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Doomed to Repeat It: Afghanistan, Media Framing, and the Loss of Historical Context

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DOOMED TO REPEAT IT: AFGHANISTAN, MEDIA FRAMING, AND THE LOSS
OF HISTORICAL CONTEXT

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Abstract

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The following research study explores the theory of framing as applied to the examination of broadcast media coverage following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and leading up to the invasion of Afghanistan on October 7, 2001. This thesis provides an understanding of the role three American television networks, ABC, NBC, and CBS, played in informing their audiences of the history behind the U.S.-Afghanistan relationship. Evening news programs from each network were reviewed and coded starting on September 11, 2001, through October 7, 2001, to determine the different frames that were used. This data was compared with public opinion polls conducted by the Pew Research Center for People and the Press during the same timeframe to examine if whether or not any correlation between reporting and public opinion could be made.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In the weeks that followed the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, in the United States, Americans turned to the news media to help them understand what was happening and what it meant (Edy & Meirick, 2007). Who were the Taliban? Why did they attack the United States? What was Islamic fundamentalism? What was the United States' relationship with Afghanistan? Even now, more than a decade after engaging the Taliban in an ongoing war, the answers to these questions largely remain unclear to the average American (Romano, 2011). A poll conducted in January 2014 found 51% of Americans said it was the right decision to use military force in Afghanistan, while 41% said it was the wrong decision. That is among the lowest levels of support for the original decision to use force in Afghanistan since the Pew Research Center began asking the question in 2006 (Pew Research Center for People and the Press, 2014).

Today, U.S. troops remain in Afghanistan, with President Barack Obama extending the role of combat forces to keep fighting the Taliban and other militant groups that threaten American soldiers or the Afghan government (Acosta & Ellis, 2014). Prior to this extension, the President had called for a withdrawal of at least half of the remaining 9,800 troops with a planned U.S. exit set for the end of 2016. This policy shift came in large part due to the poor performance of Iraqi troops as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria advances across Iraq and the election of new Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, who welcomed an extended U.S. role more than his predecessor, Hamid Karzai (Carroll, 2014). The United States has had troops in Afghanistan for almost 14 years, following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. To date, more than 2,300 American soldiers have died in the conflict that has cost the U.S. more than $685 billion (Belasco, 2014).

Ultimately, when it comes to the issue of Afghanistan and the U.S. response to the September 11 attacks, the issue is whether the American news media failed in their role as the public's watchdog or not. By providing a content analysis of broadcast media coverage from the three network evening news programs on September 11 through the start of the war in Afghanistan on October 7, 2001, this thesis makes an effort to provide an understanding of the role the American broadcast news media played in attempting to inform their audiences of the history behind the U.S.-Afghan relationship. This research also seeks to examine how this might or might not have affected public opinion and even foreign policy decisions as the country went to war (Asim, 2012).

This thesis explores the theory of framing and uses it to analyze the media coverage. Framing is the process of "selecting and highlighting some aspects of a perceived reality" and thereby "enhancing the salience of an interpretation and evaluation of that reality" (Entman, 2004, p. 26). Used here, the theory of framing is a tool to analyze the coverage with special emphasis on what is not reported in the news, by introducing the concept of exclusionary framing. This enhances the current understanding of how frames can be influential, not only through deliberate methods of creation, but also through the phenomenon of omission (Asim, 2012).

With this goal in mind, the researcher coded, analyzed, and organized the evening news coverage of Afghanistan from ABC, NBC, and CBS starting on September 11, 2001, and ending with the beginning of the war in Afghanistan on October 7, 2001. The following thesis outlines the results of this study, beginning with a review of prior research, historical context, and related theory

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The overall goals of this chapter were firstly to establish the significance of media framing in regards to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, then to identify a place where a new contribution could be made, specifically examining the use or lack thereof of historical context in network television coverage leading up to the invasion of Afghanistan on October 7, 2001. The bulk of the chapter is dedicated to reviewing the theory of agenda setting, framing, prior wartime reporting, history of the U.S.-Afghan relationship, and different methodologies used to examine framing and television coverage so as to identify the appropriate approach for investigating the research questions. Articles and prior research referenced herein were found by accessing the online archives and databases of the University of Memphis's library.

Agenda Setting

The ability of the news media to direct public attention to specific issues and bring about top-of-mind awareness is an immense and well-documented influence. The public not only obtains factual information from the news media, but readers, listeners, and viewers also learn how much importance to attach to a topic on the basis of the emphasis placed on it in the news coverage. This process is known as agenda setting. Agenda setting illustrates a strong correlation between the emphases that mass media place on certain issues through placement or amount of coverage and the importance attributed to these issues by the audiences (McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

Previous studies (Lazarsfeld, Bernard, & Hazel, 1944) that laid the groundwork for this topic include those conducted by Paul Lazarsfeld during World War II. Between 1940 and about 1960, Lazarsfeld and troops at the Bureau of Applied Social Research

conducted a series of panel studies on the role of mass communications in the making of decisions to vote, to buy, and choices regarding occupation (Lazarsfeld, Bernard, & Hazel, 1944). His study put forth the idea that media effects were much more complex in nature than previously assumed and that the constant stream of messages presented to audiences could have strong, long-term effects (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

The origins of agenda setting in political communication can be traced back to Lippman's (1922) observation that the news media filter reality (McCombs, 2004, p. 3). Lippmann supported this argument by discussing how public opinions consist of pictures inside men's heads and why the picture "so often misleads men in their dealings with the world outside" (Lippmann, 1922, p.18). He described how stereotypes affect public opinions and how these individual opinions "are crystallized into what is called public opinion" (Lippmann, 1922, p.19). Public opinions are the pictures inside men's heads, "the pictures of themselves, of others, of their needs, purposes, and relationship" (Lippmann, 1922, p.18). Public opinion then consists of those pictures collectively acted upon (Lippmann, 1922).

One of the most notable studies occurred in 1972 by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw concerning agenda-setting research in political communication. McCombs and Shaw found that when the media increased their coverage of issues, the public cited those issues as more pressing in their own lives (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). They concluded that mass media influenced the assessment by voters of which were the biggest and most prominent issues in a political campaign. The media managed to transfer their own attitude on the importance of certain issues to the audience's attitude by increasing attention to those issues (Lozovina, Jurišić, & Lozovina, 2013).

This landmark study of the agenda-setting effects of mass communication represented a shift from work that focused on persuasion to studies that focused on earlier stages of attitude formation and information acquisition (McCombs, 2004, pp. 2–4). It also represented an end to the era of the minimal consequences of media effects. Agenda setting in this tradition is the process by which the media transfer the salience of issues to the public (Wolfe, Jones, & Baumgartner, 2013). The power of the press to set the public agenda as first documented by McCombs and Shaw has been shown to be widespread (Wolfe et al., 2013).

Delving further into the effects of agenda setting, Rogers and Dearing (1988) described the mutual relationship of participants in the agenda-setting process. This relationship is characterized as follows: the media strongly influence the audience's agenda; the media agenda has a strong and direct influence on the policy agenda, which the media indirectly influence through the audience's agenda, a sphere they also form and reflect. Therefore, the mass media agenda-setting function is related to the formation of public opinion (Lozovina, Jurišić, & Lozovina, 2013).

The growth in the studies of mass media effects has built on this foundation of agenda setting and matured with the introduction of many approaches, including framing (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). These approaches were based on the idea that mass media had potentially strong attitudinal effects, but that these effects also depended closely on predispositions, thought and behavior patterns, and other characteristics of the audience that influenced how they processed messages (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

Media Framing

One of the first comprehensive examinations of the theory of framing was published in 1974 by Canadian sociologist and writer Erving Goffman. In this work, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*, he posited that people interpret what is going on around their world through their primary framework (Goffman, 1974). This framework is regarded as primary as it is taken for granted by the user. Goffman defined two types of primary frameworks: natural and social, which both help individuals to interpret data (Goffman, 1974).

Natural frameworks identify events as physical occurrences, not attributing any social forces to the causation of events. On the other hand, social frameworks view events as socially driven occurrences, because of the whims, goals, and manipulations on the part of the other people or social players. Taken together, these frameworks and the resulting frames they create in communication can influence how data is interpreted, processed, and communicated (Goffman, 1974).

Framing is based on the assumption that how an issue is characterized in news reports can have an influence on how it is understood by audiences (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Following the agenda-setting theory, framing shows that the media not only tells the public what prominent issues to think about but also how to think about them. Therefore, the audience finds the issues pointed out by the media important, but also accepts interpretative frames given to the issues by the media (Lozovina, Jurišić, & Lozovina, 2013).

For journalists and reporters who shape media content, framing is a tool that assists in reducing the complexity of an issue and adapting it to the parameters of the medium where it is to be published or distributed (Lozovina, Jurišić, & Lozovina, 2013).

