not pursuing a course of action (military operation)? | .477 | | | |
| Domestic politics | | | | |
| Does the story relate the law and order situation of Pakistan with political instability? | .743 | | | |
| Does the story deal with people's growing satisfaction/dissatisfaction with government institutions? | .691 | 1.30 | .626 | 8.112% |
| Does the story involve administrative complacency/competency to address the issues of terrorism, extremism, and other issues faced by Pakistani society at large? | .684 | | | |
| International relations | | | | |
| Does the story involve strained/strong diplomatic ties of Pakistan with other countries? | .758 | 1.04 | .627 | 6.408% |
| Does the story involve Pakistan's role in world affairs in the form of agreements with foreign countries? | .626 | | | |

Does the story involve criticism/acknowledgment
of Pakistan fulfilling/not fulfilling its diplomatic
commitments? .575

* Items adapted from Semetko and Valkenburg, (2000).

Visibility of News Frames in Two News Agencies

A total of 277 news articles were analyzed: 165 (59.6%) were reported by Xinhua, and 112 (40.4%) were covered by the Associated Press. General linear model repeated measures provided evidence of the presence of five frames in both Xinhua ($F = 23.98$, $df = 4,161$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .37$) and AP ($F = 20.39$, $df = 4,103$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .44$) as depicted in Tables 2 and 3, respectively. Independent sample t tests confirmed that statistical significant differences existed in the mean visibility of the frames between the two news agencies. The results shown in Table 4 substantiate that the *terrorism threat* frame was more prominent in AP coverage than in Xinhua ($p < .001$). The *social* ($p < .001$), *domestic politics* ($p < .05$), and *international relations* frames ($p < .05$) were more noticeable in Xinhua than in AP.

**Table 2. General Linear Model (Repeated Measures)
for the Presence of Five Frames in Xinhua's News Coverage.**

| Frames | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>F</i> | <i>df</i> | Significance | Effect size |
|-------------------------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|--------------|-------------|
| Terrorism threat | 0.33 | 0.27 | | | | |
| Social | 0.14 | 0.25 | | | | |
| Domestic politics | 0.19 | 0.24 | 23.98 | 4,161 | $p < .001$ | 0.37 |
| International relations | 0.14 | 0.20 | | | | |
| Economic consequences | 0.10 | 0.26 | | | | |

**Table 3. General Linear Model (Repeated Measures) for the
Presence of Five Frames in the Associated Press's News Coverage.**

| Frames | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>F</i> | <i>df</i> | Significance | Effect size |
|-------------------------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|--------------|-------------|
| Terrorism threat | 0.46 | 0.28 | | | | 0.44 |
| Social | 0.05 | 0.09 | | | | |
| Domestic politics | 0.13 | 0.20 | 20.39 | 4,103 | $p < .001$ | |
| International relations | 0.07 | 0.13 | | | | |
| Economic consequences | 0.079 | 0.19 | | | | |

Table 4. Independent Sample T Test With Respect to Mean Visibility of the Frames.

| Frames | Xinhua | | AP | | t value | Significance |
|-------------------------|--------|------|------|------|---------|--------------|
| | M | SD | M | SD | | |
| Terrorism threat | 0.33 | 0.27 | 0.46 | 0.28 | -3.8 | $p < 0.001$ |
| Social | 0.14 | 0.25 | 0.05 | 0.09 | 3.68 | $p < 0.001$ |
| Domestic politics | 0.19 | 0.24 | 0.13 | 0.20 | 2.39 | $p < 0.05$ |
| International relations | 0.14 | 0.20 | 0.07 | 0.13 | 3.47 | $p < 0.05$ |

Evaluative Tones of News Frames in Two News Agencies

The independent sample t test presented in Table 5 revealed that the two news agencies statistically significantly differ from each other in their use of evaluative tones for the five frames under investigation ($t = 6.24$, $df = 275$, $p < .001$), with negative tones being more prominent in the AP than in Xinhua. Linear regression analysis was run for the two news agencies to learn which frames significantly differ from each other in use of evaluative tones. The results (shown in Table 6) indicate that, in case of the AP, only the *terrorism threat* frame was statistically significant in the use of evaluative tones; in Xinhua, the *terrorism threat*, *economic consequences*, and *international relations* frames were found to be statistically significant. Generally, the trend was that the more positive the tone of the news article, the less there is reference to *terrorism threat*. On the contrary, there are more references to the *economic consequences* and *international relations* frames when the articles have a positive tone.

