The Role of Media in Framing Political Imaginaries: Comparative Analysis of Media Response to 9/11

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Abstract

Immediately after the sad incident of 9/11, world witnessed war hype in the mainstream media of US and UK and the captions like "war on America", "America's new War", and the likes were beamed by major news channels. The narrative, thus created, portrayed the war as the sole option as the attacks were portrayed as an act of war. This study explores, compare and contrast the role of the US and the British media in the aftermath of 9/11 terrorist attacks. The question that has been investigated is whether the imaginary of War was constructed in the media of both these countries? The news headlines and talk shows of two months period starting immediately after the 9/11 incident are collected from the major US media (CNN, Fox News, New York Times, Washington Post) and also news headlines of UK newspapers (The Times London, The Independent UK) by using Lexus Nexus and are analyzed using interpretive analysis. The post 9/11 responses of media is analyzed in the light of framing theory and the domination of war rhetoric seems a direct repercussion of the forthwith framing of the events in terms of war by the administration. The political imaginaries thus created shifted the balance of power towards the executive with the military bureaucracy with its technical prowess and excess to all information attaining a pivotal role.

Keywords: War on terror, political imaginary, framing, 9/11, media response

Introduction

The trend of the time is away from the dominance of the specialist on bargaining, who is the businessman, and toward the supremacy of the specialist on violence, the soldier. (Lasswell H. , 1941)

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The terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the response of the US government brought a drastic shift in the way governments' used to respond to terrorism. Instead of dealing it as law and order issue, dealt with by the political institutions through law enforcement agencies, the response was orchestrated at a global level: the global war on terrorism. The portrayal of the terrorist attacks as an attack by the enemy country took the initiative away from the political institutions and passed it on to the military.

The question that one can ask retrospectively is that despite being a pluralistic democracy where all major public issues generate a distinctly divisible standpoint; the war rhetoric went unchallenged. All the mainstream media from both sides of the political divide was in-sync in buying the arguments in favor of "War". The whole issue can be retrospectively judged as a knee jerk reaction to the man -made catastrophe for which the populace was not prepared. The media continuously developed the war hype by featuring "logos such as "War on America," "America's New War," and other inflammatory slogans that assumed that the U.S. was at war and that only a military response was appropriate" (Kellner, 2002).

Furthermore, the media assisted the ruling elites in reifying the "political imaginaries" in the minds of populace by constructing an image of an enemy living in far flung areas as organized as any national army with sophisticated war weaponry and techniques. Time and again, the hierarchy of Al-Qaida was projected by juxtaposing it to the modern state structure. The War imaginary has been created as a Political imaginary: "as self-conscious projection of a state of affairs that did not in fact exist" (Wolin, 2008). The response to the terrorist attack as "War" changed its political dynamics.

The purpose of this paper is to explore, compare and contrast the role of the US and the British media in the aftermath of 9/11 terrorist attacks. This paper analyzes the response of mainstream media of the two countries: the US media because the incident happened in their country and the British media because Britain was the main ally and supporter of US government's war-centric policies. The data analysis is conducted by using Interpretive Analysis where the news headlines and the words used by the media after 9/11 is analyzed.

The questions explored in this study are; what was the response of the US and the British media in the aftermath of 9/11 terrorist attacks? Does the imaginary of War was constructed in the media of both these countries?

Political Imaginary & Framing

"The media tell us what to think about" (Bernard C. Cohen: 1963)

The media's interests play a crucial role in "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" (Entman R. , 2003). It has been argued, "What people know about the world around them is mostly the result of second-hand knowledge received through the press and that the pictures in our heads are the result of a pseudo-reality reflected in the news" (Lippmann, 1946).

Critical theorists argue that big media conglomerates connive with government to portray their side of the story in order to secure its business interests (Badikian, 2004; Chomsky & Herman, 2002). This becomes more eminent in the time of war: all major media groups' framing of issues gets aligned with the government's version of the story. In political science literature this is usually attributed to the "rallying around the flag effect"; where the coherent stories are shown on the media to satisfy the "market" demand. The populace demands a coherent language on media due to the overflowing patriotic emotions and energy all around; and no media group takes the "risk" to show the alternative view as that can be perceived as "against the national interests" and can go against them in the long run.

