

Pakistani and U.S. Press Content on Benazir Bhutto's Assassination Frame Her Dynasty, Destiny, Death and their Secrets

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Abstract

Few studies have investigated how the press covers political leader assassinations, and its societal, cultural and political connotations, particularly when that leader is female. Using framing theory, this textual analysis investigated how more than 200 stories from three Pakistani English dailies portrayed the murder of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto, and compared it to a similar sample of U.S. news reports. Pakistani press used three prevalent latent frames—the devastating effects of her death, the fulfillment of a prophetic demise, and efforts to keep the assassination's details under wraps. Also, it employed two absent latent frames—obscured gender and religion, and candidate without an election—to organize the information. In contrast, the U.S. coverage relied on two prevalent latent frames—the secret diplomacy behind Bhutto's return to Pakistan and the individual and national danger surrounding her life. The (in)ability of the presses to make sense of the assassination is discussed.

Keywords: Framing theory, framing typology, interpretative textual analysis, Benazir Bhutto, prevalent latent news frame, absent/trump latent news frame

On December 27, 2007, news sources avalanched news reports surrounding former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's assassination. Having survived a two-month earlier attempt on her life, she was the leading opposition candidate in the parliamentary elections that were scheduled for January 8, 2008, until the assassination. She chaired the center-left Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and touted democratic ideals. She was also the first woman elected to lead a Muslim state, having served twice as Pakistan's prime minister (1988-1990; 1993-1996). Benazir Bhutto had returned October 2007 to her homeland, exiting almost a decade of self-imposed exile in Dubai, following U.S. encouragement and an understanding with then Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf.

More than four years after her assassination, a Pakistani antiterrorism court indicted five militants and two police officers in her assassination, beginning the trial phase of the prosecution. Although both sides have delayed the indictment by procedural moves, "...four years is not a particularly long time for an indictment in a murder case in Pakistan" (Gillani, 2011).

This study's purpose is to consider how Pakistani news media covered the death of its, to date, first and only female government head, and how that coverage compares with U.S. coverage, given the two nations' relationship. One of the ten most populous countries, Pakistan, which is 97 percent Muslim and in which

less than 40 percent of its women are literate, is a key nuclear-armed Greater Middle East and South Asia nation. The region remains a strategically, economically, politically, culturally and religiously charged region because of its proximity to Afghanistan, geographic connections with the Taliban, possession of nuclear arms and notorious instability. These conditions have kept it closely on China's, Russia's and the United States' radars. However, 9/11 sealed U.S. and Pakistani relations such that the U.S. declared it a major non-NATO ally in the "war on terror" and has poured into it, to date, more than \$10 billion in aid, primarily military (The Post, December 29, 2007; Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, December 28, 2007)¹. In fact, TIME magazine headlined its May 23, 2011, issue cover story on Pakistani and U.S. relations as "Frenemies."

Pakistani news media under investigation in this study are English-language, available-online newspapers. Each has been individually selected from different publishers and, hence, different influencers of and on domestic news coverage. The U.S. news media are diverse, surfacing from a LexisNexis search of leading U.S. newspapers. Both news searches span relatively the same time period. One reason for collective examination is newspapers are decision makers' medium of choice (Cantrell & Bachmann, 2008). Another is because English, as the lingua franca of Pakistani elite and most government ministries, is Pakistan's official language as well as that of the United States. A third motive is the easy accessibility and immediacy of online and database-provided news. A fourth is to cut through extra-media influencers on national news (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996), comparing and contrasting perspectives to dismiss "per chance" findings and to work at getting the news-event(s)-under-investigation's truth.

This topic is interesting and important for at least three reasons. First, it offers a timely opportunity to study not only a prominent figurehead's assassination, which has rarely been done, but also a prominent *female* figurehead's assassination, which has been done even less. The immediate repercussions of such an event and its dynamism within the national public sphere complement the first point. Second, this assassination marked a critical moment in Pakistani history; as its "worst incident in the history of the country" (*Dawn*, December 28, 2007), it is Pakistan's 9/11. Press reports highlighted the elections as critical for political stability, and the assassination threatened the nation's peace, politically destabilizing and making it vulnerable to its neighbors. Third, at the time of this study's composition, it is timely to consider how female politicians who come under attack, like Benazir Bhutto and U.S. Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords from Arizona, are positioned within national media.

Framing theory provides the theoretical perspective by which to understand a textual analysis of Pakistani and U.S. press reports surrounding Benazir Bhutto's dynasty, destiny and death. This paper does not address Muslim (mis)interpretations in Western media; rather, its focus is to weigh how Pakistanis tell their own story, how they identify the dialogue surrounding Benazir Bhutto's death, and how this compares with

¹ The Council on Foreign Relations offers an excellent timeline of the two nations' history at <http://www.cfr.org/pakistan/us-pakistan-relations/p18392>.

the U.S. news media's framing of the event. This study intends to strengthen the framing research canon, delivering a replicable framing typology that considers prevalent and absent or trump latent frames for future news studies, in general, and potential leader assassination studies, in particular.

