



FRAMING THE KILLING OF BIN LADEN IN NATIONAL PRESS: IMPLICATIONS FOR US PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

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The killing of Bin Laden was arguably a watershed moment in the US led global war on terror. A considerable scholarship has been conferred about the media framing and US counterterrorism, intriguingly hitherto no academic study is available how the incident was framed in the national media milieu. This study makes a modest attempt to fill this academic lacuna by exploring how the national press of Pakistan framed the killing of Bin Laden in their editorial discourses and what could be its possible implications for the US public diplomacy. Drawing on the framing tradition as framework and qualitative analysis as methodology, the study findings reveal three dominant discursive frames the press employed to construct the narratives about the killing of Osama Bin Laden and the events ensued namely: Ambivalence/ US-staged drama, Sovereignty violation, and Pakistan under US threat to overarching anti-American frame. The discussions elaborate the contribution of the study and the implications for the US public diplomacy toward Pakistan.

Key word: Bin Laden/US counterterrorism, media framing, Pakistani press, war on terror, US, Pakistan, qualitative analysis, public diplomacy.

INTRODUCTION

The Killing of Bin Laden in a US Navy SEALs operation was a major breakthrough in the US led global war on terror that drew unprecedented media coverage both domestically and globally. The US was celebrating it as a major victory on the global war on terror and soothe for those who lost their dear ones in the 9/11 terrorists attacks; much ambivalence and antipathy prevailed toward the US counterterrorism both in the media and public discourse in other parts of the globe, particularly in Pakistan where Osama was killed. In the aftermath of the killing, two competing narratives dominated the public sphere in Pakistan. First, how were the US Navy Seals able to intrude the Pakistani airspace without being detected by the Pakistani security forces and what was the role of Pakistan in the whole episode? A second narrative that prevailed in the conservative circles was the conspiracy theory that the operation was a US-staged drama to malign Pakistan and its security institutions. A major conservative daily termed the killing a drama in one of its editorials bearing the headline, "Bin Laden dies again" (The Nation, May 3, 2011). As major purveyors of information, the news media play significant role in constructing the discourse on both domestic and international terrorism. In the extant scholarship, scant scholarly attention has been given to examine the media discourses on US counterterrorism and narratives associated with it from the national media perspectives of Pakistan. Thus the killing of Bin Laden as a major US counterterrorism move offers a suitable case point to examine the national media framing of US counterterrorism as the media construction of terrorism/counterterrorism could influence shaping public opinion and perceptions about the causes and responsibility of issues of public concerns (Lyengar, 1990; Lyengar, 1994; Price *et al.*, 1997; Scheufele,

1999) and may have implications for the US led global war on terror. The current study thus attempts to build on the existing scholarship on media and counterterrorism (Storie *et al.*, 2014) by examining the news media framing of killing of Bin Laden in the national press of Pakistan. Previous studies on western media framing of killing of Bin Laden have noted the differential news framing between the US and Russian wherein the US media predominately used the victory and catharsis frames in contrast to Russian media, which expressed much ambivalence and framed it as a tool in advancing the US foreign policy goals (Storie *et al.*, 2014). How the news media in the national settings have framed the US counterterrorism remains yet to be explored. Pakistan offers the most suitable case it has remained affected most by the US counterterrorism and wherein Bin Laden was killed.

This study thus aims to advance the current scholarship on media and counterterrorism by examining how the powerful news media of Pakistan (Nadadur, 2007) constructed the narratives about the killing of Bin Laden and the reverberations that followed. Specifically, we were interested how the news media strike the balance between the global war on terror and the national sovereignty and whether or not the killing was framed as a major breakthrough in the US led war on terror of which Pakistan is an important ally. Further, what could be the possible repercussions news framing of the US counterterrorism for the US public diplomacy toward Pakistan. Two theoretical lenses, namely the framing theory and media and public diplomacy are used as guiding frameworks to address the question of news framing and counter terrorism and its implications for the US public diplomacy.