It is also invaluable for efficiently presenting complex issues in a manner understandable to the audience. Many definitions for framing exist. Framing has been described as a "central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration" or as "the selection of a restricted number of thematically related attributes for inclusion in the media agenda when a particular object is discussed," (Weaver, 2007, p.143). It should also be noted that frames can influence opinions by stressing specific values, facts, and other considerations, endowing them with greater apparent relevance to the issue than they might appear to have under an alternative frame (Lozovina, Jurišić, & Lozovina, 2013).

Described by Entman (2004), as "selecting and highlighting some facets of events or issues, and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/or solution" (p.5). Entman noted the process of framing selects some aspects of a perceived reality and makes them more accessible in a communicating text. This is done in such a way as to promote a particular problem, definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the topic described (Entman, 2003).

Entman has defined two classes of framing: substantive and procedural. The focus of this thesis includes substantive frames. These types of frames perform at least two of the following basic functions in covering political events, issues, and actors: defining effects or conditions as problematic, identifying causes, conveying a moral judgment, or endorsing remedies or improvements (Entman, 2004). It should also be noted that a frame in communication can be defined only in relation to a specific issue, event, or political

actor (Chong & Druckman, 2007).

For many journalists and communicators, framing is a mode of presentation used to convey information in a way that resonates with existing thought and behavior patterns among their target audiences. Framing, for them, is a necessary tool to reduce the complexity of an issue. Frames have become invaluable tools for presenting relatively complex issues, such as foreign affairs, efficiently and in a way that makes them accessible to lay audiences because they play to existing cognitive patterns (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). The presence or absence of certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information, and sentences that provide reinforcement of certain facts or judgments can provide documentation for frames (Reynolds & Barnett, 2003).

For the purposes of this thesis, the researcher made use of existing media frames found in the work of communication scholars Patti M. Valkenburg and Holli A. Semetko (2000). Valkenburg and Semetko have identified five news frames: conflict, human interest, attribution of responsibility, morality, and economic consequences. The researcher coded each broadcast segment according to these frame definitions.

According to Valkenburg and Semetko (2000), the conflict frame emphasizes conflict between individuals, groups, institutions, or countries. The human-interest frame brings a human face, an individual's story, or an emotional angle to the presentation of an event, issue, or problem. The responsibility frame presents an issue or problem in such a way as to attribute responsibility for causing or solving them to either the government or to an individual or group. The morality frame interprets an event or issue in the context of religious tenets or moral prescriptions. Finally, the economic consequences frame

presents an event, problem, or issue in terms of the financial penalties it will have on an individual, group, institution, region, or country. These frame categories complement Entman's (2004) work on the functions of frames, which are defining effects or conditions as problematic, identifying causes, conveying a moral judgment, or endorsing remedies or improvements.

To understand how framing can impact the formation of public opinion, consider the following process outlined by Shah, Watts, Domke, and Fan (2002). First, particular frames and cues, defined as labels and terms used to identify aspects of the news, become shared by political elites and journalists and grow commonplace in news coverage. Secondly, these components of news discourse become particularly likely to be adopted by the mass public in forming their evaluations of politicians and political issues, fundamentally shifting the basis of judgment (Shah et al., 2002). For example, the classic study by Nelson and colleagues shows how people's policy attitudes and opinions toward a proposed Ku Klux Klan rally differ depending on whether news coverage discusses the rally as an issue of free speech or as an issue of public safety (Nelson, Clawson, & Oxley, 1997).

The Events of September 11, 2001

As noted above, framing is most beneficial when used to reduce the complexity of issues reported in the media and make them accessible to the general public. For the purposes of this thesis, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and the resulting U.S. invasion of Afghanistan are examined, looking specifically at how the big three American television networks, ABC, NBC, and CBS, used frames to explain the terrorist attacks. The sources of media examined were evening news broadcasts from ABC, NBC,

and CBS, starting on September 11, 2001, through October 7, 2001, which marked the beginning of the U.S. war in Afghanistan.

As described before, when it comes to foreign policy issues and the media, there is a debate about how media cover foreign policy issues and policy conflicts (Lee, 2004). In a democratic society, such as the United States, public opinion is often seen as playing a large role in the development of governmental policy, and foreign affairs issues are part of the public policy mix (Kiousis, Mitrook, Popescu, Shields, & Seltzer, 2006). Additionally, there is a widespread belief that being informed on current events equates to civic duty. Lacking personal contact with international events, the American public is largely dependent on the news media's presentation of foreign events. The less direct exposure people have to a given issue, the more they rely on news media for information and interpretation (Krishnaiah & Signorielli, 1993).

That was definitely true during and after the terrorist attacks of September 11, which targeted symbols of U.S. military might and economic power. On that morning, American Airlines Flight 11 departed Boston for Los Angeles, was hijacked, and crashed into the North Tower of the World Trade Center at 8:45 a.m. United Airlines Flight 175 departed Boston for Los Angeles, was hijacked, and crashed into the South Tower of the World Trade Center approximately 18 min. later. The South Tower collapsed in a plume of ash and debris at approximately 10 a.m., and as people ran for their lives, the North Tower collapsed at 10:27 a.m. American Airlines Flight 77 departed Washington Dulles for Los Angeles, was hijacked, and crashed into the Pentagon at 9:43 a.m. United Airlines Flight 93 departed Newark for San Francisco, was hijacked, and crashed into Shanksville, PA., at 10:10 a.m. (Talbott & Chanda, 2001), thwarting the terrorists' plans

to crash this plane into the White House.

Previous War Framing and September 11, 2001

Because the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, were broadcast live to millions around the globe, the events were particularly suited to visual frames in terms of both available video footage and photographs. Prior studies have examined the visual coverage and framing of the September 11 attacks and the lead-up to the subsequent invasion and war in Afghanistan. Contrary to common belief, photographs, and video recordings are not neutral (Bissell, 2000). When it comes to visual framing, still and recorded images have ideological functions that are "easy to conceal because they appear to record rather than to transform or signify" (Woolacott, 1982, p. 99). Moreover, the mere presence or absence of certain photographs represents a manifestation of visual framing (Fahmy, 2004). This idea correlates with the concept of exclusionary framing (Asim, 2012). Exclusionary frames omit relevant information, or what is not present.

Another important element to consider in visual framing is the frequency of visual depictions (Fahmy, 2004). Entman (1993) described that concept by repeating and reinforcing visual images that reference some ideas and not others, frames convey thematically constant meanings, rendering ideas more salient and memorable than others. The more frequently an image is shown or topic is mentioned by the news media, the higher the level of importance placed by the public, along with the frame it is presented in.

Fahmy's study (2004) examined photographs of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks from both English and Arabic newspapers to categorize their visual frames in terms of theme, topic, graphicness, dominance, and use of thematic reporting. Fahmy's

analysis indicated that while the news coverage of an English-language newspaper emphasized the emotion of guilt in the September 11 attack by showing visual messages that humanized the victims, it de-emphasized the bombing of Afghanistan by showing images that focused less on the victims and more on aid, patriotism, arsenal, and weaponry, thus framing the Afghan War in a technical frame. On a similar level, the news coverage in an Arabic-language newspaper emphasized the emotion of guilt in the Afghan War by showing photographs that humanized the victims. It de-emphasized the September 11 attacks by showing visual messages that focused less on the victims and more on material destruction and planes crashing into the buildings, thus also framing the terrorist attack in a more technical frame (Fahmy, 2004).

In comparison to the previous U.S.-led war effort in the region, which was the Gulf War in 1991, Perlmutter (1999) wrote that the management of news coverage of the first Gulf War included not only censorship, but also the creation and distribution of images and the creation of news frames to guide interpretation of published photographs. Public sentiment at the time did not initially favor war. Many Americans wished to avoid war so much that only hours before bombing began, a plurality of the public agreed with a proposal to end the crisis by giving a piece of Kuwait to Iraq, if Kuwait would agree (Allen, O'Loughlin, Jasperson, & Sullivan, 1994).

Nightly network news programs largely ignored public efforts to oppose President George H. W. Bush's military policies in the Persian Gulf. Of the 2,855 minutes of television coverage of the crisis from August 8, 1990, until January 3, 1991, only 29 minutes or about 1% of the coverage showed popular opposition to the U.S. military build-up in the Gulf (Allen, O'Loughlin, Jasperson, & Sullivan, 1994). However, within

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hours of the January 16, 1991, beginning of "Operation Desert Storm," public debate

ceased and differences in opinion that had endured, despite media inattention, shifted

instantaneously to an apparent consensus in favor of U.S. military action (Allen,

O'Loughlin, Jasperson, & Sullivan, 1994).