Aday (2010) argued, "media coverage of war tends to reflect official frames, especially those of the White House, and also tends to be relatively sanitized, at least early in a conflict" (p. 148). The body of literature on functional theory of mass communication posits that one of the core functions of communication is mobilization. It has been defined as "campaigning for societal objectives in the sphere of politics, war, economic development, work and sometimes religion" (Gilboa, 2009, p. 105). It has been argued that in democracies mobilization exists "in times of crisis and warfare……… may result from a governmental initiative or from the media's own initiative" (Gilboa, 2009, p. 105).

According to social constructivists, news and information is value-laden with an obvious bias and thus steer the public policy in a particular direction; making policy consequences burdensome for some and beneficial for others. Thus in Lasswell's terminology "Who gets what, when and how" is shaped a great deal by analyzing "Who (says) What (to) Whom (in) What Channel (with) What Effect". A great effort is put into deciding and popularizing various terms for different events; hence, words like war, peace, friend, enemies are used metaphorically whose meanings are embedded in peculiar contexts. Thus power elites possess the ability (power) to make a person think what he wouldn't have thought otherwise (adapted from Dahl 1949).

Another body of literature that deals with influence of media in positioning the public issues in the minds of the denizens is the framing

theory. The name is a rubric that encompasses a variety of concepts from the diverse disciplines of social sciences. The philosophical underpinnings of the concept can be traced back to the Plato's allegory of the cave depicted as a dialogue between Socrates and the wise man in the "Republic". The central idea is that humans living in a society are bounded in their understandings of the world (reality) by the explanations predefined by societal norms and values: analogy can be drawn to the shadows on the wall of the cave. However, mental frames or schemata as termed by psychologists are predefined by the societal forces and we as humans then tries to fit the reality into these compartments according to our "training" and experience.

In the field of media and communication, the concept of news frame is defined as the one that "operates to select and highlight some features of reality and obscure others in a way that tells a consistent story about problems, their causes, moral implications, and remedies" (Entman R., 1993). It is posited that news is "shaped by news media's construction of the conflict for a society. The media interpret and frame messages within the same cultural context as do naive actors" (Lee, Maslog, & Kim, 2006). This line of argument suggests that news framing is done in a particular social and cultural context; where media determines what facets of the news needs to be emphasized. Thus, media "creates" the "reality" for the populace that once established is pursued till some alternative explanation gains common currency.

A similar but much more extensive theoretical construct discussed in the political science literature is that of "political imaginaries" (Wolin, 2008, p. 17). The term "imaginaries" depicts something "existing in imagination" where imagination has been defined as "the power which the mind has of forming concepts beyond those derived from external objects; a scheme, plot, a fanciful project" (Wolin, 2008, p. 18). It has been argued that due to the witness of unprecedented technological advancements and economic growth the populace strives hard to create political imaginaries: "going beyond and challenging current capabilities, inhibitions, and constraints regarding power and its proper limits and improper usage" (Wolin, 2008, p. 18). The "Political imaginaries" is explicated as "a self conscious projection of a state of affairs that did not in fact exists"; "extrapolated" from existing "realities" (Wolin, 2008, p. 18). Thus "while a strong element of fantasy may figure the imaginary, there is likely to be a significant "real", verifiable element as well" (Wolin, 2008, p. 19). It has been argued that the imaginaries are created and substantiated in the minds of the populace to the extent that "political actors and even the citizens become habituated to that imaginary" (Wolin, 2008, p. 19).

The assumption of the theory is that the creation and substantiation of political imaginaries is based on the interests of those who hold power and resources. Furthermore, the power elites in a society control the projection of news and views and steers the mainstream media. This is due to the asymmetry of information in a society. As government is in possession of vital information, hence, they are in control of determining the course of action in advance. In almost all instances the decisions made by the government are legitimized under the garb of national interest and thus pass on unchallenged.