THEORETICAL LITERATURE

News framing theory: Having its roots both in the

sociological and psychological traditions (Feng *et al.*, 2012), framing theory is widely employed in a number of fields of social, political and media studies (Goffman, 1974; Tuchman, 1978; Gamson, 1988; Entman, 1993; Pan and Kosicki, 1993; Scheufele, 1999; Norris *et al.*, 2003) in order to understand how the news media construct reality about complex issues and events through what Van Gyneken (1998) calls “selective articulation” by promoting one particular understanding or perspective of events or issues while excluding others intentionally or unintentionally that help the public in understanding issues including terrorism (Zeng and Tahat, 2012). As “central organizing ideas or storyline” (Gamson, 1988) frames provide meaning to an unfolding strip of events about the social world. Gitlin (2003) writes, “media frames largely unspoken and unacknowledged, organize the world, both for the journalist who report it and, in some important degree, for us who rely on their reports”. Journalists use frames to construct the news, as social reality (Tuchman, 1978) by simplifying, prioritizing some facts, images, narratives or developments over others (Norris *et al.*, 2003). Thus news is not a factual account as claimed by journalists, rather a discursive construction of social reality through the process of inclusion and exclusion. In a widely cited conceptualization, news framing is defined as “selecting some aspects of a perceived reality” to enhance their salience “in such a way as to promote a particular definition, casual interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation” thus limiting or constraining alternative audience interpretations of issues and events (Entman, 2008) by framing issues using either thematic or episodic frames (Lyengar, 1994). Thus the US counterterrorism efforts could be episodically framed as an isolated event to target a particular nation or thematically using the global war on terror frame. Finally, given the conceptual inconsistencies in framing tradition to identify the news frames (Entman, 1993; Scheufele, 1999; Van Gorp, 2005; Van Gorp, 2006). This study employs the approach propounded by Cappella and Jamieson (1997) for recognizing and classifying frames that should have (a) identifiable conceptual and linguistic characteristics b) commonly observed in journalistic characteristics and c) should be reliably distinguishable from other frames.

Mass media and public diplomacy: How the news media frame issues of terrorism/counterterrorism are likely to have implications for the public diplomacy, which is considered an important tool of ‘soft power’ (Nye and Joseph, 2004). Broadly, speaking public diplomacy refers to “a government’s process of communicating with foreign publics in an attempt to bring about understanding of its nation’s ideas and ideals, its institutions and culture, as well as its national goals and policies” (Wang, 2007). At the heart of public diplomacy is to cultivate and retain a favorable image of states and non-state actors abroad by employing communication and cultural resources to achieve the desired targets in the realms of foreign policy. As Manheim (1994) notes that public diplomacy means “efforts by the government of one nation to

influence public or elite opinion in a second nation for the purposes of turning the foreign policy of the target nation to advantage”. With the rapid explosion of moderns means of communication and information, the mediated public diplomacy has become an inevitable reality wherein alongside the military/ physical conflict an ideological wars is also being played by various actors in the information and communication realm through dissemination of ideas, values and perceptions (Archetti, 2010) with the sole aim to influence public opinion in foreign societies (Gilboa, 2001) and to shape the foreign countries’ policies toward them in favorable terms (Yarchi *et al.*, 2013). Both state and non-state actors are concerned over their actions and news framing in foreign media as such news framing could shape the public and elite opinions abroad and could have implications for the public diplomacy of states and other actors. In that sense public diplomacy could be conceived as the efforts designed ultimately to shape the elite opinions and actions by political elites and foreign policy makers in order to control the news media framing over the state policy in foreign media (Entman, 2008). Thus states and non-states actors are noted to be engaged in a discursive struggle to influence the news agenda and framing building favorably in foreign media especially during terrorism and conflict (Sheafer and Shenhav, 2009). With the surge of terrorism globally, public diplomacy has become inevitable to shape the media agenda and public attitudes toward terrorism and counterterrorism strategies as the winning of the battle/conflict is less dependent on the tactical outcomes than how the strategic narrative about the war/conflict is told to the local populous for the public legitimacy, will and support (Dimitriu, 2012).