Table 5. Independent Sample T Test With Respect to the Evaluative Tones of the Frames.

| | M | SD | t value | df | Significance |
|--------|-------|------|---------|-----|--------------|
| Xinhua | -0.01 | 0.96 | 6.24 | 275 | $p < 0.001$ |
| AP | -0.66 | 0.70 | | | |

Table 6. Regression Analysis With Respect to the Evaluative Tones of the Frames.

| | Unstandardized coefficients | | Standardized coefficients | t value | Significance |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------|---------------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| | B | SE | Beta | | |
| AP | | | | | |
| Terrorism threat | -.08 | .04 | -.187 | -2.001 | $p < 0.05$ |
| Xinhua | | | | | |
| Terrorism threat | -.09 | .02 | -.33 | -4.44 | $p < 0.001$ |
| Economic consequences | .04 | .02 | -.20 | 2.58 | $p < 0.05$ |
| International relations | .06 | .02 | -.30 | 3.94 | $p < 0.001$ |

Visibility and Evaluative Tones of News Frames in the Periods Before and After Operation Zarb-E-Azb

To evaluate how the Associated Press and Xinhua differ in their coverage of the five frames with respect to evaluative tones in the periods before and after Operation Zarb-e-Azb, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was employed, as exhibited in Table 7. In the case of Xinhua, the MANOVA revealed a significant main effect of tone on different frames ($F = 5.06$, $df = 10,310$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .05$), but no statistical significant differences were observed in the visibility of the five news frames in the pre- and post-Operation Zarb-e-Azb time periods. Univariate tests showed that this main effect holds only for the *terrorism threat* ($F = 9.05$, $df = 2,159$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .10$), *economic consequences* ($F = 3.87$, $df = 2,159$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .05$), and *international relations* frames ($F = 8.83$, $df = 2,159$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .10$). A negative tone was more prominent in the *terrorism threat* frame, and a positive tone was more evident in the *economic consequences* and *international relations* frames (see Table 8). The MANOVA revealed a significant three-way interaction among the frame types: evaluative tone and before and after Operation Zarb-e-Azb ($F = 2.57$, $df = 10,310$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .08$). A univariate test showed that this interaction effect holds only for the *terrorism threat* ($F = 8.07$, $df = 2,159$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .09$) and *economic consequences* frames ($F = 3.28$, $df = 2,159$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .04$). After the initiation of Operation Zarb-e-Azb, there was a remarkable shift in the coverage of Pakistan in the *terrorism threat* frame as the negative tone descended and the positive tone ascended. The *economic consequences* frame manifested a significant shift toward neutral and positive tones in the period after Operation Zarb-e-Azb.

Table 7. Multivariate Analysis of Variance for Xinhua and AP on Visibility and Evaluative Tones of News Frames in the Periods Before and After Operation Zarb-e-Azb.

| | <i>F</i> | <i>df</i> | Significance | Effect size |
|--|----------|-----------|--------------|-------------|
| Xinhua | | | | |
| Main effect of evaluative tones and visibility of frames | 5.06 | 10,310 | $p < .001$ | .05 |
| Main effect of visibility of frames and time period | | | | |
| Interaction effect of evaluative tones, frames and time period | 2.57 | 10,310 | $p < .01$ | .08 |
| Associated Press | | | | |
| Main effect of evaluative tone and visibility of frames | 1.90 | 10,204 | $p < .05$ | .08 |
| Main effect of visibility of frames and time period | 1.65 | 10,204 | $p < .05$ | .06 |
| Interaction effect of evaluative tones, frames and time period | 1.95 | 10,204 | $p < .05$ | .08 |