In case of democratic governments the role of media gets vital in developing public opinion in favor of or against a particular issue. The government to generate favorable public opinion, if the stakes are high puts in more rigorous effort. In most of the cases the governmental agenda is initiated in the immediate aftermath of the event and the incident is kept in the news for a very long period of time. Once a political imaginary is created and rhetorically brought into the parlance of the citizenry through media; it starts living its own life- where people use it to explain other related events. Thus the political imaginaries are "power-ladden terms….. Seems to join power, fantasy and unreality" (Wolin, 2008, p. 18). It involves "going beyond and challenging current capabilities, inhibitions, and constraints regarding power and its proper limits and improper uses" (Wolin, 2008, p. 18). The framework contends that the underlying assumption of creating and substantiating the political imaginary is to alter the power dynamic of the polity and also to consolidate it.

The political imaginary has been categorized into "power imaginary" and "constitutional imaginary". Albeit being a "real" and existing social contract, the constitution is termed as imaginary as its interpretation is contingent upon "how public officials, politicians in power and lastly citizens conceive it to be" (Wolin, 2008, p. 19). The construct of power imaginary is needed to acquire the power formation beyond the designated means and legitimized with the help of an "accompanied" reason or "justifying mission".

The theory of political imaginary assumes the existence of power elites: politicians, public officials, and military bureaucracy, businessmen and media houses. The role of media houses in building and consolidating the political imaginaries is pivotal; as they can reach household on daily basis with their "expert opinion" and news reporting, bringing some aspects of news under spotlight while neglecting others.

The two frameworks are conceptually interrelated: the media framing can be conceptualized as nested within the broader construct of political imaginaries. Both these constructs are utilized in tandem in

explicating and characterizing the role of media. The concept of media framing posits that the role of media in framing news items and meaning construction of events is embedded in the social and cultural milieu; where media decides how to create the reality. However, the political imaginary scholars argue that the social milieu is created by those who have power that includes but not restricted to media. According to this line of reasoning, the frames are developed by power elites and are endorsed by the media; i.e. media may or may not be party to the construction of the frame but plays a pivotal role in advancing that frame.

The constructs of political imaginaries, media framing and their corresponding frameworks are utilized in this study to analyze the media's response to the post 9/11 events. The news items, op-ed pieces and the headlines of the leading newspapers of America and England are analyzed. The time frame selected for this study is the one week post 9/11 period; with the assumption that media started framing the events in specific context by defining the contours and dimensions of the events immediately after its occurrence. The opinions of key decision makers and media pundits are also analyzed.

The focus is on the post 9/11 media coverage in the US and Britain. The reason for choosing these two countries is because both have peculiar socio-political values and albeit being affected by the scourge of terrorism in recent past; both reacted differently in selecting response to this problem. Another reason for selecting them is that the two countries are the key stakeholders and are facing major repercussion to the post 9/11 policies. Thus, the assumption is that the media of the two countries will develop different types of news frames and will create different political imaginaries. The objective is to study the role of media in pursuing or challenging the political imaginary of "war". The portrayal of 9/11 as a "war" is assumed to be the "political imaginary" as this shifted the onus of decision making to apolitical agencies.

Research Design

The data is collected from the online newspaper database: Lexis Nexis academic Universe. The data is collected by using the power search option in LexisNexis online database. The US media sources selected for the study are CNN, Fox News, New York Times and the Washington Post. Two known and widely read British newspapers, the Times of London and the Independent are selected. The media source selection was based on two factors: popularity (widely watched or read) and the availability of data sources needed for this research.

The search was made by using the search criterion of starting date 9/11/2001 and the ending date 11/21/2001. As the emphasis was

mostly on the news items, therefore, the search was confined to the "headlines". Opting the "search within the results" option further narrowed search results down. The keywords used were "war" and "terrorist attacks". Apart from the news headlines, the database was also searched for the "editor's note" in The New York Times (US Newspaper) and The Independent (British Newspaper). The search criterion for the key word "war" was consistent with the other searches. The search path is as follow:

> 'LexisNexis Academic Universe------ Power search------- Dates between (9/11/2001 to 9/21/2001) ----Source ------ Section (headlines, editor's note) ---- Results ------- search within the results (Key word= 'war" and "terrorist attacks")'.

The following table shows the sources and the results analyzed for this study.