Frames and Framing Research

Although sometimes considered a "fractured paradigm" (Entman, 1993, p. 52), framing research has become increasingly attractive over the last several years because of its unique (inter)national applicability. It considers frames, or "*organizing principles* that are socially *shared* and *persistent* over time, that work *symbolically* to meaningfully *structure* the social world" (Reese, 2003, p. 11, emphasis in original). It digs deeper than simple discussions of media bias or themes to unearth the underlying structures of news messages and tap into group mental imagery (schemas) prompted through sometimes emotional visual and/or verbal clues and connections (Entman, 1993; Gamson, 1989).

Frames are active, negotiated elements that uniquely link media producers, content and audiences across time and space. Since framing is a multifaceted process in which influences travel in and through news texts in multiple directions, integrating discursive, political and sociological subprocesses in public deliberation, frames are illusive concepts, difficult to define and measure (Pan & Kosicki, 2003; Tankard, 2003). Frames organize and structure, yet they can be so taken-for-granted that their impact is by stealth (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Lewis & Reese, 2009; Van Gorp, 2007). This is because frames are culturally embedded; they "form universally understood codes that implicitly influence the receiver's message interpretation, which lends meaning, coherence, and ready explanations for complex issues" (Van Gorp, 2010, pp. 87-88).

Entman (1993) tried to identify and make explicit common tendencies among the various uses of framing terms and to suggest a more precise and universal understanding of them. Specifically, frames are formed and transferred through selection and salience; they define problems, can diagnose causes, make moral judgments and suggest remedies, through connection; shared understanding—culture being highly implicit—is key (Entman, 1993). Also, Tankard (2003) suggested a tried-and-true empirical approach to framing research, blending producer and content through the "media package," the "multidimensional concept," and the "list of frames" (p. 101) approaches. Along these lines, Nisbet and Scheufele (2007) have shown how a framing typology specific to U.S. science-related issues, including frames such as social progress, economic development/competitiveness, morality/ethics, public accountability/ governance, and conflict/strategy frames, could be successfully replicated (see also Nisbet & Mooney, 2007a,b; NPR, 2007).

Frames are composed of *manifest* content—informational, or that which is explicitly stated, intended and surface-ial—and *latent* content—interpretive commentary requiring investigation of deeper, perhaps unintended themes or even omissions (Clarke & Everest, 2006; Gamson, 1989; see also Altheide, 2002). Cultural resonances, sponsor enterprise (basically, frame management) and media organization and practice are three determinants of frame prominence or news content etiology (Gamson, 1989). For example, Entman and Rojecki (1993) analyzed the U.S. 1980-1983 nuclear freeze movement portrayal to show the interaction between frame prominence and framing judgment (journalist judgments in selecting and conveying information that filter in to news); movement coverage analysis shows that much of the democratic process of policymaking is a *ritual* designed to calm public anxieties while maintaining existing power relationships.

Also, Snow and Benford (1988) showed that interpretations by and through media and audience members allow or contribute to public action. Further, Carragee and Roefs (2004) linked framing to power and investigate the relationship between political change and the news media, including production, distribution and, primarily, interpretation angles. Since hegemony is tied to institutions through a structuration process, the status quo is engineered, but a researcher can study it through understanding product framing and routine. More particularly, framing research looks for patterns in the *selection* of information, the *emphasis* given to that information, the *interpretation* of that information, and the *exclusion* of other information; non-frames apparent through the consistent *absence* of certain, commonly accepted manifest and latent content, then, are also powerful frames.

Framing Funerals/Assassinations

Applying framing theory to death and/or assassination news coverage offers a unique opportunity to consider the “spiral of opportunity” stakeholders engage in; they can force news into a single interpretive context supporting elite interests and creating a public through significant numbers of people becoming actively engaged in debate about how society at large should respond to an issue (Miller & Reichert, 2003). This is because when famous people die, the public mourns and remembers them primarily in the same forum where they came to know them in life—in the news media (Kitch, 2000). The flurry of memorializing discourse that appears in the news media situates the deceased in a framework that makes sense of the deceased’s accomplishments in the present (Carlson, 2007). The obituary-related notes are a major form of collective memory within modernity, at least in theory (Fowler, 2005; Kitch, 2000). While the obituary is limited as a form of witnessing, due to constraints on critical openness at the time of death, the press is an important site of meaning-making, community-building and memorializing.

Regarding meaning-making, journalists err when they make more meaning of who they are and their power to talk about events than the dignitary they have been covering and his/her contribution(s) to society. For instance, U.S. news media have been sharply critiqued for their coverage of the Kennedy assassination, being detailedly called out on their self-congratulatory myth-making, having their objectivity debunked and their tabloid tendencies highlighted (Zelizer, 1992). In other words, news media can become more about the message makers than about the message.

