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A Comparative Analysis of the Framing of Terrorism in Online News Under the George W. Bush and Barack H. Obama Administrations: from Clash to Dialogue?

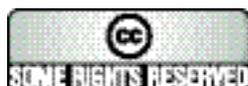
Zachary Devereaux

A new object of study, a new realm of conflict? The rise of the Web.

The need to study online developments related to media and terrorism through the lens of previous research is compelling: "Most comprehensive studies about political violence/terrorism and media/communication were conducted and published before the Internet's breakthrough as a widely used medium of communication..." (Nacos 2002, p. 28).

In response to this need, a significant degree of empirical realism is needed in order to quantitatively examine the differences in framing of terrorism in newsmedia over time, and especially in relation to the rise of the the Internet as a major news source. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are obviously a means to perpetrate cyberwarefare, and at risk of terrorist activity as Nacos points out. But disruption focused netwar exists within a single digital medium along a spectrum that includes government service delivery and civil society network activism. Therefore, as Rogers & Ben-David explain, we should look to the Web not to track who is winning the war of words but rather to search for "the prospects for some form of reconciliation implied by shared language" (Ben-David & Rogers, 2005, p. 9).

Tracking and analyzing the social and institutional networks and media practices that constitute the military-industrial-communications-complex (MICC) and the communication of terrorism via mass media has long been the task of critical media and political theory. This paper aims to translate established research methods in critical media theory into the present digital landscape. In particular the type of established research to be translated is news media frame usage analysis (Picard, 1993; Griset & Mahan, 2003). Based on new media mapping techniques, this effort will result in a strengthened continuity between preceding work in the field and current digital methods (Rogers, 2009).



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1. For an overview of modern mapping projects online see <http://www.visual-complexity.com>

In order to do so, this study will examine semantics related to the reporting of terrorism online. Such current online mapping techniques render visible networks and reporting strategies online that may be said to constitute traces or matrixes of the MICC and conflict online (Rogers, 2004; Rogers & Ben-David, 2010; Devereaux, 2005; Devereaux & Ruecker, 2005). The maps to be analyzed were produced with the IssueCrawler (www.issuecrawler.net) and Reseau-Lu (www.aguidel.com). These network mapping tools depict in an interactive graphic format social, institutional, semantic and corporate networks that are important for advancing understanding of the MICC as a distributed power relation. While the network nature of core MICC actors and institutions has been theorized (Mosco, 1989) research carried out with IssueCrawler and Reseau-Lu has traced the social practice of hyperlinkage behavior and framing strategies through quantitative method. Thus online relations between government institutions, professional organizations, research institutes, organizing news frames and corporations have been mapped over time.¹

Cybernetic individuals vs. Networked politics.

In a network society the administrative, economic and political health of the state is tied to its digital capacities in the form of databases, automated tracking software, and large scale consumer and intelligence profiling (Elmer, 2004). Working in a wired world requires, according to Levidow & Robins, considerable expenditures:

The great expenditures involved are continually justified by a military logic of total control over uncertainty, indeterminacy and insecurity. Its systemic model is C3I – *Command, Control, Communications and Intelligence* – a philosophy of struggle to shape reality through surveillance and information gathering on those labeled the enemy. This authoritarian technics is turned not only against other countries but also against the internal population (Levidow & Robins, 1989, pp. 164-165).

Thus a Hobbesian or Machiavellian logic compels a contract or bargain; the state protects one in exchange for limited liberties, and this is one meaning of the rise of *faith-based politics* wherein neoliberal dictates intensify as a regime, demanding the acceptance of surveillance, unilateralism, and extensive limitations on the possibility of opposition (Elmer & Opel, 2008). This type of logic, one should note, will be repeated in the paradox of terrorism reporting. And during the War on Terror there has been no lack of organized will to limit civil liberties in favour of security in a country such as Canada. However both the capacities for comprehensive C3I and the

costs of wiring the newsmedia in a more global context are different than Levidow and Robins anticipated. As I will explore below the rise of the Internet and online news has posed challenges to the idea that C3I is easily and ubiquitously maintained, and the cyber-security capacities of governments, such as Canada's has been cast into doubt.