This about-face by the public is in large part explained by framing. The news

media omitted coverage of the war protests, exclusionary framing, and instead followed

the U.S. military's lead in portraying the Gulf War as a "bloodless affair" (Prince, 1993,

p. 236). To minimize the violence, the news media avoided the portrayal of body bags of

U.S. troops and Iraqi victims of air attacks (Shaw & Carr-Hill, 1992). Images of Iraqi

casualties did not appear in the news media (Schiller, 1992). Further, the news media

spent a lot of time depicting the use and efficiency of smart bombs (Perlmutter, 1998),

emphasizing technical aspects of the weaponry and material damage, such as bridges

blowing up, property damage and other forms of non-human destruction (Prince, 1993).

Afghanistan, Soviets, and the Americans

For many, the attacks on September 11 demanded a background explanation,

especially for a shocked nation that was simultaneously panicked, angry, and uncertain of

the future. Historical references in reporting provided the opportunity to give the why and

how of the story, or, in other words, its historical context (Winfield, Friedman, &

Trisnadi, 2002). Some of the most frequently cited references included the previous

World Trade Center bombing in 1993, the 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in

Kenya and Tanzania, and the bombing of the guided missile destroyer *USS Cole* in 2000

(Winfield, Friedman, & Trisnadi, 2002).

However, the historical involvement of the United States in the Soviet-Afghan

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war was largely absent from the news coverage. Most studies indicate that this conflict remains an enigma for much of the American public (Grau & Yahya, 1995). It was not widely cited in American news coverage in the lead-up to the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan (Edy & Meirick, 2007). Historical references that describe the communist regime in Afghanistan from 1978 to 1992 have continued to remain largely absent from today's news coverage, despite parallels with the current conflict. It was during that 14-year period that the society and politics of Afghanistan were brutally transformed, resulting in the chaos of the 1990s in which the Taliban came to power (Halliday & Tanin, 1998). To fully understand the history of the U.S.-Afghan relationship that preceded the terrorist attacks of September 11, one must first take into consideration the Soviet-Afghan relationship.

The Soviets first became involved in Afghanistan with a small-scale invasion in 1925. The incursion stemmed from a land dispute over an island in the Oxus River. Russia withdrew and recognized Afghan ownership because the island was not worth the price of antagonizing both the Afghans and Great Britain, which had previously occupied the country until 1919 (Hammond, 1984). Additional Soviet invasions occurred in 1929 and 1930 along with the rise and fall of several national leaders over the course of the next 30 years. However, the loyalties of the people of Afghanistan remained largely tribal, without widespread recognition of a centralized government.

During this 1960s, the communist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) was formed. Three leaders emerged in this party: Nur Mohammad Taraki, Hafizullah Amin, and Babrak Karmal (Hammond, 1984). The PDPA split into two factions: Khalq headed by Taraki, and Parcham headed by Karmal. The Khalq faction

favored a Leninist-type party based on the working class, while Parcham wanted to form a broad national-democratic front. Basically, the division was more personal than political. In 1973, Parcham supported former Prime Minister Mohammad Daoud in a bloodless coup that ousted King Zahir and established a republican-style system of government. In return, Daoud appointed several Parcham members to key positions. Later on, however, Daoud wanted to reduce the influence of Parcham. In 1973, he introduced a new constitution that only permitted one party to act legally, the National Revolutionary party, and Daoud personally selected the members of its central committee (Coleman, 2014).

Daoud also began to change Afghanistan's foreign policy by pulling away from the Soviet Union and strengthening relations with other countries, particularly Pakistan and Iran. He began talks with President Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan to reduce conflict over the Pashtunistan issue (Cogan, 2008). Known as the geographic region inhabited by the indigenous Pashtun people of Afghanistan and Pakistan, Pashtunistan bordered the Punjab to the east, Persian-speaking regions to the west and north, Kashmir to the northeast, and the Balochistan region to the south. The shah of Iran also pledged financial aid to Afghanistan, which would have provided for the construction of a railroad. This new shift in policy encouraged the Afghan communists to plan a coup.

The communist Khalq and Parcham factions united under Taraki to carry out the coup in 1978. With the help of the army, Daoud was killed, and Taraki assumed power. Taraki instituted land and debt reforms without considering the cultural and religious heritage of the Afghan people (Coleman, 2014). According to Hammond (1984), the reforms were implemented too rapidly for the population to adjust. The Soviet policy of

communist gradualism was not followed. Communism was also associated with atheism, which was completely unacceptable to the Muslim Afghans. Taraki's reforms ultimately failed, and the Afghans rebelled (Coleman, 2014).

The Soviet Union blamed the failed reforms not on Taraki but on Amin. Taraki had become a figurehead leader, while Amin had obtained much power in the government. The Soviets wanted to oust Amin. However, Amin, fearing assassination, acted first. He strengthened his position by dismissing Taraki's supporters from key cabinet positions and then had Taraki captured and killed. Nevertheless, Soviet and rebel opposition to Amin was very strong, and in December 1979, the Soviet Union launched a large-scale invasion of Afghanistan (Hammond, 1984).

When the Soviets invaded, Amin was killed for his ineptness and insubordination. He was replaced with Babrak, who had become a loyal Soviet puppet. The Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan for several reasons. A primary one was the Brezhnev Doctrine, which required intervention whenever a communist regime was threatened by counter-revolution. The Soviet Union's determination to secure its frontiers by surrounding itself with friendly, subservient, or neutral states was another factor (Ouimet, 2003).

The Soviets also feared Muslim fanaticism. The Afghan rebels had declared *jihad*, holy war, against the Soviet Union. The Russians feared that if the Muslims in Afghanistan succeeded in overthrowing communism and driving them out, then the Muslims in Central Asia might try to do the same thing (Brandt, 2014). The Soviets expected the invasion to lead to a suppression of the resistance movement of the rebels, but the effect was just the opposite. The civil war between competing Afghan factions was transformed into a national liberation struggle of all Afghans against the Soviet

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invaders. Soviet control of the central government in Kabul meant little in the province areas of the rebels because Afghanistan had always operated according to the rule of local autonomy. This meant that the Soviets would have to subdue every village and win over or eliminate every local leader (Brandt, 2014). The same holds true today for the United States, 14 years after the current war in Afghanistan began.

At the time, the reaction of President Jimmy Carter and his administration to the Soviet invasion was one of surprise. Afghanistan was still viewed by many in the United States as an insignificant country. Also, the crisis of U.S. hostages in Iran focused media attention away from the invasion. Some verbal reprimands were issued by the administration, but no military action was forthcoming. The United States implemented economic sanctions against the Soviets and boycotted the 1980 Olympics to be held in Moscow (Dimitrakis, 2012).

Rise of the Taliban

As the Cold War intensified during the 1980s, the United States took a veiled interest in Afghanistan to make a play against the Soviets. U.S. policy at the time supported Afghanistan with arms and supplies for no other reason than to make the war more costly to the Soviets. The United States backed the Afghan rebels, also known as *mujahedeen*, with both financial and military support in their war against the Soviets (Hartman, 2002).

The Taliban was one of the *mujahedeen* factions that formed during the Soviet occupation and eventually took control of the country following the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989. The majority of Taliban officials were of Pashtun heritage (Cogan, 2008). They were born in Pakistani refugee camps and educated in Pakistani

madrassas, or Islamic schools. The Taliban based their strict religious philosophy on the teachings of the Deobandis, a branch of Sunni Hanafi Islam (Gunn, 2003). Taken to its extreme, this became the primary religious and ideological influence on the Taliban (Ingram, 2014).

Some of the Deobandis' beliefs include a restrictive view of women's rights, opposition to forms of hierarchy in the Muslim community, and rejection of Shia Islam. The Taliban also incorporated a strict interpretation of Sharia law combined with the tribal codes of Pashtunwali. They also opposed most attempts at modernization (Ingram, 2014).

The Taliban first began their takeover of Afghanistan in 1994 with the city of Kandahar. Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar gained recognition by seeking retribution for two teenage girls who had been raped by local warlords. He later emerged as a Robin Hood figure, who helped the poor against disreputable commanders and guerilla leaders (Rashid, 2001). His prestige grew because he asked no reward for his efforts but only support for his movement. He promised to bring peace and restore pure Islam to the war-ravaged people of Afghanistan.

The Taliban were aided with money and arms from Pakistan. As they continued their takeover, the Taliban disarmed the local population. In 1995, the Taliban captured the city of Herat, where the majority of the population adheres to Shia Islam. As the Taliban continued its conquest, a counter-alliance, comprised of former *mujahedeen* soldiers, built a resistance movement. Two of these leaders included Ahmad Shah Massoud, a Tajik who fought for the city of Kabul, and General Rashid Dostum, an

Uzbek who fought for the city of Mazar-e-Sharif. Nevertheless, despite fierce battles, these cities eventually fell to the Taliban. ("Afghanistan: Dostum's Return," 2009).