Notwithstanding, the success of public diplomacy efforts by the states in order to influence the public opinion and media frames in the targeted countries are depended on a range of factors including political proximity between the country that purveys the frames and the targeted nations that receives those frames (Entman, 2008) and the cultural, linguistic, policy proximity and social resonance between the countries (Sheafer and Shenhav, 2009; Yarchi *et al.*, 2013). Thus the more political and cultural proximity between the countries, the greater chances of success of public diplomacy efforts of promoting a country’s messages abroad (Yarchi *et al.*, 2013). In addition to these factors, the public diplomacy campaigns could be misconceived or misinterpreted in countries with various cultural and beliefs systems. For instance, despite numerous diplomacy campaigns, the US in the post 9/11 failed to produce a favorable image in the Arab world owing to the lack of the cultural understanding and propagandist nature of the information while hiding the controversial US policies in the region (Dutta-Bergman, 2006; Storie *et al.*, 2014). Similar notes have been made elsewhere that historically the US public diplomacy efforts have remained monologist and ad hoc focusing on war-driven objectives rather than dialogical with long policy objectives (Wang, 2007; Paul, 2012) and lacking ethical legitimacy (Lzadi, 2016).

Keeping in view the aforementioned scholarship on media framing and its implications for public diplomacy in the realm of terrorism/ counterterrorism, the current study aims to examine how the news media in Pakistan frame the US counterterrorism move in which Bin Laden was killed and what implications could be there vis-à-vis news framing and counterterrorism and US public diplomacy toward Pakistan. Pakistan is a pertinent case point for examining the media discourse on counterterrorism for a couple of reasons. First, it is an important US ally against the US led war on terror. Secondly, the news media framing of terrorism/ counterterrorism has serious implications for the public legitimacy of US counterterrorism efforts and US public diplomacy in Pakistan as 'winning the hearts and minds of the public' is inevitable for the successes of the global war on terror. The study thus by providing a national media perspective on counterterrorism from a targeted country (Pakistan) aims to build on the existing scholarship on terrorism/counterterrorism and implications for the US public diplomacy in the light of the media narratives surround the US counterterrorism.

METHODOLOGICAL AND ANALYTICAL APPROACHES

Qualitative content analysis: The study employs qualitative content analysis in an inductive way to framing analysis to distill the predominant frames that appeared in the editorial discourse on the killing of Bin Laden from May, 3, 2011 to June, 3, 2011. This time period was critical during which the press in Pakistan widely covered the Osama killing episode and the subsequent debates surround it. Employing the qualitative content analysis is pertinent to analyze written, verbal and visual images (Cole, 1988) and is noted to be suitable to study and analyze small sample sizes about a phenomenon on which little previous research has been conducted (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008) allowing to discern both implicit and explicit themes from the data (Fürsich, 2009) in addition to be suitable in reporting and interpreting the data in rich details contrary to the quantitative analysis approach (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun and Clarke, 2006). Keeping in mind the techniques of qualitative content analysis for the immersion with data, each editorial was read multiple times to elicit the overall concept of the mediated text (Cavanagh, 1997) while taking notes and linking the concepts and patterns of the data. Studies have noted the suitability of qualitative textual analysis to study issues of global significance (Arif et al., 2014).

Inductive frame analysis: Finally, we employed the inductive framing approach to framing analysis which is used in cases when there are no enough previous concepts/categories or ideas available making it difficult to generate a comprehensive coding sheet in advance (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008; Storie et al., 2014). Inductive framing approach allows the researcher to draw the concepts and themes from the data (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008) and putting them into categories or themes that capture the meanings and intention of the analytic data (Cavanagh, 1997). We analyzed the

editorial news discourse on the killing of Osama Bin Laden in the two selected national dailies with an open coding to attempt to reveal the array of possible frames, beginning with loosely defined prior notions of frames (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000) linking the identified frames strongly to the data from which they were drawn (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Each frame was named using the content-characteristics/ insights and patterns with an overall organizing concept. Sub-frames echoing the similar concepts and narratives were conflated into the major frames using the constant comparison method (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