The totalitarian potential of digital communication, insofar as it is the ultimate traceable means of communication, is counterbalanced by the messy reality of the Web. Levidow & Robin's explanation of the cybernetic tendencies in modernity is in keeping with Chun's identification of wiring the world as a "civilizing mission" (Chun, 2005, p. 243). The point is that, as a traceable medium optimism regarding ICT's democratic potential has to be balanced against the susceptibility of digital technology to authoritarian control.

Thus it is increasingly plausible to extend the cybernetic perspective to a conception of network intelligence (the collective repository of human knowledge in the form of the Web 2.0), or networked political communication (the circulation of digital politicized objects) and networked politics (carrying out politics and communication within digital networked realities) both within and beyond the intelligence community. It is necessary to identify this on account of the fact that so much of the argumentation presented here and below hinges on an attempt to comprehend the results of digital convergence (Cartwright, 2002; Jones, 2002). I will argue that the network does hold some answers regarding the previously problematized relationship between the media and terrorism, and that knowledge construction projects impossible to conceive of in an exclusively realist world are taking place (such as www.wikipedia.org, www.wikileaks.org). Networked politics are not mere instruments of the MICC, but are reflexively shaping the MICC as well. See the debate regarding Twitter & Iranian Democracy Protests (<http://www.doublex.com/section/news-politics/twitter-really-tool-democracy>) or, Ratliff 2005 "The Zombie Hunters: How to fight Internet Gangsters" New Yorker Magazine, Oct. 10, 2005. The Economist dec. 3-9th 2005: "Clicks, bricks and bargains". The cybernetic and terror reporting paradoxes do relate; they are both systemically exacerbated by the rise of the Web.

The Terrorism – Media paradox and reporting Terrorism online

The sentiment that the Internet and social media represent democratization is clear in popular publications and more serious considerations of the blogosphere that also permeate foreign policy debates (Drezner & Farrel, 2004). "Although government influence on the media is still evident, Internet technology makes it possible for disenfranchised individuals to have access to information. The Net has brought about a democratization of the media"

(Griset & Mahan, 2003, p. 129).

However, just as the Web helps make anyone (who cares to be one) a journalist, and helps major media outlets reach *everyone* with connectivity, the Web has been held to hold negative consequences for media – terrorism interdependence.

Wilkinson (1997) asserts that it is intrinsic to the very activity of terrorization that some form of media, however crude, is utilized as an instrument to disseminate the messages of threat and intimidation. The theory that the media are, in part, a cause of terrorism is based on the assumption that by attacking Western democracy, terrorists will receive benefits from the media through coverage of the incident" (Griset & Mahan, 2003, p. 133)

Nacos emphasizes both "...terrorism's considerable success in exploiting the mass media for publicity purposes." (Nacos 2002, 83) and the negative potential of the Internet: "The Internet provides the apostles of hate and their adherents a means of communication, where they can promote each other's sites in the hunt for recruits" (p. 26). Obviously the terrorism – media paradox is deeply connected to the Web. Nacos may be indicative of a general fear of the Web on the grounds of its capacity to be put to negative purposes. Indeed, Gruen approaches a tone of alarmism in evaluating the impact of the Web: "Despite this mounting evidence that a well-conceived website is a powerful tool to indoctrinate and incite violence, adequate attention has not yet been given to this danger" (Gruen, 2004, p. 128). The important point to make is that the Web is quickly growing and becoming increasingly central to MICC structures. In counterpoint to the negative potential the Web represents, a few issues that imply the positive potential of the Web when it comes to the news coverage I am presenting need clarification.