Media Sources	Overall Results (Section)	Search within Results (key word "war" and "terrorist attacks")
CNN.Com	599 (headlines)	180 (war)
Fox News	200 (headlines)	167 (war)
The New York times	3000 (Editor' note)	184 (war), 70 (terrorist attacks)
The Washington Post	2658 (Editor' note)	624 (war), 251 (terrorist attacks)
The Times (London) (UK)	2861(Editor's note)	558 (war), 240 (terrorist attacks)
The Independent (UK)	1973(Editor's note)	430 (war)

Apart from the news captions and headlines, a couple of popular talk shows analyzing the situation and interviewing some political and defense persons are also included in the study data.

The second column in the above table depicts the huge amount of results popped up for the mentioned sources during that one week. This study did not need all data. Therefore, the search results were further narrowed down by searching the keyword "war" and "terrorist attacks".

After having fewer number of news items, they were further reviewed according to the study objectives. To narrow them down these results were scrutinized initially on the basis of their framing. Accordingly, the news captions and editor's notes that were framing "9/11 with war" or were "showing association of 9/11 to war" and also "going of war or no war in relation to 9/11" were taken for the study. That scrutiny resulted into 356 news captions from all the sources. In the final phase of selection the names of the important people associated or framed within same news captions were selected. Thus, the news captions, which mentioned the important politicians belonging to the administration and opposition, defense officials, and also the opinion

leaders, were selected. This whole scrutiny of news brought a sample of 52 news articles for the analysis under this study.

The results thus obtained are analyzed by conducting the interpretive analysis. The statements and opinions of those who were brought on the media in the immediate aftermath of the tragedy were analyzed in the context. The words they used while describing their views of the incident and also the op-ed pieces of the major newspapers were analyzed.

Findings & Discussion

The data has been collected from the online database of LexisNexis within the time frame of first week after 9/11 attacks. The pattern of reporting from the mainstream media in the United States (belonging to both sides of the political divide) seems quite homogeneous; unlike their characteristics difference of opinion on all major public policy issues. The vibes coming fromthe administration were quite deterministic regarding the possible culprits and the appropriate response to the terrorist attacks. All this agreement on the details of such an important issue seems quite out of place as most of the information was based on the preliminary investigations: it was too early for investigators to come up with any substantial evidences and details.

The findings in this study indicate that in his initial reaction to the incident, President George W Bush on September 13, 2001 told the New York Governor and the Mayor in a conference call that "America will win in the war against terrorism" (CNN.com, 2001). He reiterated his stance on September 15, 2011 when he declared that "the country is at war and that an act of war has been committed against America by terrorists"(FoxNews.com, 2001). The same day the President informed the nation that Osama bin Laden is a "prime suspect" and urged the military to "get ready" to retaliate for America's worst terrorist attack. The President's war rhetoric was supported vociferously by the Secretary of State Colin Powell. On the talk show "*Face the Nation" on September 16, 2001;*he warned the terrorists by saying that "you've united the country. You're at war. You will see the full weight of the international community brought against you"(FoxNews.com, 2001). The statement served two purposes: one to warn the terrorists and the other to inform the populace about the strategy that the administration had in mind for the response of the attacks.

The initial responses from the highest administrative authority provided a glimpse into the future. The framing of the event started shaping immediately after the horrifying incident; where the phrases like attack and war dominated the discussion by the commentators on all the mainstream media. As predicted by the framing theory the media played

a vital role in embodying the events and shaping their meanings and possible explanations. However, the media in this case lacked the capacity to construct the frame on its own because of lack of information and details; thus, the seminal work was done by those who possessed the first hand information about the events: the administration and the agencies.

The political imaginary adds on to the framing theory, as it is capable of explicating the framing at a broader level where media's role shrinks down to endorsing that construction. The early vibes coming from the administration explicating the events' plausible causal explanations and response is analyzed via the lens of political imaginary construct. The administration was under enormous pressure to explain the events and convince the populace that the culprits are sorted out; and also to make sure that these events will not be repeated in the future.

The constitutional imaginary about the possible uses of powers limits the domain of possible actions by the executive and those limits can only alter in case of war. However, the war can only be declared by the Congress. Thus, this framing of the events as war allowed the administration to smoothly transfer unprecedented powers to the administration (somewhat similar to what administration used to have during the times of two World Wars or in the aftermath of great depression) without forcing them to "officially" rectify the war from the Congress.