Newspapers and data sample: Two major national English dailies belonging to the largest media organizations in Pakistan were selected namely *The News* and *The Nation*. The unit of analysis was the individual editorial appeared in the two national dailies from May 3 to June 3, 2011. Both the selected newspapers are major English national dailies of Pakistan with highest circulation and readership (Archetti, 2010; Romero-Trillo, 2011; Onyebadi, 2016; Riaz, 2017) belonging to the first and second major media groups in the Pakistani media landscape. Finally, the rationale for studying editorial lies in the fact that they are important news genres of newspapers, construct realities about the social and political affairs of the world and act as political actors in constructing socio-political identities of various groups both at local, national and international arenas (Le, 2010). Editorial are also argued to be reflecting the ideological positions of news organizations on important sensitive national and international affairs (Lee et al., 2011) and are noted to be less constrained by the professional conventions of objectivity (Le, 2002; Lee and Lin, 2006).

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The analysis of the editorial discourses revealed four dominant frames the press used to construct the narratives about the killing of Bin Laden and the events followed with an overarching *anti-American* frame that thread across the editorial discourse namely; Ambivalence / US-staged drama, Sovereignty violation, and Pakistan under amid US threat. The occurrence of these frames in the editorial discourse was not mutually exclusive, rather they recurred simultaneously. However, the severity of tone and the lexical choices varied in the selected dailies, wherein *The Nation* used highly polemical language and ideologically driven-lexical choices toward the US and its actions in Pakistan. In contrast, *The News* though less polemical yet equally negatively depicted the US and its killing of Bin Laden. Below these frames are discussed with illuminating illustrations.

Ambivalence/ US-staged drama: The news about the killing of Bin Laden was broken by the Western media when President Obama announced it in a televised address to the American nation creating a sense of awkwardness in the Pakistani media. As the news about the killing unfolded an element of doubt and uncertainty prevailed vis-à-vis the killing of the most wanted man in a garrison city in the close proximity of Pakistan's capital. The most prominent frame

that frequently appeared in the editorials in the initial weeks was what was the hidden role of Pakistan in the US operation that killed Bin Laden? was Bin Laden really killed by the US in Pakistan? The Nation in its first editorial appeared after the killing of Bin Laden called it a 'drama "that has been 'staged to put the blame of hiding him on Pakistan" (May 3, 2011). Expressing an element of doubt, The Nation headlined its editorial as, "Bin Laden dies again" (May 3, 2011) thus implicating that the operation was a US-staged drama to malign Pakistan and its military and to push Pakistan for more military operations against the militants. The Nation frequently questioned how the Americans knew the identity of Bin Laden and that the city where Bin Laden was killed cannot be an option 'the most wanted man could have chosen to hide" (The Nation, May 4, 2011). As the following editorial excerpt explicates: The drama, it seems has been staged to put the blame of hiding him on Pakistan. That would give the credibility to the accusation that it [Pakistan] provides sanctuaries to other Al-Qaeda operatives it was housing, so the US story goes (The Nation, May 3, 2011).

The element of doubt pertinent to the killing of Bin Laden was further strengthened when his body was thrown into the sea as no country acceded to receive it. Thus the news media questioned the American claims of the true identity of Bin Laden. As one such editorial excerpts echoes: doubts have continued to persist about the man whom they [Americans] had identified as Al-Qaeda chief before taking his life the burial of the body at sea tends to reinforce the suspicion of a questionable identity of the murdered person. If proper Islamic rites were performed as the US claims, there was no question of a sea burial (The Nation, May 4, 2011).