Firstly, the passive nature of traditional mass media is giving way to (virtual) interactivity. In this sense passive connotes reception of news with minimum feedback, the emphasis being on a one way flow of communication. Traditionally entering into this predominantly one-way flow, with its concentrated market structure, has clearly been a challenge for any group outside the mass media structure (Picard, 1993, p. 40). But as Griset & Mahan point out, the Web presents challenges to this media monopoly on information and is also systemically challenging the passive model of news consumption. Furthermore the clear segregation of violent acts into neat categories by a dominant and unified mass media is vastly complicated by the Web. In a very important way varying interpretations and reporting practices are brought into contestation in a single medium online. Furthermore, news consumers are increasingly taking advantage of what the Web offers in terms of diversity of sources. Finally recent scholarship has demonstrated how Internet-savvy publics may

act as a check and balance on the traditional production of knowledge and power, with important consequences for alternative modes of organization and the creation of meaning (Kelty, 2009; Lenhart, 2010).

While Web based news and publishing do challenge traditional media models and offer hope for democratization it is important to understand that the systemic paradox of terrorism and dissemination of information has crossed into the virtual realm at least as well as the major traditional news media apparatuses have. The key changes to be kept in mind here are the vast amounts of news available online for free and the consistent aggregation of news sources into searchable database formats both in real time and in archive models. In addition to this, pedagogic engagement with new media offers the prospect of bolstering alternative interpretations and capacities of the Web (Leonard, 2004) as shown in the blog and Peace networks online examined below.

The danger of terrorism has actually fallen since 9-11 but fears of terrorism have increased; following Tod Gitlin (1980, 1994) Norris, Kern and Just (2003) provide this crucial contextualization for examining terrorism frames online: "The heart of our explanation lies in the idea of news frames, representing persistent patterns of selection, emphasis, and exclusion that furnish coherent interpretation and evaluation of events... Conventional news frames of terrorism are important because they furnish consistent, predictable, simple and powerful narratives that are embedded in the social construction of reality" (pp. 4-5). My argument here is that search rankings and frames are related in the provision of online news and relational mapping of search terms as frames indicates how a news search portal (Google News, and later Google Blog Search) engages in the construction of discourse (e.g. narrative) and that this shaping of the discourse provided to an end-user has consequences for the social construction of conflict.

The relationship is close to Lippmann's famous assertion about the news media acting as a *searchlight scanning* about with important consequences for what Lippmann referred to the pictures that are in our heads (Lippmann, 1922) and for this I reason I undertook to compare the association of specific *frames as search terms* to one another and to online news outlets under two different US administrations. Thus the first maps provided below show frames in relation to news sources about Iraq, major figures in the administration, and terrorist groups in 2005 under the George W. Bush Administration. The second maps provided below show these same frames in relation to sources four years later on the same news portal but with a different US administration, that of Barack H. Obama. The final maps show the same terms, leaders and groups from 2009, but in relation to blogs derived from the Google Blog Search portal that came into being in the interim between the first and second mapping exercise. In all these

networks of free online media, frames play a similar role:

The use of the terrorism frame serves several functions both cognitive, by linking together disparate facts, events, and leaders, and also evaluative, by naming perpetrators, identifying victims, and, attributing blame. It allows political leaders to communicate a coherent, simple message to the public, while also reshaping perceptions of friends and enemies. In the words of President Bush: Every nation in every region now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists (Norris et al., 2003, p. 15).

The novelty is in the capacity to reverse-engineer framing through lexical and network analysis. The research question was: how have the relationships between the frames, outlets, and world leaders changed, if at all? The theoretical framework is derived from Picard, Nacos and Norris et al. The method is an attempt to innovate in the area of online, automated open-source intelligence and large-scale (discursive) analysis.

As Norris et al. (2003) argue, the terms as frames and names of groups are variable, and there are some idiosyncracies in my dataset connected to this fact, such as the spelling of Hizbollah and Al-Qaeda. But an effort to remain non-partisan was central to the methods. Nonetheless the study did not concern itself overtly with the veracity of normative claims but only the patterns of association and word frequencies in the news and blog discourse. Despite this disclaimer Norris et al's definition of "terrorism as the systematic use of coercive intimidation against civilians for political goals" (p. 6) is a useful foundation for the research presented here. Comparing the frames in free online news over time cannot but help be caught up with the comparison of geopolitical and diplomatic approaches of the two US administrations. In this regard I argue that the move beyond the *clash of civilizations* hypothesis is critically important and that news framing will be caught up in the potential for such a transition to take hold more broadly.