This framing of the events resulted in a consensus based response by many legislatures belonging to both sides of the political divide. Sen. John McCain (R-Arizona) declared, "the unwarranted, unprovoked attacks on innocent Americans are clearly an act of war and one that requires that kind of response"(CNN.com, 2001). According to Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah the "most authorities agree this is something we doubt Iran, Iraq or Libya would try and do, because they know of the massive response we would have to bring down on them"(CNN.com, 2001). The democratic senator from Connecticut, Christopher Dodd, paralleled the events to that of Pearl Harbor, and asking for a similar response: "We stand completely and totally behind our president. We may have our differences from time to time, but on a day like this, which rivals or not exceeds the attack on Pearl Harbor, we stand united behind our president and our government" (CNN.com, 2001).

The message that the administration wanted to convey through their initial statements was loud and clear: the response to the attacks will be a war. The spatial dimensions and modalities of the war were delineated by the administration in their latter statements to the media. According to the framing theory the selection of the media frames by the

mainstream media is contingent upon the cultural and social milieu of the society. In case of the tragic events of 9/11 the frame that emerged at the very outset of the media coverage was that of war. The emergence of the frame was from the official quarters i.e. from those who possessed information as can be concluded from the data. The implication of framing the attack and its possible response in terms of war was that the administration was able to generate support of politicians from both sides of the divide.

The war rhetoric assisted the administration to change the power imaginary of the society from highly desirable trait of less intrusiveness government to that of high security state. This is done because of early framing of the events as war; that consequently produced the rallying around the flag effect: customary outcome of war rhetoric. The political imaginaries resulting from such a framing of the events created such a socio-political environment where the war hysteria generated a motivation within the nation that has not seen the impact of war on its territory for almost a century. This "forced" even the opposition to avoid framing the events in any other way as that could have politically backfired. Thus, the theoretical explanation of selecting the war frame by the administration is due to its desire to concentrate its power without confronting the existing constitutional imaginary.

Few voices were raised asking for alternative responses but the majority voices overwhelmed them. Sen. Robert Byrd, D-West Virginia opined, "we can be shocked, but we shouldn't be overly surprised by what we're seeing. Planes are capable of diving into buildings, and there are lots of suicide bombers all over the world" (CNN.com, 2001). Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Massachusetts said "all of us deplore the acts of terrorism that we have seen in these last minutes, and our hearts reach out to all of those who have suffered, lost their lives or who are injured right now, and all of us reach out to the brave rescue workers who are attempting to help our fellow citizens" (CNN.com, 2001).

The media framing framework posits that media comes up with its own frames of events. However, in this case, the media's one-dimensional and non-challenging support to the frame developed by the administration can be explained by the political imaginary construct. Once the political imaginaries gain the legitimacy in the society they stay for a long periods of time; until some better alternative replaces them. These imaginaries are beneficial for the elites as it helps concentrating power without compromising the legitimacy. Furthermore, the theory also argues that framing events in terms of war (cold war and war on terror) makes it easy for the elites to obtain the desired objectives. This also helps in overcoming the common hindrances that political power

elites in a pluralist society confront such as opposition, media and civil society groups. The reason media initially avoids head on confrontation or challenge to such frames is due to highly and in most cases across the boards patriotic affiliations associated with these frames.

Findings in this study indicate that the editorials, letters to the editors and op-ed pieces published in the leading newspaper were also predominantly supportive of the looming war prospect as envisaged by the administration. In the New York Times on September 21, R.W. Apple Jr. (New York Times editor) wrote that the President, while addressing the spiritual side of the populace, declared attacks to be "acts of war" and said, "this will be a monumental struggle of good vs. evil. But good will prevails" (Apple, 2001). He further elaborated the contours of the future by declaring that "my resolve is steady and strong about winning this war that has been declared on America" and that the "government will call others to join us, to make sure this act, these acts, the people who conducted these acts and those who harbor them, are held accountable for their actions" (Apple, 2001).

The attacks were unprecedented and populace was looking towards government for answers. The administration came up with the answer: identifying the culprit and also the pertinent reply in terms of the war. The war hysteria resulted in generating the "rallying around the flag effect", uniting the populace by generating the patriotic and nationalistic vibes and the society geared up to support the administration in their war. The leading newspaper including the New York Times in its editorial reported the 'tremendous public support for the president', at the reception he received on Capitol Hill.