The reason for staging the drama in addition to malign Pakistan was as the excerpts shows to hide the US failure in Afghanistan and to create a favorable US public opinion for Obama to win the US elections. This reason for the 'staged drama' was often narrated in the initial editorial discourse on the Bin Laden killing. As can be seen: was the whole drama an attempt at hoodwinking the world to lift the sinking morale of the US and NATO troops in Afghanistan letting them to have an air of victory before their withdrawal and boost the popular rating of President Obama polls next year (The Nation, May 4, 2011).

The US has found an ideal scapegoat in Pakistan for its failure in Afghanistan (The Nation, May 10, 2011). Interestingly, contrary to the headlines which dominantly expressed an element of doubt about the killing of Bin Laden, the news media in the main body of the news discourse accepted the killing of Bin Laden but qualified that it would not make the world safer and Al-Qaeda weaker. In a long written editorial, The Nation questioned the Americans, "Is the world safer now" (The Nation, May 4, 2011). The News, in contrast repeatedly questioned what was the role of Pakistan and how the US Navy SEALs intruded deep into the Pakistani territory. An element of suspicion dominated in the initial framing of the Osama episode that what was the role of the

Pakistani security institution in the US operation implicating that certain institution of Pakistan must have had cooperated with the Americans. The News remained critical both toward the Pakistani political and military leaders for their incoherent policy statements and silence over the grave intelligence failure to stop the Americans in 'invading' Pakistan.

Osama Bin Laden is dead but all kinds of uncertainties remain, especially those pertaining to the nature of Pakistan's role in the affair. It is true that the death of Osama may be good news- but the issue of how Pakistan has played its cards in the matter leaves us staring into a huge hole, down which we could possibly tumble....we need to come up with a common stance the matter how we deal with the militants must be tackled and the intelligence failure of that seems to have occurred must be discussed (The News, May 4, 2011)

The News repeatedly echoed the failure of Pakistani security apparatuses for failing to prevent the American Navy SEAL's unilateral operation and failing to detect Bin Laden thus becoming a "laughing stock" in the international media. As the news about the killing confirmed both nationally and internationally, The Nation could not afford to term it a US drama rather, it turned toward the intelligence failure of the concerned institutions and termed their failure to detect the US forces as a "national shame" (The Nation, May 9, 2011). However both the dailies highlighted the failure of Pakistani security institutions more to detect the US Navy SEALs intrusion in Pakistan rather than their failure to detect the presence of Bin Laden. As the editorial excerpt narrate: Pakistan and its security apparatus have become something of a laughing stock with the media around the world highlighting the discovery of the world's most wanted man how secure Pakistan and its nuclear weapons-really are, given that the helicopters were able to fly undetected deep into our territory (The News, May 5, 2011).

The entire nation is still in a state of shock at how the American Navy SEALs penetrated as deep as in Abbottabad got with the highest valued target Osama Bin Laden whether it was an intelligence failure or an act of comprehensive incompetence that has caused nation shame (The Nation, May, 9, 2011).

The News frequently echoed the secrecy and the suspicion about the tacit role of Pakistan in the US operation and contrary to The Nation; it accepted that the real Bin Laden was killed. The Nation initially framed the killing as an American- staged drama; however, as the Pakistani state and the world substantiated the killing, it came with the narrative that the killing of Bin Laden will not make the world safer any more as the 'old' man was nothing more than a symbolic figure of Al-Qaeda. In one such editorials, The News posited that the "the death of Osama Bin Laden will be even iconic than he was in life and that what the Americans have done will guarantee the longevity of his legacy" (The New, May 8, 2011).

Sovereignty violation: Once the killing of Bin Laden was

confirmed, the discourse that followed was constructed on the sovereignty violation of Pakistan by the US Navy Seals. Both the dailies framed the US operation as 'raid', 'invasion' and 'sovereignty violation' of 'our' country. The News echoed the sovereignty violation issues in several editorials and warned that further "American action would tear the notion of our sovereignty into even small pieces" (The News, May 6, 2011) suggesting that the US action had already made 'pieces of our sovereignty'. The frame of sovereignty violation by the US forces appeared as a major recurring frame in The Nation. Both the dailies consistently used the collective nouns of 'us', 'ours' and 'we'. The dailies in their editorials often narrated that the 'whole nation is in shock' for the bridge of its territorial borders at the hands of the US forces. As the excerpts explicate: The US action on our soil has had an impact on all of us...we must do all that we can to ensure that we are in a position to defend our territory and sovereignty. (The News, May 13, 2011).