Column inches to bytes and search rankings.

The shift in analysis, then, is from technical media backbone networks such as video tape and satellite transmission networks, to hyperlink, referral and issue networks as well as network dynamics online. This is very much in keeping with previous analysis of technological evolution as Brooten and Mosco point out (Brooten, 2005, p. 239). The goal here is to better understand the importance of the rise of distributed processing, a Web that ques-

tions national state boundaries and identities. These developments force mainstream media networks to do something that can be searched for and found on the Web while alternative movements take advantage of the new capacities the Web endows (Rojecki, 2002; Appadurai, 1996). In some ways the opposition between the clash of civilizations as a compartmentalization of cultures and the notions of modulation, distributed knowledge and global recursive publics mirrors the opposition in zeitgeist between the Bush Jr. administration and the fledgling Obama administration.

Picard claims "Altheide has argued that, despite the presence of competing media, U.S. media presented a strongly homogeneous view of events that is damaging because homogeneous messages by major news channels make it difficult for viewers who rely on these sources of information to discern the multiple realities underlying many issues and events... and then assess them" (Picard, 1993, p. 88). Confronting this claim of homogeneity and its counterpoint in the form of the Web, research has been undertaken to evaluate Picard's claims, and the new media mapping presented in this essay is part of such a research agenda.² Thematically, this research is additionally motivated by an effort to gauge whether distinct differences have emerged between news framing patterns during and after the neo-conservative apex under the Bush Jr. administration.

The homogeneity in American coverage of terrorism and war before 9-11 that Picard cites must be related to systemic centralization of two types. The first systemic centralization is thematic, and is aptly pointed out by Picard and upheld by Boggs and others. This tendency to centralize momentum in favour of armed conflict is most clear in the embedded journalist phenomenon (Picard, 1993; Boggs, 2003; Seib, 2004; Calabrese, 2004; Tumber & Palmer, 2004; Jensen, 2005). However, the second systemic centralization (or collapse / convergence) is that of formats. Namely news production networks are increasingly difficult to differentiate from one another in terms of format technology.

Thus, where Picard collapses TV and newsprint into mainstream media the Web means that TV, print, audio/radio, and government, NGO, blogger, and activist coverage is all in the same digital medium. To avoid confusion it is best here to look at mainstream media which is concentrated not only in terms of ownership, but additionally on the Web in terms of formats. Thus TV clips, radio broadcasts, print stories, photos and interactive media are all available through a large news network's website, and some evidence of Picard's homogeneity is in the offing: "Thus we had the proliferation of premeditated war shows like "Countdown to War" or "Showdown with Iraq," not only as a ploy for ratings but also as a way to help cable news networks like CNN, Fox, or CNBC determine how best to present the war to the

2. See "All-American Issues, Seven Stories from the Homeland" <http://www.issue-network.org/node.php?id=46>

American public to obtain the largest audience share" (Grusin, 2003). This similarity in formats is both systemic on the Web in terms of software and file types, but also compelled by digital convergence, as the many types of output produced by large media sources are channeled into online formats. Indeed the formats have changed little between the Bush Jr. and Obama administrations, and despite the rise of the capacity to search blogs on Google in addition to mainstream news, the types of blog entries that result are a mix of alternative and traditional sources. To put it briefly alternative bloggers are ranked alongside major media blogs and bloggers on Google Blog search.

In this way, through search aggregators, competing providers are brought together and ranked for the news consumer, whether the interest is official journalism or blogosphere materials.³ Instructively, governments can also benefit from this side-by-sidedness and search logic, and bypass the media outlets on the Web to approach news consumers directly such as Whitehouse.gov press releases, or Canadian government news portals⁴ and attempts to manage and bypass the national news press gallery.