The Congressmen from both sides of the political divide provided unconditional support to the President. After the President's address to the Congress on September 19, 2001, the Majority Leader in the Senate, Tom Daschle (D-South Dakota) declared, "we will take up the president's initiatives with speed. We may encounter differences of opinion along the way, but there is no difference in our aim. We are resolved to work together, not as Democrats or Republicans, but as Americans. We will do whatever is needed to protect our nation. Nothing is more urgent"(CNN.com, 2001). The Minority Leader, Trentt Lott, (R-Mississippi), backed his comments by stating that "what normally happens when the president of the United States addresses a joint session of Congress, the leaders of the opposition party gives a statement and they respond. Tonight there is no opposition party. We stand here united, not as Republicans and Democrats, not as Southerners or Westerners or Midwesterners or Easterners, but as Americans" (CNN.com, 2001).

While analyzing the President's speech to joint session of Congress, The New York Time editor R.W. Apple Jr. posited that the claim of the President that the terrorist network has thousands of operatives in more than 60 countries; "suggests the awesome scope of the task that the president has set for the United States and for those who stand beside it" (Apple, 2001). He further argued, "some in the administration would prefer to focus the campaign more narrowly, concentrating on the operations of Osama bin Laden, the main suspect in the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on Sept. 11. That, they argue, would constitute a much more realistic goal -- though still a hard one to achieve -- and make easier the assembly of an extensive, actively engaged international coalition" (Apple, 2001).

This portrayal of alternative viewpoint did not get hold in the media as the dominant frame was too strongly backed by a "reality" of 9/11. The frame was reinforced by all the key figures of the administration. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice while elaborating the dimensions of the war on September 19, 2001 stated that "the U.S. would be facing an unconventional foe that did not have territory to invade or a well defined leadership" and that "this is also of a war of will and mind. It is a war in which information may be the most important asset that we have. So we're asking a lot of countries to help us with information" (CNN.com, 2001).

The Defense Secretary Rumsfeld gave some clue of the administration's strategy on as early as September 16 when he said that, "It's a mistake to think of the fight against terrorism as something that will be dealt with in a short period of time" (FoxNews.com, 2001). The same day Vice President Dick Cheney on NBC's *Meet the Press* said, "If you have a nation that has been providing a base, a sanctuary; they have to understand that if you provide support to these groups you will face the full wrath of the United States" (FoxNews.com, 2001). He added that "I have no doubt that he [Bin Laden] and his organization played some role in this" (FoxNews.com, 2001). Cheney opined that the U.S. may head into a time of war and possible recession, but that he expects the economy to rebound within the year.

It was found in the study that there were few people in the intelligentsia who were asking for a restraint and better thought out strategies but those voices were very few and not very popular amongst the talk show hosts. One reason for the media to toe the war rhetoric was its early popularity amongst the populace due to the early framing of the terrorist attacks as war attacks by the administration. Even before the proper initiation of the official investigations of the heinous crime; it was envisaged as an act of war. This can be substantiated by the statement of

the Richard C. Holbrooke, the former United States ambassador to Germany and the United Nations, who after the President's speech rightly pointed out that "the challenge that Mr. Bush faced tonight and will continue to face in the months ahead, is channeling the public's emotions in a clear direction, because Americans are confused and, in many cases, scared" (Apple, 2001).

Without changing the political imaginary the first casualty of this confusion could have been the administration itself; as the populace may have questioned the level of their competence in predicting protecting such an attack. However, the new imaginary was strong enough to convince the populace that it was not an ordinary attack planned by some run of the mill type of terrorist group but was conducted by as organized a group with sophisticate organizational and planning capabilities juxtaposing them with a national army.

Thus the media while pursuing the official view point without critically examining it indirectly endorsed those frames. The media, instead of asking questions about the negligence on part of those responsible for security assisted in transferring powers to the same security apparatus. As explicated by the theory, the political imaginary is based on something real (in this case the 9/11 tragedy) brought significant shift in decision making power during the early days to the executive, prompt passage of Acts through the congress and unauthenticated supply of those rumors that can substantiate the war rhetoric.