In the case of the Associated Press, the MANOVA yielded a significant main effect of tone ($F = 1.90$, $df = 10,204$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .08$) and time ($F = 1.65$, $df = 10,204$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .06$) on different frames. Univariate tests revealed that the main effect of tone holds only for the *economic consequences* ($F = 2.44$, $df = 2,106$, $p < .10$, $\eta^2 = .04$), *domestic politics* ($F = 2.48$, $df = 2,106$, $p < .10$, $\eta^2 = .05$), and *international relations* frames ($F = 3.62$, $df = 2,106$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .06$). Univariate tests also revealed that only the *terrorism threat* frame was statistically significantly different with respect to visibility in the periods before and after Operation Zarb-e-Azb ($F = 7.57$, $df = 1,110$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .06$), with visibility being remarkably higher in the pre-Operation Zarb-e-Azb time period. The MANOVA furnished a significant interaction effect between tone, news frames, and the pre-/post-Operation Zarb-e-Azb time periods ($F = 1.95$, $df = 10,204$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .08$). Univariate tests revealed that this interaction effect was present only in the *economic consequences* frame ($F = 7.62$, $df = 2,106$, $p < .005$, $\eta^2 = .13$), and its coverage became increasingly positive in the post-Operation Zarb-e-Azb time period.

Table 8.Descriptive Statistics on the Evaluative Tones and Time Periods.

| Frames | Tone | Time | Associated Press | | Xinhua | |
|------------------------------|----------|--------|------------------|----------|---------------|----------|
| | | | <i>M (SD)</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>M (SD)</i> | <i>N</i> |
| Terrorism threat | Negative | Before | .55 (.23) | 52 | .48 (.26) | 51 |
| | | After | .39 (.30) | 35 | .32 (.26) | 25 |
| | | Total | .48 (.27) | 87 | .43 (.26) | 76 |
| | Neutral | Before | .47 (.34) | 4 | .18 (.18) | 8 |
| | | After | .39 (.28) | 8 | .38 (.22) | 6 |
| | | Total | .38 (.30) | 12 | .26 (.22) | 14 |
| | Positive | Before | .25 (.32) | 4 | .15 (.18) | 29 |
| | | After | .38 (.31) | 9 | .31 (.26) | 46 |
| | | Total | .34 (.30) | 13 | .24 (.24) | 75 |
| | Total | Before | .52 (.25) | 60 | .34 (.28) | 88 |
| | | After | .38 (.30) | 52 | .32 (.25) | 77 |
| | | Total | .46 (.28) | 112 | .33 (.27) | 165 |
| Social | Negative | Before | .04 (.07) | 52 | .16 (.34) | 51 |
| | | After | .08 (.13) | 35 | .16 (.19) | 25 |
| | | Total | .05 (.10) | 87 | .16 (.30) | 76 |
| | Neutral | Before | .04 (.08) | 4 | .15 (.20) | 8 |
| | | After | .02 (.06) | 8 | .08 (.06) | 6 |
| | | Total | .03 (.06) | 12 | .12 (.15) | 14 |
| | Positive | Before | .06 (.07) | 4 | .14 (.19) | 29 |
| | | After | .04 (.07) | 9 | .12 (.21) | 46 |
| | | Total | .05 (.07) | 13 | .13 (.20) | 75 |
| | Total | Before | .04 (.07) | 60 | .15 (.28) | 88 |
| | | After | .06 (.11) | 52 | .13 (.20) | 77 |
| | | Total | .05 (.10) | 112 | .14 (.25) | 165 |
| Economic consequences | Negative | Before | .06 (.16) | 52 | .05 (.11) | 51 |
| | | After | .03 (.08) | 35 | .06 (.12) | 25 |
| | | Total | .05 (.12) | 87 | .05 (.11) | 76 |
| | Neutral | Before | .00 (.00) | 4 | .03 (.09) | 8 |
| | | After | .15 (.24) | 8 | .20 (.24) | 6 |
| | | Total | .10 (.21) | 12 | .11 (.18) | 14 |
| | Positive | Before | .00 (.00) | 4 | .09 (.27) | 29 |
| | | After | .28 (.34) | 9 | .17 (.20) | 46 |
| | | Total | .19 (.22) | 13 | .12 (.23) | 75 |
| | Total | Before | .05 (.13) | 60 | .06 (.18) | 88 |
| | | After | .09 (.17) | 52 | .14 (.18) | 77 |
| | | Total | .07 (.15) | 112 | .09 (.18) | 165 |
| Domestic politics | Negative | Before | .10 (.18) | 52 | .15 (.21) | 51 |
| | | After | .14 (.22) | 35 | .22 (.28) | 25 |
| | | Total | .12 (.20) | 87 | .18 (.24) | 76 |

| | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----|
| International relations | Neutral | Before | .18 (.23) | 4 | .35 (.31) | 8 |
| | | After | .30 (.24) | 8 | .32 (.29) | 6 |
| | | Total | .25 (.23) | 12 | .34 (.29) | 14 |
| | Positive | Before | .00 (.00) | 4 | .24 (.27) | 29 |
| | | After | .10 (.17) | 9 | .15 (.19) | 46 |
| | | Total | .07 (.15) | 13 | .18 (.23) | 75 |
| | Total | Before | .10 (.18) | 60 | .20 (.25) | 88 |
| | | After | .15 (.22) | 52 | .19 (.23) | 77 |
| | | Total | .13 (.20) | 112 | .19 (.24) | 165 |
| | Negative | Before | .06 (.10) | 52 | .09 (.11) | 51 |
| | | After | .06 (.10) | 35 | .07 (.10) | 25 |
| | | Total | .06 (.10) | 87 | .08 (.11) | 76 |
| | Neutral | Before | .16 (.33) | 4 | .09 (.12) | 8 |
| | | After | .16 (.22) | 8 | .08 (.12) | 6 |
| | | Total | .16 (.25) | 12 | .08 (.12) | 14 |
| | Positive | Before | .05 (.10) | 4 | .23 (.28) | 29 |
| | | After | .02 (.07) | 9 | .19 (.25) | 46 |
| | | Total | .03 (.08) | 13 | .21 (.26) | 75 |
| Total | Before | .07 (.13) | 60 | .14 (.19) | 88 | |
| | After | .07 (.13) | 52 | .14 (.21) | 77 | |
| | Total | .07 (.13) | 112 | .14 (.20) | 165 | |

Interpretive Analysis

The news coverage of Pakistan by the AP was decidedly negative. News related to terrorism was often framed in a way that presented Pakistan as responsible for the widespread terrorism in the region. The United States was often presented as very "concerned" about Pakistan's situation, but serious doubts were raised about Pakistan military's "commitment" strategy and the "capability" of the state to overcome terrorism. The AP framed Pakistan as an "accomplice" to the terrorist elements in the region. The policy adopted by the United States regarding the war against terrorism in the Pakistan-Afghanistan region was fully endorsed, and any failure that the United States experienced was attributed to a lack of cooperation of Pakistan. An excerpt from the AP exemplifies this coverage: "The United States has for years complained to Pakistan about its failure to impose order in a region harboring what Washington considers the country's most dangerous militants, and has carried out hundreds of drone strikes in the area" (June 16, 2014).

This tendency was noticed by Ali, Jan, and Saleem (2013), who observed that when NATO and U.S. forces failed to achieve their intended purpose in Afghanistan, they were confounded by a challenging situation and blame was shifted to Pakistan. After Operation Zarb-e-Azb, the integrity of Pakistan's claim of achieving success against the militants was questioned by continuously casting doubt over the veracity of the news because of the unavailability of independent sources to substantiate them. The fundamental

thesis was an expression of distrust of and suspicion about Pakistan's engagement in tackling the terrorist elements. This trend was noted in post-9/11 events in 2001–2002 by Siraj (2006), when Pakistan was framed by the U.S. news media as a "theocratic state" involved in "harboring terrorism" and "Islamic militancy." One plausible explanation for this is that the September 11 attacks has made the U.S. media extremely watchful and highly cognizant of the terrorist threat from "outside," particularly in the region of Afghanistan-Pakistan, which sometimes has led to a perception of hostility toward the news coming from this region (Zhang, Shoemaker, & Wang, 2013).