Once the Taliban assumed control in Afghanistan, harsh reforms were imposed on the population. They removed women from public view. Afghan women were not allowed to attend schools and were forced to wear burkas, all-enveloping, head-to-toe veils. Men also had to grow their beards as long as their fists. All forms of entertainment, such as music, television, and even kite flying, were banned (Rashid, 2001).

The Taliban attempted to rule with shared political leadership, but by 1996, it became highly centralized, secretive, dictatorial, and inaccessible. Two main Islamic councils, *shuras*, were established in Kabul and Kandahar. The Kabul *Shura* attended to the day-to-day running of the government and the city. However, the Kandahar *Shura* ultimately had the decision-making power. Mullah Mohammed Omar consulted the *shuras* less and less and eventually fell into the role of dictator (Coleman, 2014).

On October 15, 1999, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1267, establishing the al-Qaeda and Taliban Sanctions Committee, which linked the two groups as terrorist entities and imposed sanctions on their funding, travel, and arms shipments (Genser & Barth, 2010). This move by the United Nations followed a period of growing power for al-Qaeda and its leader, Osama bin Laden, who guided the terror group from Afghanistan and Peshawar, Pakistan, in the late 1980s, to Sudan in 1991, and back to Afghanistan in the mid-1990s. The Taliban provided al-Qaeda sanctuary for operations (Genser & Barth, 2010).

The Afghan drug trade was a problem that the Taliban could literally not afford to solve. Islamic teachings strictly forbid the consumption or production of such drugs, but

the Taliban justified its opium trade because unbelievers of the West consumed the drug. Many Afghan farmers grew the poppies used in the production of opium as their main cash crop and source of income. If the Taliban banned opium production, it would risk angering the farmers and losing state revenue. Instead, the Taliban imposed an Islamic tax, *zakat*, on all dealers moving opium (Rashid, 2001).

The Taliban experienced an opportunity to gain a legitimate revenue source when an Argentina-based oil company, Bridas Corporation, approached them. Bridas had previously signed a contract with Turkmenistan to build pipelines within the country and extract oil and gas. The Turkmenistan government rescinded the contract after the discovery of a large gas deposit. Bridas then courted the Taliban in hopes of securing a pipeline (Brown, 2013).

As the same time, U.S. interests were piqued in cashing in on the natural resources of the Central Asian Republics of the former Soviet Union. A U.S. oil company, Unocal Corporation, also began negotiations with the Taliban to build a pipeline through Afghanistan. Unocal, however, refused to finalize negotiations because the Taliban government did not have international recognition (Rashid, 2001). Also, the Taliban outraged feminist organizations in the United States with its treatment of women. This pressure forced President Bill Clinton's administration and other investors to end negotiations. Pakistan nurtured the Taliban into dominance in Afghanistan. In fact, Pakistan's original intention was to use Afghanistan for Kashmiri training camps. However, Pakistan did not have a firm influence once the Taliban was in power. Pakistan suffered economically in the black market trade that used Afghanistan in its transport (Smith, 2014).

The U.S. Response

At the same time during the 1990s, the greater the U.S. involvement in a globalizing world became, the less knowledgeable or concerned Americans became about events beyond their own borders (Talbott & Chanda, 2001). Much of the media turned inward, focusing on domestic issues, closing overseas bureaus, and replacing foreign news coverage with personal lifestyle features. The media as a whole failed to report when U.S foreign policymakers set deadlines but did not enforce them, made threats but never carried them out, or blamed others for American failures (Talbott & Chanda, 2001). This perceived decline in the quality and attention span of press coverage found a parallel in American diplomacy. According to Talbott and Chanda (2001), throughout the 1990s, sloppy negotiations were aimed at getting an agreement, almost any agreement, and working out the details later. That would change on September 11, 2001.

Just days before September 11, 2001, on September 9, Ahmad Shah Massoud, commander of the Northern Alliance, an anti-Taliban coalition, was assassinated by al-Qaeda operatives. The killing of Massoud, a master of guerilla warfare known as the "Lion of the Panjshir" (Lamothe, 2004, p.74), dealt a serious blow to the anti-Taliban resistance. Terrorism experts believed his assassination assured Osama bin Laden protection by the Taliban after the September 11 terrorist attacks (Lamothe, 2004).

On September 18, President George W. Bush signed into law a joint resolution authorizing the use of force against those responsible for attacking the United States on September 11. Then on October 7, less than one month after the terrorist attacks, President Bush ordered the invasion of Afghanistan to flush out the Taliban-led

government, which supported the al-Qaeda terrorist network and the al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden himself (Izard & Perkins, 2011)

In light of the September 11 attacks, the history of U.S. involvement in Afghanistan is invaluable in understanding the rise of extreme fundamentalism in Islam and why Afghanistan provided a suitable breeding ground for such a movement. Over the course of its history, Afghanistan has had the misfortune of being both a weakened state with much domestic civil unrest, as well as a pawn of foreign governments. The rise of the Taliban is partially the result of abandonment and neglect by the world community (Steele, 2010).

September 11, Framing, and Broadcast Journalism

In examining studies on the media reporting of Afghanistan following the attacks of September 11, 2001, framing has been used as a tool to analyze the coverage. This includes special emphasis on what has not been reported in the news, by introducing the concept of exclusionary framing. This additional definition adds to the understanding of how frames can be influential, not only through deliberate methods of creation, but also through the phenomenon of omission (Asim, 2012).

Entman specifically addressed the function of media frames used in relation to the events of September 11, 2001. According to Entman (2004), when applying the functions of framing, the problematic "effect" resulted in thousands of civilian deaths from an act of war against the United States. The "cause" was found to be the Taliban government of Afghanistan and the al-Qaeda terrorist network, as well as its leaders, Mullah Mohammed Omar and Osama bin Laden (Fitzgerald & Gould, 2009). The U.S. government's "moral judgment" was condemnation of these agents, which were often referred to as "evil" by

White House officials. And the initial remedy was the war against Afghanistan. All four of these framing functions hold together in a kind of cultural logic, according to Entman (2003), each helping to sustain the others. Emphasis should be given to the problematic definition and the remedy because they promote support for or opposition to a public policy (Entman, 2004).

The September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks were the "biggest story to ever occur on the morning TV shift" (Stelter, 2013, p.27). Historically, much network broadcast programming was created mostly for women with the goal of consistently informing and entertaining viewers. Network news shows thrive in what is known as the "familiarity industry" because "familiarity breeds security" (Stelter, 2013, p.28). And in network television, the watchword is consistency.

However, on the morning of September 11, the role of broadcast news media quickly transitioned from the regular morning show line-up to crisis mode, informing a shocked country about one of the most tragic events in the nation's history. Reporting on the morning of September 11 has been ranked among journalism's finest hours (Izard & Perkins, 2011). But what made September 11 different? What was the role of America's three major television networks?

For the media, September 11 was different. First, many in broadcast television dropped the pretense of being "Olympian gods on high" (Izard & Perkins, 2011, p.2). They became human and showed emotion on air. Second, September 11 marked the return of advocacy reporting. There were not two sides to this breaking story when U.S. civilians were attacked. Third, the inventiveness of the reporting made September 11 different because news media had little direct access to public officials as events

unfolded. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the media served as a consoling

mechanism during the crisis (Izard & Perkins, 2011).

Television is undoubtedly a personality-driven medium (Izard & Perkins, 2011).

There is an emotional bonding between audience and reporter. On September 11, grief

was the primary emotion that was shared with the nation (Izard & Perkins, 2011). Other

emotions included shock and anger. Emotion, especially when displayed on television,

can be perceived to conflict with the American media's traditional mantra of objectivity

in seeking the truth. The three television networks played critical roles in reassuring the

country during a disaster by maintaining control and consistency while on air. As the

crisis unfolded, their function was to provide "clear, precise, accurate, and timely

information to thousands of people who made decisions about their own safety" (Izard &

Perkins, 2011, p.8).

Research has shown the power of television to provoke emotion (Nimmo &

Combs, 1985). Television is a ubiquitous and highly stimulating visual medium (Izard &

Perkins, 2011). When they watch television, viewers experience time and space with

reporters on screen (Izard & Perkins, 2011). Facial gestures and body language all

convey the message. On television, expressions usually dominate words. Television was

ranked as America's main source of information on September 11. Viewers watched an

average of eight hours of television on September 11, with 18% of Americans viewing

upwards of 13 hours that day (Robertson, 2001).

At first, many networks and reporters treated the initial news of an airliner

crashing into the World Trade Center as an accident. But after the second crash, most

journalists correctly concluded this was an act of terrorism. All major television networks

aired live pictures from the scene within 15 min. after American Airlines Flight 11 slammed into the North Tower at 9:45 a.m. (Talbott & Chanda, 2001). As the crisis unfolded, reporters were open and honest about what they did not know, telling viewers whether information was confirmed, and correcting wrong information as soon as possible. Transparency was key (Izard & Perkins, 2011).