Contrary to the administration backed war hysteria that was developing within the US media, the reaction of the British media and their politicians was circumspect demanding a more prudent response to the terror attacks asking their Prime Minister to show restrain. The Times of London on September 13, 2001 published a detailed report by their Parliamentary correspondent Greg Hurst, who reported the reactions of parliamentarians from both sides of the political divide. The Labor MP for Linlithgow and Father of the House, Tam Dalyell, "called for restraint until it was clear who had committed the atrocities" and stated that "to say something unpalatable, they must understand the hatred engendered in many countries in the Middle East. I was in Iraq and the truth is that the bombing does engender hatred and I think we have to recognize a very nasty fact that there are young men from all over the Middle East who are prepared to do this kind of devilment. When I hear President Bush and others saying we must attack those harboring terrorists, the collateral consequences are really unimaginable again" (Hurst, 2001).

The reason for this distinct divergence in interpretation of events can be attributed to the different type of political environment prevalent in Britain. As the event was not happened on their soil so it was not possible for the power elites of that country to easily sell the war frame to the populace. In the absence of a dominant frame coming from the power elite' media framed the events in their own ways. Another reason that power elites in Britain were not able to frame it the way it was framed in the US was the prevalence of distinctly different and deep-rooted political imaginaries. The same political imaginaries stopped the power elites over there to frame it as extension to the war even after the subway bombings in London, and the events were dealt with more as a law and order phenomenon rather than that of war.

The left wing political media and politicians pursued and advocated their own frames and were as dominant as their counterparts. The former Labor Cabinet minister who left the Commons at the election, Tony Benn said, "'Star Wars' defense is no longer really relevant. We have to have a considered response. The point is this is an act of war by powerless people against the most powerful force in the world. You cannot say to a suicide bomber: if you attack us we will kill you. The whole world balance is changing. It is just a very, very difficult situation. A little bit of reflection is needed. Anger and fear are the worst basis for political decision (Ferguson, 2001).

Thus, the former Liberal Democrat Leader, Lord Ashdown of North-sub-Hamdon urged all those concerned to show restraint by stating that "we have to hope and exercise restraint. The easiest thing now is for us to respond with revenge. It would be illegal under international law, where a proportionate response is the guiding principle, were America just to blast out at this stage. We need a degree of maturity and to act in a careful, calculated way." The heading of the leading article of The Independent on September 12, 2001 was "*terrible acts of barbarism against America, but still the response must be civilized*" (www.independent.co.uk, 2001). In the body of the article it was argued, "The terrorists can only truly be said to have won if civilized nations abandon civilized values and themselves use indiscriminate violence against the innocents. Restraint, even in the face of such grievous provocation, has to be the watchword". The article denounced President Bush's desire of war as a response by terming it as a "wrong note" when "he said that the nation he leads would "hunt down those responsible for these atrocities" and opined that his tone was "more measured when he pledged that terrorism against the United States will not stand" (www.independent.co.uk, 2001). The author argued, "where there is proof against an individual, group or country, America should take

robust military action. But haste brings dangers not merely of hitting the wrong target but of making the dangers worse" (www.independent.co.uk, 2001). And that, "America must move with circumspection in this treacherous political terrain" (www.independent.co.uk, 2001). However this neutral framing got significantly biased once the Prime Minister Tony Blair took went to the US to support the war initiative of the US government.

Conclusions

The paper analyzed the media response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks on World Trade Center. The analysis is conducted by using two theoretical frameworks: the framing theory and the theory of political imaginaries. The two theories are not being used in tandem in any previous study although framing theory supplements and add the explanatory power of the political imaginary framework.

The post 9/11 responses of media is analyzed in the light of framing theory and the domination of war rhetoric seems a direct repercussion of the forthwith framing of the events in terms of war by the administration. The reason for this immediacy on part of the administration is due to the manifold benefits that it can achieve from doing this. The political imaginaries thus created shifted the balance of power towards the executive with the military bureaucracy with its technical prowess and excess to all information attaining a pivotal role. However, time constraint for the semester project and the sample size restricted the amount of data required to test all the assumptions of the theory.

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