The point is that the centralizing tendencies of particular platforms making up the Web are matched by an evolving sensitivity to the feedback loops of Web intelligence. New media mapping and quantification of online distribution and search rankings when it comes to news stories and government press releases can give governments, researchers and activists insight into the spin at play on the Web. Brooten (2005) relates that one of the most interesting capacities of the IMC is its ability to do "news on news" (pp. 248-249) namely tracking the spread or ignoring of stories and Rojecki (2002) notes the role of the largest media outlets as "master framers" (p. 11). These insights should be brought to bear through new media mapping and combined with an interrogation of Picard's assertion that framing is far from objective (Picard, 1993). It is important to understand that while Picard's theory needs to be updated in order to take into account the evolution of the Web, the new Web-based news universe is not as homogenic as the reality of news media at the time of Picard's research. Additionally, specific frames have changed (Picard, 1993; Nacos, 2002). Indeed, Picard was highly prescient in his conclusion when evaluating the consequences of media framing: "As a result, there is no single reality, but multiple realities that are constantly changing" (Picard, 1993, p. 96). Compare this with Rogers' assertion that "Thus far the Web has been found to be and taken as a valuable collision space between official and unofficial accounts of reality." (Rogers, 2004, p. 28). I now turn to examples of virtual cartography informed by previous research that depict the reality collision Picard and Rogers identify, seeking to clarify how the growth in alternative sources and the Web-centric characteristics of the Obama administration-cum-phenomenon have resulted in alternative framings of the war in Iraq and terrorism.

3. Two key examples of 'official' and 'unofficial' are GoogleNews <http://news.google.ca> and Technorati <http://www.technorati.com/>

4. In the USA : <http://www.whitehouse.gov/>
In Canada : <http://news.gc.ca/cfmx/view/en/index.jsp>

Frames related to terrorism in online news from 2005 and 2009 compared.

Method

Queries (see below) are identified by past research and added to with an eye to current developments. Queries were launched (in 2005 with the Govcom.org Google News Scraper and in 2009 via Google News RSS output), and the top 100 stories for Frames with more than 100 items and the given number for Frames with less than 100 items were collected as Extensible Markup Language and assembled in a spreadsheet. This record was sorted according to the number of stories per outlet, per search term. All of the maps presented here are of news or blog providers with seven or more stories responding to any given one of the Frames. This method reveals both proximity to top of results ranking in the data set and significance of distribution across Frames. The resulting data is visualized with ReseauLu to provide an image that shows the relations between frames and providers as a network map, where nodes are either frames or outlets whose size and position indicate their importance and connections between the two are shown as links.

Iraq Frames Maps

These are the frames used to retrieve news stories about Iraq. As table 1, figure 1, and figure 2 show, terms derived from Picard's research are significant, but Insurgent is much more prevalent than Guerilla or Extremist in both time frames. Note that the overall volume of several major frames is reduced from 2005 to 2009. The most marked differences come in Frames related specifically to the War on Terror and Peace.

Table 1

Iraq Frames

Frame	'number of items' 21-Nov-05	'number of items' 6-Jul-09
Iraq + Regime*	13700	5910
Iraq + Dictatorship*	1670	695
Iraq + Rebels*	2270	327
Iraq + Insurgents*	29100	7575
Iraq + Terrorists*	16700	3744
Iraq + Guerillas*	39	200
Iraq + Revolutionaries	82	148
Iraq + Occupation	9010	3028
Iraq + Democracy	14800	3966
Iraq + Terrorism	22400	3282
Iraq + Brutal*	4180	1089
Iraq + Criminal*	12000	2024
Iraq + Despicable*	260	154
Iraq + Murder	7240	1244
Iraq + Extremists*	6680	2347
Iraq + Evil*	2910	1185
Iraq + Peace	23100	6041

Note *See Picard, 1993, p. 98-101

Findings for 2005

Terms are listed here in order of interlinkage significance (moving from more to less resonant). It is important to note that these maps take previous research a step further, as not only is the sequential prevalence of the terminology presented by the size of nodes, but additionally, relations between terms and providers are rendered clear by linkage lines:

First order of importance (Most Dominant): Democracy, Insurgents, Extremists, Criminal, Evil, Murder. These terms highlight the main us vs. them frame of the War on Terror.