According to sociologist Arthur G. Neal, "An extraordinary event becomes a national trauma under circumstances in which the social system is disrupted to such a magnitude that it commands the attention of all major subgroups of the population … The major task, individually and collectively, is that of integrating the traumatic event into the fabric of social life in order to make it less threatening" (Neal, 1998, pp.9-12). During such a crisis, television provides not only facts and meanings but offers its own kind of therapy for viewers. The immediate coverage of September 11 was characterized by chaos, uncertainty, and abnormality. The role of media was then to normalize the abnormal (Izard & Perkins, 2011).

Academic research shows that when the social order is seriously disrupted, people usually desire more information than the media can provide (Neal, 1998). During a crisis, the public becomes dependent on the media for news that may be vital for survival and for important messages from authorities. They look to the media for information, explanations, and interpretations (Graber, 1980). In 1980, the National Research Council Committee on Disasters and the Mass Media found that the functions of television news go through distinct stages during a crisis. The council suggested that the press had the following functions during a crisis: warning of predicted or impending disasters; conveying the information to officials, relief agencies, and the public; charting the

progress of relief and recovery; dramatizing lessons learned for the purpose of future preparedness; taking part in long-term public education programs; and defining slow-onset problems as crises or disasters (National Research Council Committee on Disasters in the Mass Media, 1979).

With this theoretical framework and research in mind, this thesis has employed the use of content analysis to examine the evening broadcast news coverage from the three major American television networks: ABC, NBC, and CBS. The researcher has coded, analyzed, and organized broadcast media coverage from these three networks, starting on September 11, 2001, and ending with the beginning of the war in Afghanistan on October 7, 2001. To the researcher's knowledge, these evening shows' broadcast coverage in the aftermath of the events of September 11, 2001, have not previously been directly compared or examined in the context of media framing. The big three networks also carried the terrorist attacks live for millions of viewers on September 11, 2001, staying on air commercial-free for hours that day. They played an instrumental role in informing the public and framing the story in those first few critical hours during and after the attacks.

The research questions for this thesis include the following:

RQ1   Will the most frequently cited historical reference be the 1993 World Trade Center bombing?

RQ2   Will the news frames of conflict and responsibility be the most frequently used, and human interest and economic consequences frames the least used?

RQ3   Will the historical references regarding the U.S.-Afghan relationship be most likely seen in conflict frames, responsibility frames, or morality frames?

RQ4   Will the inclusion of quotes or attributed statements from White House and/or Cabinet-level officials be most likely pro-war or anti-war? Definitions are contained the in the codebook (Appendix A).

Chapter 3: Methodology

For the content analysis, this research employed the use of the holdings available at the Vanderbilt University Television News Archive. Content analysis is a method used to quantitatively analyze communication messages, such as texts, visuals, and sounds. This method then uses numbers to describe the communication messages. One of the major advantages of content analysis is the ability to summarize large bodies of communication messages, such as the hours of broadcast news coverage that is proposed for review in this study. Another advantage is that content analysis is an unobtrusive technique that does not require interaction with human subjects or any approval from an institutional review board. Content analysis also enables people to study historical moments and differences over time (Krippendorff, 2004).

According to Krippendorff (2004), six questions must be addressed in every content analysis. These include: Which data are analyzed? How are they defined? What is the population from which they are drawn? What is the context relative to which the data are analyzed? What are the boundaries of the analysis? What is the target of the inferences? These questions are addressed below in the steps that are outlined to conduct this particular content analysis of broadcast media.

Determining Data Sets

The sampling unit taken from the possible population of broadcasts available for review include the evening news broadcasts of ABC, NBC, and CBS, starting on the morning of September 11, 2001, and ending with the beginning of the war in Afghanistan on October 7, 2001. The coding unit, or communication message selected to be categorized individually for this content analysis, is any segment in those broadcasts that

references the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, or the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan. Keywords used included "terrorist attack," "Afghanistan," and "Osama Bin Laden." The researcher used the Vanderbilt University's Television News Archive to access the broadcasts and perform keyword searches to narrow down the desired segments. Once the coding units have been identified, then the segment was coded in terms of historical reference and media framing. The researcher trained one additional coder before participating in this research project. A total of 90 broadcasts were coded.

Coding and Existing Media Frames

For the first part of the content analysis, the researcher examined the network news coverage to determine the number of historical references that was provided on the U.S.-Afghan relationship, as well as to determine what framing category best classifies the news coverage. Historical references to code for each broadcast include U.S. support for the Afghan *mujahedeen*, or freedom fighters, during the 1980s Afghan-Soviet conflict; the previous World Trade Center bombing in 1993; the 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania; the bombing of the guided missile destroyer *USS Cole* in 2000; any other historical reference that is related to Afghanistan; or any other historical reference that is non-Afghan-related.

Next, the researcher made use of existing media frames, including conflict, human interest, attribution of responsibility, morality, and economic consequences (Valkenburg & Semetko 2000). The researcher coded each broadcast segment according to these frame definitions.

Once a broadcast has been coded into one of the five categories with the historical reference also coded, the researcher then documented whether a White House or Cabinet-

29

level official or spokesperson was quoted or had a statement attributed to him or her during the broadcast concerning the terrorist attacks of September 11 and/or the American invasion of Afghanistan. This quote or attributed statement was coded as either pro-war or anti-war. Next, the researcher coded at what point the segment concerning Afghanistan and the events of September 11, 2001, was featured in the evening broadcast news program. Categories here are the first half of the 30-minute evening news segment or the second half of the 30-minute evening news segment, demonstrating the topic's level of importance according to when it is featured. The completed codebook is available in Appendix A.

Timeline and Cost

The timeline for this research study's content analysis was September 11, 2001 through October 7, 2001. The researcher had a budget of $875 to cover travel expenses for both the researcher and coder, relating to assisting with the content analysis. Travel expenses included mileage and parking costs. To conserve funds, the researcher and coder visited the Vanderbilt University's Television News Archive over a period of three months to access the network broadcasts and perform keyword searches to narrow in on the desired segments. The archive charges $10 per hour to access the videos onsite, versus a charge of $50 per video segment to make DVD copies of the evening news programs. The researcher worked with one coder to assist in reviewing and examining every official evening news broadcast from ABC, NBC, and CBS, starting on September 11, 2001, and ending with the beginning of the war in Afghanistan on October 7, 2001. That is roughly 45 hr. worth of broadcasts in total over a five-week period, with each news segment running 30 min. each.

For the purposes of this content analysis, the holdings from Vanderbilt University's Television News Archives were used. This online news archive is one of the world's most extensive and complete archives of television news. The core collection includes evening news broadcasts from ABC, CBS, and NBC since 1968. An initial online search of these available holdings yielded 9,065 results, using the keywords "terrorist attack," "Afghanistan," and "Osama Bin Laden." These results were further narrowed down using the date parameters of September 11, 2001, through October 7, 2001, as well as limiting the search results to only the three major American networks of ABC, NBC, and CBS. Other search criteria excluded results from commercials, program introductions, and anchor "Good Night" segments, which are the anchor sign offs of the news programs. This yielded 105 results that matched the search criteria. Of those 105 results, three were not available for viewing; nine did not work; and three were mislabeled. This left 90 viable broadcast segments for coding.

Validity and Reliability

To address the issues of validity and reliability of this content analysis, the researcher used one independent coder to help code the broadcast segments. An intercoder reliability test was conducted to measure the extent to which the researcher and coder, working independently, code the same message and reach the same conclusions. The test required that they review the same 10 broadcasts and perform the content analysis, using the codebook and coding form. The percentage of agreement among the coders was reviewed. At minimum, the coders should agree 80% of the time (Krippendorff, 2004). If the agreement is below 80%, the researcher will determine what the problem was, and if necessary, the codebook will be modified, and the coder will be

retrained.

For this content analysis, intercoder reliability was calculated at 88.9% agreement on the first two variables for type of historical reference made and type of media frame used. For the remaining third, fourth, and fifth variables of comment made, pro-war or anti-war comment, and placement in news segment, intercoder reliability was calculated at 100%. Table 1 below details the sample used for testing intercoder reliability.

Table 1
Intercoder Reliability Test

	Percent Agree-ment	Scott's Pi	Cohen's Kappa	Krippend-orff's Alpha (nominal)	*N* Agree-ment	*N* Disagree-ment	*N* Cases	*N* Decis-ions
Variable 1	88.90%	0.617	0.625	0.638	8	1	9	18
Variable 2	88.90%	-0.059	0	0	8	1	9	18
Variable 3	100%	1	1	1	9	0	9	18
Variable 4	100%	1	1	1	9	0	9	18
Variable 5	100%	1	1	1	9	0	9	18

After the coding was finished and compiled, the researcher then compared the results of the content analysis of the broadcast news coverage with archived, online data from the Pew Research Center for People and the Press's public opinion polls conducted during the same timeframe as the broadcasts, as well as statements from White House and Cabinet-level officials, to see if the amount, or lack thereof, of historical context

presented in the news coverage, as well as the frame it was placed in, coincided with U.S. policy towards Afghanistan. The researcher and coder used a coding sheet to record information from the relevant broadcasts.