It is quite evident that most citizens believe Islamabad must not ignore what has happened [in Abbottabad] and must take action to assert Pakistan's sovereignty and dignity (The News, May 15, 2011).

A telling humiliating experience, like kill Osama Operation that violated Pakistan's sovereignty in the a most blatant manner (The Nation, May 23, 2011).

As the editorial discourse narrates, the press instead of framing the killing of Bin Laden as a breakthrough on the global war on terror of which Pakistan is a US ally, overwhelmingly negatively framed the US and its actions and consistently echoed "our sovereignty violation" at the hand of the Americans. While narrating the sovereignty, the press remained critical towards the Pakistani political leaders and frequently called them 'corrupt, powerless' and 'US servants' who disregard the public opinion in their attempt to "please their American masters" (The Nation, June 1, 2011).

Pakistan under amid US threat: A prominent frame that occurred frequently in the editorial discourse in the weeks that followed the confirmation of Bin Laden's killing was the US threat to Pakistan to destabilize it and to control it nukes. *The Nation* in six such editorials wrote that the US in the guise of the Abbottabad operation wants to control the nuclear assets of Pakistan as it does not want a Muslim country like Pakistan to have nuclear weapons. In a number editorial headlines namely, "Obama on the warpath" (The Nation, May 24, 2011), "Threat to nuclear assets" (The Nation, May 6, 2011), "US double standard" (The Nation, May 19, 2011), "American obduracy" (The Nation, May 12, 2011) and "No end to American arrogance" (The Nation, May 8, 2011) to mention a few the US and its actions were implicated to be a threat against the existing of Pakistan particularly its nukes. Frequently the terrorist's attacks in the aftermath of the Bin Laden killing in Pakistan were often framed with a cover or overt involvement of the US thus putting the US and the terrorists in the same group of 'enemies' of Pakistan. Both the dailies frequently narrated that Pakistan is under US

threat both militarily and diplomatically. Both the dailies framed the domes terrorism in Pakistan as a direct cause of the US actions. As shown in the editorial excerpts: at least 80 more people were killed in a double suicide bombing the US is celebrating the death of Osama but it is our people who had not part in determining what happened - who are paying the price for the raid in Abbottabad (The News, May 14, 2011).

The Abbottabad episode has brought to home the military as well as the political leadership the existential danger to our stability posed by the US (The Nation May 17).

Washington's designs against our nuclear assets despite its denial are hard to discount while our rulers remain oblivious of the danger (The Nation, May 26, 2011).

While narrating the US-Pakistan relations, both the dailies were critical to the existing nature of ties and consistently agreed to revisit the ties to make them in accordance with the national interests of Pakistan implying that the existing ties were not in 'our' national interest. The News frame the ties lacking transparency, in contrast The Nation, went on stating that "breaking with the US is the only possible course of action consistent with the national interest" (The Nation, May 22). In the post Osama episode, both the dailies were critical toward the US war on terror and frequently framed the war on terror as "their war on terror" that is being played on 'our' soil. The Nation expressed its deep-rooted antipathy toward the US and occasionally framed the war on terror as "war on Muslims (The Nation, May, 28, 2011) and recommended that the way to peace in Pakistan and Afghanistan is to "leave the US war on terror" which has brought "misery to the Afghans as well as Pakistani nation (The Nation, MY 19, 2011) in pursuing its global "domination" in the post 9/11. Terming the US as a "reliable" and an "enemy friend", The Nation in one such editorial comments concluded that "Only China and some Muslim countries are our genuine friends in this uncertain world. We strongly urge for a rethink of our West-leaning policies". (The Nation, May 9, 2011). Interesting, even the US aid to Pakistan came under media discussions and was framed as a "burden on Pakistani nation for generation to come" (*The Nation* May, 12, 2011). In a similar vein *The News* opinioned that, "many people think the aid [US aid] is a burden" (*The News*, May, 17, 2011).