Second order of importance (Less Dominant): Terrorism, Occupation, Terrorists, Guerillas, Brutal, Dictatorship, Despicable. These frames focus on the more traditional definitions of terrorism.

Third order of importance: (Least Dominant): Regime, Peace, Rebels, Revolutionaries.

i. *Insurgents* has become a dominant term and is closely related to extremism, crime, evil and murder. This is much different than previous research indicated, and may reflect successful information politics on the behalf of the Bush administration. Compare with Picard's earlier assertion: "The word insurgent does not seem to convey the strongly negative connotations that other terms do because it has been used much less, connotes less-organized or fewer ideological opponents to the existing military and civilian authorities, and seems to suggest a lower level of violence." (Picard, 1993, p. 99)

ii. Guerilla is more prevalent than previous research would indicate, but is closely associated with terrorists and terrorism.

iii. Peace is at the bottom end of the resonance scale but is present.

iv. Rebel and revolutionary are the least used terms, and this finding is in keeping with earlier research.

2009 Frames Comparison

- i. First order of importance: Regime, Insurgents, Extremists have become the predominant frames. Extremists stands out as an important recent term.
- ii. Second order of importance: Occupation, Dictatorship, Terrorists, Murder, Evil, Brutal and Criminal are all middle order frames.
- iii. Revolutionaries, Rebels, Guerillas, Terrorism, Peace and Democracy form the third order of importance. Despicable is the least used frame.
- iv. Wire stories (Associated Press) dominate. Daily Kos (an independent blog) joins major news outlets in significance, larger than the Washington Post or the Wall Street Journal.
- v. The results are not extremely geo-localized although the position of the Canadian outlet National Post is central and significant.

United States Leaders & Terror Groups Frame Maps⁵

The frames shown in table 3 are used to retrieve stories about leaders and terror groups. Wherever possible Nacos' keywords were replaced with equivalents in the timeframe of the Obama administration. Note the difference in volume between George W. Bush and Barack Obama, or Condoleezza Rice and Hillary Clinton. As with other changes in volume depicted in this table, these differences reflect the increased importance of online news to the relationship between terrorism and the media.

Findings for 2005

- i) First order of importance: Terrorism is more significant than crime, considerably so, however peace is very centrally linked and much more resonant than crime. Associations to crime do not predominate.
- ii) Second order of importance; Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda are central to the semantic network. It is important to note that this coverage network

5. In consideration of the page limitations of this journal, the remaining maps are excluded from this paper. If readers wish to get a copy of the maps, please contact the author.

is definitely international in constitution.

iii) Third order of importance; Saddam Hussein is as significant as Osama bin Laden. Both are more significant than George W. Bush, Tony Blair, Dick Cheney and Condoleeza Rice.

iv) Animal Liberation Front is present in the mid range of groups as far as resonance is concerned, and is linked to terrorism by Reuters AlertNet. This runs counter to Nacos' earlier findings that emphasized more positive framings of ALF (Nacos, 2002, p. 67). Thus Griset & Mahan may be more relevant in the post 9-11 era when they argue that anti-capitalist violence is labeled as terrorism (Griset & Mahan, 2003, p. 134)

v) Khaleej Times links Zarqawi, crime, Saddam Hussein and Terrorism.

vi) McVeigh is no longer more significant in coverage than Cheney (Naco, 2002, p. 91) however Zarqawi is.

2009 Frames Comparison

Findings for 2009:

i. First order of importance: Obama is more significant than Bush. However Terrorism and Al Qaeda are less central and less significant in the 2009 map. This shows that the framing of the War on Terror has changed along with the rise of the importance of online news in relation to terrorism.

ii. Gordon Brown is far more significant than Tony Blair, likely due to the controversies surrounding Brown's tenure as British Prime Minister.

iii. Hillary Clinton is much more central than Condoleeza Rice, likely reflecting a less centralized relationship between the executive and online news media.

iv. Taliban are more central than Al-Qaeda was in 2005, while Northern Alliance is greatly reduced in significance.