For the purposes of this thesis, after the coding was finished, the researcher compared the content analysis of the network news coverage with online data from the Pew Research Center for People and the Press's public opinion polls conducted during the same time frame in 2001, as well as statements from White House and Cabinet-level officials made on ABC, NBC, and CBS, to see if the amount, or lack thereof, of historical context presented in the broadcast news coverage had any correlation with public policy. The argument holds that if the American public had been aware of the maximum information, including the full historical context regarding the U.S.-Afghan relationship, as well as the extent of anti-American sentiment in the region, public opinion may have altered the course of American policies toward Afghanistan before the war began, possibly shortening the duration of the current conflict (Asim, 2012).

For RQ1, coding was performed as to the historical references that were made during the broadcasts. The researcher made note when any of the following references were made, or not: no historical reference made; U.S. support for the Afghan *mujahedeen* (freedom fighters) during the 1980s Afghan-Soviet conflict; previous World Trade Center bombing in 1993; 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania; bombing of the guided missile destroyer *USS Cole* in 2000; other historical reference (Afghan-related); other historical reference (non-Afghan-related); and if more than one historical reference made.

For RQ2, coding was performed as to the type of media frame that was used

during the broadcasts. The research recorded when any of the following media frames were applied or not: none of these frames was used; conflict frame; human interest frame; attribution of responsibility frame; morality frame; economic consequences frame; and if more than one of these frames was employed.

For RQ3, comparisons were made between the recorded historical references regarding the U.S.-Afghan relationship and the conflict, responsibility, and morality frames to determine which combination occurred most frequently among the broadcasts. For RQ4, the researcher documented if a quote from a White House and/or Cabinet-level official was featured during the broadcast. If it was, the researcher then coded the quote as either pro-war or anti-war.

Chapter 4: Research Findings from Content Analysis

In regards to RQ1 "Will the most frequently cited historical reference be the 1993 World Trade Center bombing?," the findings of the content analysis showed that no historical references were made to the previous World Trade Center bombing in 1993. The most common result was that no historical reference was made during the broadcast.

Of the broadcast segments ($N = 90$) that were coded, the most common result at 68.89% ($n = 62$) was that no historical reference was made during the news program. The second most common result was other Afghan-related historical reference, with 25.56% ($n = 23$). Other historical references made during the broadcasts include U.S. support for the Afghan *mujahedeen* during the 1980s Afghan-Soviet conflict at 3.33% ($n = 3$), the 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania at 3.33% ($n = 3$), and other non-Afghan related historical reference at 1.11 ($n = 1$). Those historical references not used at all in any of the broadcasts were the previous World Trade Center bombing in 1993 and the bombing of the guided missile destroyer *USS Cole* in 2000. Table 2 below summarizes the historical references that were coded for each network's coverage. For ABC, there were a total of 29 segments that were coded; for NBC, there were 29; and for CBS, there were 32.

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was conducted to compare the use and/or type of historical references among the evening news programs broadcast between September 11, 2001 through October 7, 2001. There was not a significant difference between networks on the use of or types of historical references, [$F(2, 87) = .407, p = 0.667$]. The F statistic for differences among networks was 2, and the F statistic for the differences among the historical references was 87.

Table 2

Type of Historical Reference & Network Coverage

Type of Historical Reference	ABC Percent	n	NBC Percent	n	CBS Percent	n
No historical reference	59	17	76	22	72	23
U.S. support for the Afghan *mujahedeen* (freedom fighters) during the 1980s Afghan-Soviet conflict	7	2	0	0	3	1
Previous World Trade Center bombing in 1993	0	0	0	0	0	0
1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania	7	2	0	0	3	1
Bombing of the guided missile destroyer *USS Cole* in 2000	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other historical reference (Afghan-related)	28	8	24	7	25	8
Other historical reference (non-Afghan-related)	0	0	3	1	0	0
More than one historical reference made	0		3		3	1

When examining the media frames employed during the broadcast programs, Patti M. Valkenburg's and Holli A. Semetko's (2000) five news frames—conflict, human interest, attribution of responsibility, morality, and economic consequences—were found. The media frame of conflict was the most frequently employed across all networks with 84.44% ($n = 76$). The second most commonly used media frame was attribution of responsibility with 24.44% ($n = 22$), followed by the frame of human interest with 18.89% ($n = 17$). The least used media frames included the economic consequences frame at 10% ($n = 9$) and the morality frame at 6.67% ($n = 6$). Forty-four broadcasts employed more than one media frame. The most frequent combination included the conflict and attribution of responsibility frames at 45.46% ($n = 41$). Table 3 below summarizes the types of media frames that were coded for each network's coverage. Once again, for ABC, there were a total of 29 segments that were coded; for NBC, there were 29; and for CBS, there were 32.

In regard to RQ2 "Will the news frames of conflict and responsibility be the most frequently used, and human interest and economic consequences frames the least used?," the findings of the content analysis showed that conflict and attribution of responsibility were most frequently used. The least used frames were those of economic consequences and morality.

An ANOVA test was conducted to compare the use and/or type of media frames among the evening news programs broadcast between September 11, 2001 through October 7, 2001. There was not a significant difference between networks on the use of or types of historical references, [$F(2, 138) = .243$, $p = 0.784$]. The F statistic for differences among networks was 2, and the F statistic for the differences among the

media frames was 138. It should be noted that 49% (*n* = 44) of evening news programs used more than one media frame per broadcast.

With respect to RQ3, "Will the historical references regarding the U.S.-Afghan relationship be most likely seen in conflict frames, responsibility frames, or morality frames?," the findings from the content analysis showed that these historical references were most often seen in the conflict frames.

An ANOVA test was conducted to compare how historical references regarding the U.S.-Afghan relationship were used in conjunction with conflict frames, responsibility frames, and morality frames. There was not a significant difference between these historical references and these frames being used in conjunction with each other, [$F(1, 32) = .951, p = 0.337$]. The *F* statistic for differences among historical references regarding the U.S.-Afghan relationship was 2, and the *F* statistic for the differences among the three media frames was 32.

Table 3
Type of Media Frame & Network Coverage

	ABC		NBC		CBS	
Type of Media Frame	Percent	*n*	Percent	*n*	Percent	*n*
None of these frames was used	3	1	0	0	3	1
Conflict	72	21	86	25	94	30
Human interest	28	25	34	10	19	6

	ABC		NBC		CBS	
Type of Media Frame	Percent	*n*	Percent	*n*	Percent	*n*
Attribution of responsibility	14	4	21	6	36	12
Morality	10	3	7	2	6	2
Economic consequences	10	3	3	1	13	4
More than one of these frames was used	38	11	45	13	63	20

A majority of all broadcasts, at 51.11% ($n = 46$), featured a direct quote from a White House or Cabinet member made by the officials themselves during an on-camera speech or interview. The most frequent on-camera officials were President George W. Bush and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. Altogether, those comments made by White House and Cabinet officials were predominantly pro-war at 69.57% ($n = 63$), demonstrating support for the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan because the Taliban gave safe harbor to Al Qaeda's leader Osama Bin Laden.

In regard to RQ4, "Will the inclusion of quotes or attributed statements from White House and/or Cabinet-level officials be most likely pro-war or anti-war?," the findings showed that the quotes and attributed statements were predominantly pro-war. For example, during the *NBC Nightly News* broadcast on September 15, 2001, President Bush said,

They will try to hide, they will try to avoid the United States and our allies, but we're not going to let them. They run to the hills; they find holes to get in. And we will do whatever it takes to smoke them out and get them running, and we'll get them. Listen, this is a great nation; we're a kind people. None of us could have envisioned the barbaric acts of these terrorists. But they have stirred up the might of the American people, and we're going to get them, no matter what it takes.

Another example, during the *NBC Nightly News* broadcast on September 28, 2001, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld said,

I don't know that I was trying to really be subtle or warn the American people about anything other than the truth, and the truth is that this is a broad, sustained multifaceted effort that is notably distinctively different from prior efforts. It is by its very nature something that cannot be dealt with by some sort of massive attack or invasion. It is a much more subtle, nuanced, difficult, shadowy set of problems … I think the answer is yes. Enduring suggests that this is not a quick fix. It's not something that all of us who like to have things immediately over. It isn't that way. It is not going to be over in 5 min. or 5 months. It'll take years, I suspect.