Pakistan was also portrayed by the AP as a socially intolerant society, persecuting vulnerable social factions such as women, children, and minorities. Pakistan was framed as a society rigidly adhering to its doctrines that promote extremism, where women are devoid of their fundamental rights, minorities are oppressed, and journalists are subjugated if they desire freedom of expression. And these events were reported in the context of Islam, casting doubt on the integrity of the socioeconomic fiber of Pakistan. Frequent use of demonizing words for Muslims and Islam appeared to be a common discourse. For instance, the use of polarizing terms such as *Islamic fundamentalism*, *Islamic extremism*, *Islamic militants*, and *radical Islamic groups* is indicative of the prevalence in the U.S. media of an "outside threat."

The fatal stoning last month cast a harsh light on violence against women in Pakistan, where human rights activists say perpetrators are often acquitted or given light sentences. . . . Under Pakistani law, those charged with killing women can see their criminal case dropped if family members of the deceased forgive them or accept so-called "blood money." (June 7, 2014)

The "killing women" phrase is misleading, because the same law is equally applicable for both men and women. But the news was framed in a way that highlighted the oppression of women in a "Muslim-majority" country. Such news reporting could be attributed to the overall frame of West versus Islam conjectured on the cultural biases held against a prosaically conventional form of Islam against modern civilization (Said, 1997). The AP news coverage in particular seldom refers to the continuous spillover effects of the war against terrorism in providing a narrative to the extremist forces who align Pakistan with the United States and the Western world and employ their interpretation of the term *jihad* as martyrdom that justifies terrorist attacks in Pakistan (Yousaf & Huaibin, 2014). Pakistan's internal political situation was unfavorably received by both Xinhua and the AP due to instability and uncertainty surrounding the country's political institutions. The economic consequences and the international relations frames received minimal coverage in the AP as compared to Xinhua. The reason for this is that Pakistan shares a broad partnership with China incorporating culture, economy, trade, investment, and public diplomacy. However, Pakistan's relationship with the United States is limited to cooperation and collaboration in the war against terrorism. It often appeared that the AP framed the Pakistani army differently from the Pakistani government by repeatedly referring to the former as possessing its own foreign policy, which it aims to further with the association of militant groups such as the Haqqani network and Lashkar-e-Taiba.

Xinhua's news coverage regarding terrorism in Pakistan shifted significantly after the initiation of Operation Zarb-e-Azb. After Zarb-e-Azb, Xinhua framed Pakistan as a "victim" and a "sufferer" of terrorism, and Pakistan's counterterrorism and security strategies were unequivocally endorsed. One plausible explanation for this shift can be attributed to the alleged presence of certain elements of the East Turkistan Islamic Movement in North Waziristan—a separatist group founded by Uyghur militants, designated as an international terrorist organization by the United Nations Security Council and believed to be involved in acts of violence and terrorism in Xinjiang Province. Therefore, furnishing support and encouragement to the Pakistani government in its endeavors to combat terrorism was considered vital to safeguard the security of the whole region. A slight tilt toward Pakistan was clearly observable whenever a news story related to India and Pakistan was reported, indicative of the favorable diplomatic terms shared by Pakistan and China. For instance, covering Kashmir, Xinhua coverage stated, "Anti-India sentiment runs deep for majority of Kashmiris." Thus, Pakistan's stance on Kashmir being a disputed territory and India's human rights violations in the region were endorsed by Xinhua.