Table 3

Frames used to retrieve about leaders and terror groups

Frames	'Number of items' 2005	Frames	'Number of items' 2009
Terrorism	37200	Terrorism	37552
Crime	61300	Crime	151444
Timothy McVeigh*	73	Timothy McVeigh	478
George W. Bush*	26900	Barack Obama	227960
Dick Cheney*	21400	Joe Biden	9318
Condoleeza Rice	373	Hillary Clinton	55304
Osama bin Laden*	9910	Osama bin Laden	6599
Tony Blair*	15700	Gordon Brown	19082
Abu Musab al-Zarqawi	10200	Abu Musab al-Zarqawi	54
Abu Sayyaf	720	Abu Sayyaf	2413
Al-Qaeda	12600	Al-Qaeda	19528
War on Terror	23400	War on Terror	11438
Ted Kaczynski	24	Ted Kaczynski	39
Basque ETA	293	Basque ETA	3550
11-Sep	6530	11-Sep	20830
Animal Liberation Front	69	Animal Liberation Front	113
Tamil Tigers	1810	Tamil Tigers	1774
"State Sponsored Terrorism"	840	"State Sponsored Terrorism"	41
Hamas	7360	Hamas	21557
Hizbollah	333	Hizbollah	191
IRA	5670	IRA	14487
PLO	699	PLO	1162
Northern Alliance	2830	Northern Alliance	3396
Saddam Hussein	314000	Jalal Talabani	1706
Peace	n/a	Peace	97593
		Taliban	79652

Note *See Nacos 2002, p. 91-92

v. 9-11 is less important than in 2005, but War on Terror is still central.

vi. Animal Liberation Front is now marginal, as is Al-Zarqawi.

vii. PLO, Hamas, Hizbollah are near to one another and in the same quadrant as Jalal Talabani. Hamas and Hizbollah are more significant issues than in 2005.

Overall the news results are more geographically tailored and closely grouped. The Toronto Star is central which makes sense given that the research was carried out with Canadian IPs. Outlets from the United Kingdom are also of central importance to the most shared frames.

Peace Networks Online Findings:⁵

The Whitehouse is significantly present in the 2009 Peace Issue Network online, whereas it was not in 2005. This indicates an entry into Peace issue networks by the Whitehouse between 2005 and 2009, a likely consequence of a more Web 2.0 and social media savvy US administration in the white house.

Discussion & Conclusions

If one thing is clear from my efforts, it is that the cybernetic and anticipatory potential of the Web must be further explored. The influence of a digital imperative in terms of going online has to be taken into account in critical media analysis. Picard's work can usefully serve as a compass for such undertakings, as it has done here. Specifically Picard's assertion that "...different media can help and harm the public's understanding of terrorism" should be evaluated in light of online developments (Picard 1993, p. 96) My maps showed a significant degree of officialdom in aggregated news online, however there were indicators of some balance, with peace, guerrillas, revolutionaries, and rebels employed more often over time than research from the 1990s indicated would be the case. Finally my maps also showed stronger association of terrorism to the War on Terror that can be attributed to the post 9-11 environment.

Central findings in this light are that the term Insurgent came to overtake

other terms as significant between the 90s and the Bush Administration while the overall coverage of terrorism online decreased from the Bush years to the beginning of the Obama administration, while “extremist” gained in importance, and additionally the Animal Liberation Front was considered more harshly as a terrorist organization at the time of the Bush administration than either in the earlier research (Nacos, 2002) or under the Obama administration. Finally, in terms of Peace networks online, the Whitehouse, which was not present in 2005 became connected to major Peace websites and NGOs in 2009, and the Obama administration executive figures are more implicated in online news about Terrorism than were the Bush executive.