Last but not the least, while framing the killing of bin Laden, the news media equally drew their attention to the rulers of Pakistan depicting them in an overwhelmingly negative light for their being pro-Americans demanding them to end the alliance with the US on the so called war on terror. In one such editorial comment the nation acting to speak on behalf of the whole nation concluded: the ruling elite does not lack other evidence that the USA is not friend, but this should be further proof that Pakistan is making a very big mistake by continuing an alliance in which it is not valued (The Nation, May 11, 2011).

Implications for the us public diplomacy: In the extant scholarship on news media and counterterrorism, no substantial scholarly attention has been paid to examine the

news media narratives on US counterterrorism from national media perspectives. This study attempts to fill the gap by examining the media narratives in Pakistan on the US counterterrorism inside the Pakistani territory. Findings reveal that the national English newspapers in Pakistan constructed the news discourse on the killing of Bin Laden by using three dominant themes or frames with an overarching anti-US image. Arguably, the killing of Bin Laden was the biggest breakthrough in the global war on terror, however, the news media in Pakistan as the findings suggest framed the killing in highly negatively light terming it as a violation of Pakistan's sovereignty by the US. The press consistently echoed the sovereignty violation of Pakistan by the US and hardly mentioned the killing of Bin Laden as a success on the global war on terror. In contrast to previous studies on comparative framing analysis in the US and Russia on the killing of Bin Laden (Storie *et al.*, 2014), the current study reveals additional frames in the news discourses on the US counterterrorism namely, the US-staged drama, sovereignty violation and Pakistan under the US threat. These seemingly different frames echoed the same postulates of anti-Americanism. The findings of the current study suggest that the news framing on the killing of Bin Laden in Pakistan seems to be in congruity with that of the Russian press which equally negatively depicted the US and its counterterrorism actions in Pakistan and had termed the killing of Bin Laden as a tool to advance the US foreign policy goals in the region (Storie *et al.*, 2014). Both the selected dailies in the current study, persistently depicted a negative image of US and its actions using ideologically driven lexicons of 'US as enemy', 'US imperialism' and 'US unilateralism'.

The frames that have been employed by the press to construct the discourse surrounding the killing of Bin Laden merit some explanation. First, national sovereignty seems to be an enduring notion in Pakistani media. As mentioned in the preceding sections, the selected dailies predominantly used the collective nouns of 'our country/sovereignty', 'we', and 'us' while framing the killing of Bin Laden and the events that followed suggesting that in ideological states like Pakistan, the national identity seems to be an important notion in shaping the journalistic framing of national cum global issues including the war on terror. These findings seem to be in congruent with previous findings revealing that defending the national sovereignty is one of the major goals of journalists/press in Pakistan (Pintak and Nazir, 2013). Secondly, in the aftermath of the killing, a plethora of incoherent statements came from the political and security apparatus in Pakistan causing much confusion among the public regarding what role did Pakistan play in the Osama episode. A commission known as Abbottabad Commission was formed to find the facts about the Osama's killing and what role did Pakistan play in the whole episode of killing of bin Laden. Although the commission report was never made public to reveal the truth, Hersh (2015) has allegedly claimed that the US had informed the Pakistani military prior to the operation that led the