In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, news linked to the attacks dominated network nightly news with 75.56% ($n = 68$) of stories placed within the first 15 min. of the broadcast. Most often these segments covered U.S. and Pakistani negotiations with the Taliban to turn over Osama Bin Laden and U.S. military preparations for war.

Examining U.S. public opinion during the same time period of September 11, 2001, to October 7, 2001, data from the Pew Research Center for People and the Press was used. This data was collected from telephone interviews conducted under the direction of the Princeton Survey Research Associates among a nationwide sample of 1,488 adults. According to findings from Pew's nationwide survey conducted September 21 through September 25, 2001, 44% of Americans ($n = 655$) think that taking military action abroad to destroy global terrorist networks is more important than building up defenses at home to prevent future attacks (Pew Research Center for People and the

Press, 2001). From that same survey, nearly eight in 10 Americans think that punishing

terrorists is an important reason for using military force (Pew Research Center for People

and the Press, 2001).

When probing for the public's degree of confidence in U.S. success in destroying

terrorist networks around the world, only 39% ($n = 580$) of Americans were very

confident that this could be achieved, while nearly as many, at 37% ($n = 551$), were only

somewhat confident (Pew Research Center for People and the Press, 2001). It should also

be noted that public uncertainty was also found over the timing of military action. Nearly

half the public at 49% ($n = 729$) was concerned that the Bush administration would delay

taking military action, while 34% ($n = 506$) worried that the administration would move

too quickly. Overall, polls showed solid support for military action, including the use of

ground troops, to retaliate against whoever was responsible for the terrorist attacks (Pew

Research Center for People and the Press, 2001).

In considering why the United States should go to war, Americans felt, by a

margin of 57% ($n = 848$) to 22% ($n = 327$), that the most important reason to take

military action against the terrorists was to prevent them from mounting future attacks

against the U.S., not to punish them for the actions already committed. However, most

Americans felt that both of these goals were very important. Nearly nine in ten said that

preventing future attacks gains the U.S. is a very important objective for military action,

and 79% ($n = 1,176$) felt that retribution is a very important objective.

A later Pew survey conducted just days before the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan

from October 1 through October 4, 2001, demonstrated the public's reliance on news

media during that first month following the terrorist attacks. This data was collected from

telephone interviews conducted under the direction of the Princeton Survey Research

Associates among a nationwide sample of 1,001 adults. Heavy media use was

widespread, with 73% ($n = 731$) of Americans paying close attention to the news about

the attacks. A majority at 67% ($n = 671$) kept radios and televisions tuned to news about

the attacks (Pew Research Center for People and the Press, 2001, October 4).

The public continued to rate the news media highly for its coverage. Most liked

the amount of coverage they saw, with 85% ($n = 851$) rating the coverage as excellent or

good. As seen in Table 4 below, news of how the attacks were carried out attracted the

most news interest, but most aspects of the story engaged majorities of the public, except

for news of the refugee crisis in Afghanistan (Pew Research Center for People and the

Press, 2001, October 4). Table 4 below outlines the top elements featured in news

coverage during the first month following the attacks.

Table 4
Top News Draw: How It Happened

	Following Very Closely		Following Fairly Closely	
Elements of the Story…	Percent	*n*	Percent	*n*
Finding out who did it and why	72	721	21	210
Building future U.S. defense	57	571	30	300
Building anti-terrorist coalition	53	531	31	310

Elements of the Story …	Following Very Closely		Following Fairly Closely	
	Percent	*n*	Percent	*n*
Economic & financial effects	52	521	31	310
Possible U.S. military action	52	521	30	300
Refugee crisis in Afghanistan	31	310	36	360

Source: Pew Research Center for People and the Press, 2001, October 4.

Chapter 5: Discussion

When examining the results from the content analysis, it is clear that the three historic networks of ABC, NBC, and CBS and their evening programs played an important and critical role in reassuring their audiences during and after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, by keeping them informed with the latest information. They also established a narrative in the lead-up to the invasion. This is demonstrated by the heavy use of the conflict media frame, followed by the attribution of responsibility frame.

In the early days following September 11, 2001, many evening network programs tagged their broadcasts, setting the tone for stories that were reported. ABC used "America Fights Back"; NBC used first "Attack on America" and later "America on Alert"; and CBS used "America Rising," "America Fights Back," "Terror Trail," and finally "America Strikes Back." Lending credibility to the coverage, all three networks routinely used their veteran anchors to report on the news concerning the terrorist attacks. ABC used Peter Jennings; NBC used Tom Brokaw; and CBS used Dan Rather.

Framing the narrative of coverage following the attacks of September 11, these network evening news programs provided a steady drumbeat on the path to war in Afghanistan, consoling the public in a time of national tragedy while also reassuring them that the U.S. government would not let these acts of terrorism go unanswered. Within days on September 15, the networks identified Al Qaeda and Osama Bin Laden as the masterminds behind the attacks. From then until the October 7 invasion of Afghanistan, these evening network programs employed both the conflict and attribution of responsibility frames to shape their coverage. Coverage of the U.S. military build-up in

the region also focused on advanced weaponry and new technology that would be used, much like the coverage of the Gulf War in 1991. In comparison to that war, with the horrific September 11 attack on the homeland, little coverage was given to public protests to the use of force in the lead up to war.

The only contrasts to the drumbeat of war were sparse human-interest features on the unfolding humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan as civilians sought to flee the region before the U.S. attacked. For example, on *NBC Nightly News* broadcast on September 29, 2001, anchor John Seigenthaler discussed that the region had the world's largest refugee population, due in large part to the Soviet war of the 1980s and the Afghan civil war of the 1990s. However, no mention was made of America's role in those conflicts. In fact, many Afghans interviewed in the refugee camps had no knowledge of the terrorist attacks on September 11 due to the stark poverty they lived in and lack of technology.

A further presentation of the attribution of responsibility frame was used in coverage of the Taliban as those providing safe harbor to bin Laden. The U.S. government worked diligently to negotiate the surrender of bin Laden or else Afghanistan would suffer the consequences. Many of the country's people became refugees, fleeing Afghanistan as the U.S. prepared for war. Some of the networks included coverage of the humanitarian crisis in the region as the Afghans fled. However, as noted from the study, few to no historical references were made regarding the rise of the Taliban or the U.S. involvement in the Soviet-Afghan war.

Previous Research Studies

As noted in the previous literature review, other scholars have examined the role of media framing in regards to Afghanistan and the terrorist attacks of September 11,

2001. Asim (2012) looked at the role of exclusionary framing and media discourse as it pertains to the American news media's portrayal of Afghanistan. Asim (2012) analyzed a large amount of data from television news coverage from the time of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan until the September 11, 2001 attacks. She used qualitative research and grounded theory approach. Her analysis provided support that suggested that the president and other government officials have the power to shape news coverage of war and to manage public opinion (Asim, 2012).

The research presented here in this thesis dovetails Asim's work by also demonstrating the connected nature of administration rhetoric and media framing when it comes to the October 2001 invasion of Afghanistan. This was seen in the pro-war statements made by President Bush and other Cabinet-level officials leading up to the invasion. Furthermore, the research presented in this thesis also employ's Asim's concept of exclusionary framing as relevant to the examination of what is omitted in media coverage with a focus on historical references. Historical references could have provided context and a more in-depth understanding of why America was attacked on September 11, 2001.

For example, building on Asim's research that the president has the power to shape news coverage of war, President Bush's address to a joint session of Congress and the nation in late September 2001 pushed forth the narrative that U.S. was attacked because the terrorists hate Americans' freedom. Bush stated,

> Tonight, we are a country awakened to danger and called to defend freedom. Our grief has turned to anger and anger to resolution. Whether we bring our enemies to justice or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done … On September the 11th, enemies of freedom committed an act of war against our country. Americans have known wars, but for the past 136 years they have been wars on foreign soil, except for one Sunday in 1941. Americans have known the casualties

of war, but not at the center of a great city on a peaceful morning. Americans have known surprise attacks, but never before on thousands of civilians. All of this was brought upon us in a single day, and night fell on a different world, a world where freedom itself is under attack …

"Americans are asking 'Why do they hate us?' They hate what they see right here in this chamber: a democratically elected government. Their leaders are self-appointed. They hate our freedoms: our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other.

However, this hatred because of freedom was simply not the case. U.S. policy in the region was (Regan, 2004). In reality, the Al Qaeda terrorists had been very explicit in their reasoning for attacking America, including the fact that U.S. troops were stationed in Saudi Arabia, Islam's holy land, during and after the Gulf War, as well as the U.S.'s unquestioned support of Israel. Al Qaeda, formed in 1988 after Bin Laden had helped the Afghans push the Soviets out of Afghanistan, was meant to help repeal foreign influence in the Middle East. The United States became their prime target with the organization declaring *jihad*, or holy war, against U.S. soldiers in 1996, and later all Americans in 1998 (Regan, 2004). As seen in the results of the research for this thesis, historical references were largely not used by the three major network evening news programs. These references could have provided valuable context and insight to the American people as the country went to war.