However, while the major findings of the Obama executive being more closely associated with major frames is compelling in terms of a shift from clash to dialogue, the changes to the media-terrorism relationship that took place between the Bush Jr. and Obama eras is also significant. Importantly, in the earlier administration content analysis reveals a pattern of framing in light of the War on Terror which put Rumsfeld rather than Bush front and centre as the top most frequently discussed leader. In fact George W. Bush was not even mentioned in relation to leaders and groups whereas Rice and Rumsfeld were. The later administration featured the president, Obama, much more prominently at top levels of framing, along with democracy and, importantly, peace. Furthermore there is more evidence in framing of even discussion of the Obama administration as a team, with Clinton and Biden mentioned more frequently than members of the previous administration. The final result worthy of note is that earlier research predicted alternative framings of Iraq and Terrorism would become more easily available due to the rise of blogs, blog networks and blog search engines, and this is definitely the case.

Appendix

Table 2

Content analysis of all headlines for most frequently occurring words, comparison of top 25 words between 2005 and 2009 (with of, it, is, an, 's, etc. removed):

Iraq Map 2005 Headline Content Analysis			Iraq Map 2009 Headline Content Analysis		
WORD	Raw	Relative	WORD	Raw	Relative
Iraq	311	28	Iraq	356	31
US	215	19	Iran	191	16
<i>Saddam</i>	172	15	US	172	15
<i>Rumsfeld</i>	141	13	<i>Obama</i>	100	9
Iraqis	122	11	War	79	7
Leaves	90	8	Iraqi	54	5
Warns	90	8	democracy	45	4
Islamic	89	8	New	43	4
Superstate	89	8	Iraqis	36	3
Trial	79	7	<i>Peace</i>	36	3
War	78	7	afghanistan	33	3
Army	77	7	<i>Biden</i>	30	3
Charges	68	6	Troops	26	2
Iraqi	67	6	<i>Saddam</i>	25	2
Democrats	56	5	Killed	23	2
Officer	45	4	Military	23	2
Killing	42	4	Murder	23	2
Voting	42	4	Forces	21	2
Begin	40	4	Inquiry	19	2
Want	40	4	Iranian	19	2
Parliament	39	3	Soldier	19	2
<i>Bush</i>	36	3	Tehran	19	2
Defending	35	3	americans	18	2
Court	34	3	terrorists	18	2
Clients	32	3	Attacks	17	1

Groups & Leaders 2005 Headlines Content Analysis			Groups & Leaders 2009 Headlines Content Analysis		
WORD	Raw Frequencies (1)	Relative Frequencies (1)	Word	Raw Frequencies (1)	Relative Frequencies (1)
US	291	18.4	<i>obama</i>	115	8.68
<i>Iraq</i>	153	9.67	al	94	7.09
Kills	123	7.78	US	92	6.94
Suicide	95	6.01	peace	75	5.66
Delay	93	5.88	<i>qaeda</i>	62	4.68
Charges	89	5.63	taliban	60	4.53
embassy	85	5.37	War	60	4.53
Bomber	84	5.31	Crime	59	4.45
Threat	84	5.31	terrorism	59	4.45
Closes	83	5.25	Terror	51	3.85
Manila	82	5.18	<i>clinton</i>	49	3.7
Upheld	81	5.12	New	48	3.62
Lanka	80	5.06	Hamas	42	3.17
laundering	80	5.06	<i>brown</i>	40	3.02
Money	80	5.06	pakistan	37	2.79
Cia	76	4.8	IRA	32	2.41
israeli	75	4.74	<i>biden</i>	31	2.34
<i>Rice</i>	73	4.61	police	31	2.34
Sri	72	4.55	afghan	29	2.19
<i>rumsfeld</i>	71	4.49	<i>hillary</i>	29	2.19
warns	70	4.43	News	27	2.04
Al	69	4.36	<i>gordon</i>	26	1.96
<i>Qaida</i>	68	4.3	Health	26	1.96
islamic	66	4.17	<i>Iraq</i>	26	1.96
leader	66	4.17	israel	24	1.81

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