killing of Bin Laden. Had Pakistan had publically posited that it had its consent in the US Navy SEALs operation, the media framing in the Pakistani media could have been different. Thirdly, anti-Americanism seems to be deeply rooted in the Pakistani society like in many other parts of the Muslim world and elsewhere. As the findings suggest, the media narratives on US overwhelmingly depicted a negative image of the US and its actions in Pakistan and the region. Finally, the news media in Pakistan using the national identity and anti-Americanism as master frames formed a highly exaggerated, trivialized, overwhelmingly negative and a demonized media image of US and its counterterrorism in Pakistan. Nothing even in passing was said that the killing of Bin Laden was a great victory in the global war on terror. Thus the press through a simplistic notion of terrorism failed to educate the masses about the complexity of terrorism and counterterrorism that could have further fomented the notion that the war on terror is an American war and not a global war of the communities across the globe. As studies have noted that media framing and agenda setting is of pivotal significance for shaping the public opinion and perceptions on issues of national and international significance (Riaz, 2017). Moreover, the narrow and simplistic framing of counterterrorism could have serious implications for the global war on terror policies and the US public diplomacy efforts toward Pakistan.

Although public diplomacy is noted to get prominence in the US foreign policy apparatus in the post 9/11 (Lzadi, 2016), the findings of the current study and previous scholarship on US public diplomacy tends to suggest that the US public diplomacy efforts fell short in meeting the desired objectives to influence the foreign public including the media. Despite a US ally on the global war on terror, the press in Pakistan looked at the US counterterrorism efforts in Pakistan as an American exceptionalism with no regard for the national sovereignty of a sovereign country. This indicates that the US seemed to have failed in Pakistan in convincing that the war on terror and US counter terror efforts are aimed at targeting the militants who equally pose threat to Pakistan. The one-sided US actions have implications for the US diplomacy efforts in an important country where (Kohut, 2012) have found that 74% of the public surveyed calls America as an 'enemy' and that majority of Pakistanis disapproved the US killing of Bin Laden (CNN, 2011). The poll results and the findings of the study suggest the prevalence of deep rooted resentment of US counterterrorism in Pakistan where demonizing the US is a norm not only in the media but also in the political discourse. These media narratives could have serious consequences in shaping the public opinion on issues like terrorism and its causes and responsibilities (Lyengar, 1990; Lyengar, 1994; Scheufele, 1999). In addition, the frequent references to Pakistani political leaders as "corrupt", "US slaves", "powerless" and "towing the US lines" (The Nation, May 14, 2011) may have serious implications for the nascent democracy in Pakistan and where the conspiracy

theories about the West and US are deeply entrenched. This highly demonized image of the US suggests that the US foreign policy efforts seem to have failed to influence the media framing and frame building in Pakistan specially vis-à-vis its war time diplomacy. Studies have noted that the US has very poor media relations in Pakistan as compared to the militant actors. In their study on US and Taliban relations with Pakistani media, *Arif et al. (2014)* have found that the Taliban had better understanding and war time relationship with the Pakistani press in contrast to US government. This could be due to the cultural congruence between the Taliban and Pakistani journalistic culture and the widespread distrust that exists in the Pakistani society toward the US policies. This study provides evidence that the US public diplomacy towards Pakistan has remained unsuccessful in projecting its story and influencing framing and frame building in the press of Pakistan. This is high time for the US to revisit its public policy toward Pakistan and to make it a two-way communication based on transparency, trust and mutually beneficial rather than adopting a US-centric approach.

CONCLUSION

Terrorism is a global phenomenon, yet its conceptualization in the national media narratives seems to differ across national and cultural settings. This study builds on the previous scholarship on media and counterterrorism and concludes that the news media framing in Pakistan on US counterterrorism as the findings suggest seem to be simplistic, nationalistic with a demonized image of the US and the latter's actions within Pakistan. Thus there is a need of robust efforts on the part of the states to influence the media framing and frame building and to look at terrorism and counterterrorism from a global perspective rather than taking trivialized and anti-US perspectives in their construction of discourses on terrorism and counterterrorism. Presenting one sided and simplistic narratives on terrorism could seriously limit the US led efforts on the war on terror. The US is equally obligated to find what causes its overwhelmingly negative image in Pakistan despite pouring in billions of dollars as assistance to it. Establishing strategic relations with the press and culture- based public diplomacy could ameliorate the existing deep-rooted antipathy toward the US in the Pakistani polity including the mass media.

Disclosure of statement

No conflict of interest on the part of the author and no funding sources were available to the study

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