A second research study cited in the literature review was Fahmy's 2004 work on examining the visual framing of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Fahmy recorded the types of photographs used in English and Arabic newspapers. He found that both sets of newspapers conformed to the journalistic standards of newsworthiness when it came to the selection and use of photographs. Analysis also indicated while the news coverage of an English newspaper emphasized guilt in the September 11 attacks by

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showing visual messages that humanized the victims, it de-emphasized the bombing of Afghanistan by showing images that focused least on the victims and more on aid, patriotism, arsenal, and weaponry, thus framing the Afghan war in a technical frame (Fahmy, 2004). On a similar level, the news coverage of an Arabic newspaper emphasized guilt in the Afghan war by showing photographs that humanized the victims. It de-emphasized the September 11 attacks by showing visual messages that focused least on the victims and more on material destruction and planes crashing into the buildings, thus also framing the terrorist attacks in a more technical frame (Fahmy, 2004).

This thesis also echoed Fahmy's findings with results showing that most network evening news coverage used the conflict frame and attribution of responsibility frame. Reporting by ABC, NBC, and CBS also emphasized U.S. preparation for war, paying special attention to new weapons technologies and America's pursuit of bringing the terrorists to justice versus the devastating humanitarian impact the invasion would have on Afghan civilians.

Limitations and Areas for Future Study

The researcher for this thesis recognizes some limitations of study. One of these limitations includes the scope of material that was examined. Only evening news programs from ABC, NBC, and CBS were analyzed. The material examined also only included those broadcasts from September 11, 2001 through October 7, 2001. Additionally, not all broadcasts between those dates were available for viewing. Three were not available; nine did not work; and three were mislabeled. Another limitation of this study is the keywords that were used in the search of the Vanderbilt Television News

Archive. Those keywords were "terrorist attack," "Afghanistan," and "Osama Bin Laden."

Areas for future study on the topics of media framing, Afghanistan, and the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 could include expanding the date parameters of the current research to include evening news coverage beyond the start of the war on October 7, 2001. An interesting study would be to examine the shift in coverage from Afghanistan on September 11, 2001 through March 19, 2003, which marked the beginning of the U.S. war in Iraq. Another future area of study could include a comparison of the three big networks' morning and evening news programs, given that the morning programs carried the terrorist attacks live. And finally, another area to build on would be comparing network television coverage of September 11, 2001 and Afghanistan to cable news coverage, including CNN and Fox News.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the research presented here showed that a lack of historical references combined with the dominant use of the conflict and responsibility frames resulted in a strong narrative to shape public opinion to be favorable to proceeding into war in Afghanistan. If the public had been more aware of the historic U.S. involvement in the country, including previous support for the *mujahedeen* fighters against the Soviets, public opinion could have perhaps shaped different policies to guide the U.S.

As noted in the introduction, the war in Afghanistan has cost the United States thousands of American lives and billions of dollars. And, the question remains, is America any safer for this effort? Is Afghanistan any better off? The answer, regrettably, is not so much. The United States war in Afghanistan has brought progress in some areas,

but the U.S. mission has expanded, the Taliban remains powerful, and poor governance, and conflict are widespread. Afghan national security forces, the linchpin of the U.S. exit strategy, offer no guarantee of future stability (Waldman, 2013).

Since the U.S. invasion, Afghanistan has experienced faltering reconstruction as the region has been plagued by insurgency and Islamic extremism. Presently, an accelerated timetable for U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan threatens to leave an intensified civil war in its wake (Waldman, 2013). Taking these outcomes into account, the American public could have been better informed about the history and relationship between the United States and Afghanistan. A better-informed public, armed with lessons from history, could have had the opportunity to influence the U.S. government for different policy decisions at the onset of the war.

However, as demonstrated by this research study, as well as others cited here, the news media did not extensively provide historical context in the lead up to the war. As demonstrated in this thesis, the three historic television networks, ABC, NBC, and CBS, did not provide a historical framework in the lead up to the war. Instead, they shaped the narrative of coverage following the attacks of September 11 by providing a steady drumbeat on the path to war, using conflict and responsibility frames. Therefore, the war in Afghanistan became lumped into the larger, more nebulous "War on Terror," which the U.S. is still waging today.

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Codebook

This codebook provides instructions and training on how to conduct the content analysis

of the morning show and evening news programs of ABC, NBC, and CBS, starting on

September 11, 2001, and ending with the outset of war in Afghanistan on October 7,

2001. It contains definitions of terms, broadcast media codes, historical reference codes,

media frame codes, as well as others.

DEFINITIONS

Conflict media frame – emphasizes conflict between individuals, groups, institutions, or

countries

Human interest media frame – brings a human face, an individual's story, or an

emotional angle to the presentation of an event, issue, or problem

Attribution of responsibility media frame – presents an issue or problem in such a way

as to attribute responsibility for causing or solving to either the government or to an

individual or group

Morality media frame – interprets an event or issue in the context of religious tenets or

moral prescriptions

Economic consequences media frame – presents an event, problem, or issue in terms of

the economic consequences it will have on an individual, group, institution, region, or

country.

White House official – President, Chief of Staff, Deputy Chiefs of Staff, Counselor to

the President, Senior Advisors, Press Secretary and Deputy Press Secretaries.

Cabinet-level official – Vice President of the United States, Secretary of State, Secretary of Treasury, Secretary of Defense, Attorney General, Secretary of Interior, Secretary of Agriculture, Secretary of Commerce, Secretary of Labor, Secretary of Health and Human Services, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Secretary of Transportation, Secretary of Energy, Secretary of Education, Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and the Secretary of Homeland Security.

Pro-war comment– in favor of supporting the invasion of Afghanistan and war

Anti-war comment – opposed to war and the invasion of Afghanistan

CODING

Column(s)   Variable

1-2   Number assigned to each coder

4   Broadcast media

1 = ABC's evening news

2 = NBC's evening news

3 = CBS's evening news

4 = Any special network news program that did not air during the regular morning

or evening news timeslots

5   Broadcasting date

Enter date as month, date, and year of the broadcasted segment. For example,

09/11/01.

6   Type of historical reference made during the broadcast segment

1 = No historical reference

2 = U.S. support for the Afghan *mujahedeen* (freedom fighters) during the 1980s

Afghan-Soviet conflict

3 = previous World Trade Center bombing in 1993

4 = 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania

5 = bombing of the guided missile destroyer *USS Cole* in 2000

6 = other historical reference (Afghan-related)

7 = other historical reference (non-Afghan-related)

8 = more than one historical reference made

7   Media frame used during the broadcasted segment

1 = none of these frames was used

2 = conflict

3 = human interest

4 = attribution of responsibility

5 = morality

6 = economic consequences

7 = more than one of these frames was used

8   Official comment from a White House or Cabinet member on public policy

towards Afghanistan made during the broadcast segment

1 = No official quote/attributed statement or comment from a White House or

Cabinet member

2 = Direct quote from a White House or Cabinet member repeated verbatim by a

news anchor

3 = Attributed statement or comment from a White House or Cabinet member

repeated by a news anchor

4 = Direct quote from a White House or Cabinet member made by the official

themselves during an on-camera interview

9   If an official comment from a White House or Cabinet member on public policy

towards Afghanistan was made during the broadcast segment, please classify the

comment as pro-war or anti-war

1 = Neither pro-war or anti-war

2 = Pro-war

3 = Anti-war

10   Placement of Afghan-related segment within the broadcast evening news show

(shows are 30 minutes each)

1 = Mentioned within the first 15 minutes of the broadcast

2 = Mentioned within the last 15 minutes of the broadcast

Appendix B

Coding Sheet

Below is the format for recording data for this content analysis so that it is suitable for depositing into a data archive for statistical review. For each category to be reviewed, numbers were used for coding the data. Please refer to the codebook for the variables being measured along with term definitions.

If you have any questions regarding how to use this coding sheet, please contact the researcher, Bobbie Maynard, at bfmynard@memphis.edu.

Assigned coder number:

1   2

_____

Broadcast media:

1   2   3   4

_____

Broadcasting date:

_____

Type of historical reference made during the broadcast segment:

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8

_____

Media frame used during the broadcast segment:

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

_____

Official comment from a White House or Cabinet member on public policy toward

Afghanistan made during the broadcast segment

1   2   3   4

_____

If an official comment from a White House or Cabinet member on public policy toward

Afghanistan was made during the broadcast segment, please classify the comment as pro-

war or anti-war

1   2   3

_____

Placement of Afghan-related segment within the broadcast evening news show

1   2

_____