Most economic news was covered positively by Xinhua. China is set to become the largest foreign direct investor in energy, transport, and infrastructure projects in Pakistan in the next five to seven years ("China Agrees," 2014). Moreover, with free trade agreements and ascending bilateral trade, Pakistan was more often positioned as a desirable investment destination for the extensions of strategic business plans of Chinese corporations. All the news stories associated with Pakistan under the international relations frame were positively reported. Pakistan and China share a close identity of views and mutual interests in their long history of bilateral ties. Pakistan was hailed as an "all-weather strategic cooperative partner" of China. Pakistan's contributions to the international campaign against terrorism, regional security, and stability, attending more than 6 million refugees of neighboring Afghanistan, and pursuing efforts in constituting peace with neighboring India were all adequately acknowledged by Xinhua. For the most part, Pakistani people, culture, art, and society were favorably framed by Xinhua. Though incidents of social violence and crimes were reported, they were attributed to poverty, unequal distribution of wealth, and misgovernance rather than religious intolerance and unlike their portrayal in the context of the overall frame of the West against Islam. Pakistani and Chinese companies competed with one another in acquiring the football manufacturing bids for the 2014 FIFA World Cup, which were eventually attained by a Pakistani company. The news was candidly acknowledged by Xinhua as a success story of the Pakistani sports industry.

Even though Pakistan has never played in a football world cup, no other team would have had the chance to play it, if Pakistan did not produce the ball! Today Sialkot's hand-stitched balls face competition from the machine-made balls produced in China. But despite tough competition, the manufacturers have managed to bring back the world cup football production to Pakistan. (June 8, 2014)

Conclusion

This study explores the representation of Pakistan in Chinese and U.S. news media in the wake of Pakistan's latest military offensive, Operation Zarb-e-Azb. The present study informs framing theory by providing evidence of the role of foreign policy and the United States' and China's mutual relations with

Pakistan and the vested interests of international politics in influencing the media frames of countries. The terrorism frame as a communication frame of a country is so disturbingly provocative in the U.S. media that once a country like Pakistan is framed within it, its spillover effects can be observed in the overall news framing of Pakistan. The frame building in the United States is inspired by the overall frame of the West versus Islam, which exacerbates the news coverage of Pakistan compared to China's coverage.

This study offers practical implications for the state and the publicity machineries of Pakistan. The news media serves as an influential regulator in the formation of public opinion, particularly in cases that are distant from audiences' personal experiences—for example, events happening in other countries—and with issues for which most people have no prior knowledge—for example, foreign affairs (McCombs & Gilbert, 1986). There is little doubt that a certain degree of controllability exists in the news networks by governments and lobbyists to propagate the interests of the communities the media assumes to represent. For example, Israel, a country usually in the news due to violence and unrest in the Middle East, is portrayed more positively and sympathetically in the United States due to a favorable perception built by the U.S. media. However, in Europe, more sympathies are attached with the other side of the conflict—that is, Palestine (Galloway, 2005).

If Pakistan is to gain the reputation of a country that is fighting for world peace, then it must ensure that its efforts are acknowledged on the world stage. Moreover, the extent to which the internal political situation in Pakistan is negatively framed in the AP's and Xinhua's news coverage is appalling and calls for immediate attention. The presence of fair democratic procedures and rule of law to overcome the misgovernance, manipulation, exploitation, and corruption of elected aristocrats would reduce the political instability. Depoliticization of institutions, including the judiciary and police, would restore people's trust, and there would be less interference in the government's operations through demonstrations, strikes, and civil unrest.

The contribution of this study is qualified by certain limitations. First, the identified time period of one month before and after Operation Zarb-e-Azb might limit the variations of the media frames, and, hence, a comprehensive picture regarding the framing of Pakistan in the U.S. and Chinese media might not have been presented. Second, in conducting the framing analysis, the identification of frames and favorability ratings is contingent on the subjective interpretation of the researcher, which is susceptible to personal and cultural biases. Future research should investigate the representation of Pakistan in other U.S. and Chinese media outlets, including daily newspapers, television news, Internet news, and alternative media avenues such as social media, to understand the generalizability of this study's findings. Third, Pakistan has periodically carried out various military offensives in the past. A comparison of the reception of the news coverage of all such operations would render a reasonable understanding of the extrapolation of the research findings. Fourth, this research could be extended to other countries that share a unique relationship with Pakistan—such as India, Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Turkey—to examine the compatibility of observations with the sorts of coverage identified in the present study.

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