Regarding community building, press reports can succeed in creating a common narrative and forum of experience. After the Kennedy assassination in 1963, "television mesmerized Americans for four days and virtually bound the nation into a single grieving family" (Hickey, 2001, p. 55). However, Dutch television news reporting analysis of controversial right-wing politician Pim Fortuyn's 2002 murder debunked the notion of a nationwide grief community; a focus on the media event and individual through mourning expressions and emotions including hate and anger dissipated unity among audience members who were followers (Pantti & Wieten, 2005). While news media coverage of the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995 did contribute to reintegrating the nation, it also traumatized the population through continuous coverage (Cohen, 2002).

Regarding memorializing, journalists can succeed in creating a uniform caricature of the deceased while working as an interpretive community and attempting to use narratives and collective memories to keep themselves together (Zelizer, 1992). The faulty portrayal can result from news media failure to provide an open, free discussion vital to the public sphere. This occurs when a "surrogate public sphere' . . . [or] realm of ideological homogeneity, in which only one interpretative frame is presented, while others are either ignored or denied legitimacy" is formed (Yadgar, 2002, p. 162). In short, press calls for a national unity and national unity government at a time of national mourning can be faulty to the point that press reporters willingly sacrifice the mythical status of the deceased national leader (Yadgar, 2002).

With this background, these questions rise: How have Pakistani news media framed the death of its first Muslim female leader? Given the relationship between Pakistan and the United States, how does Pakistani news coverage of the assassination compare with U.S. news reports?

Methods

While Urdu and English are both official languages in Pakistan, we chose three Pakistani English-language newspapers, *The Post*, *Dawn* and *The News International*. The government is an Islamic Republic, with a president and prime minister governing more than 160 million people.

The Post, a national newspaper, was founded in 2005 and has already become one of Pakistan's top five

English newspapers, largely because of its content and policy. Owner Zia Shahid also owns the Khabrain Group of newspapers. More than 250 journalists work with *The Post*, in and out side of Pakistan.

Dawn is Pakistan's newspaper of record. The flagship of the Dawn Group of Newspapers, which Pakistan Herald Publications publishes, *Dawn* is also the oldest (founded in 1941) and most widely-read English-language Pakistani newspaper with a weekday circulation of more than 138,000. Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Pakistan's founding father, created this medium to counter Hindu-press anti-Muslim propaganda.

The Jang Group of Newspapers, which also produces the largest Urdu language newspaper, publishes *The News International*, Pakistan's second largest newspaper. It has a certified circulation of 140,000. Its overseas edition, which is published from London, caters to the UK Pakistani community.

This study's sample covers the week immediately following Bhutto's assassination, beginning December 28, 2007 (the date after the murder and the day of her funeral service) and continuing through January 3, 2008. All articles headlined "Benazir," "Bhutto" or "BB" were pulled from Pakistani papers, resulting in almost 400 stories. From this pool, front page and main news stories, national news stories, business news and editorial content were included in the sample, totaling 238 articles. Table 1 provides a print news summary:

Table 1: Pakistani Print News Summary

Paper	Articles
The Post	116
Dawn	48
The News	74
Total	238

A similar format was followed for the LexisNexis draw of U.S. newspapers. Although licensing agreements between news media outlets and LexisNexis change on at least a yearly basis, it remains a premier source for searching numerous news media outlets with regard to any given topic at once. This allows greater objectivity on the part of the researcher, as it removes bias toward any particular news source choice for comparison while including a wide variety of sources for concurrent data capture. On December 22, 2011, LexisNexis was directed to include U.S. newspapers, using similar terms and conditions as with the Pakistani press search, with one exception. Given the 10-hour time difference between Pakistan and the East Coast of the United States, the timeframe of the sample was increased by one day. In other words, LexisNexis was searched from December 28, 2007, through to January 4, 2008. Only articles with "Benazir" or "Bhutto" in their headlines were pulled, an approach that resulted in 263 articles for the comparison.

Once newspaper article abstracts and any duplicate articles were removed, the adjusted total of U.S. news articles analyzed was 241.

An interpretive textual analysis seeks to get beneath the surface or denotative meanings and examine more implicit or connotative social meanings. This methodological approach often views culture as a narrative or story-telling process in which particular "texts" or "cultural artifacts" such as news reports consciously or unconsciously link themselves to larger stories at play in society. Interpretive textual analysis is a powerful tool, especially when complemented by or used to apply framing theory.

This method is not without its flaws, however. Textual comparisons are not supported by any systemic guidelines for record interpretation. Rather, "they are left to an informal discussion which solely draws on the ingenuity and experience of the author who is working backward from the data." (Truex, 1996, p. 3) To add rigor to our interpretive textual analysis, we reviewed each story numerous times to understand in what *manifest* and *latent* way(s) the story surrounding Bhutto, her death, and the implications of her slaying were presented. To reiterate, *manifest* frames are explicit, superficial and informational, while *latent* frames are interpretive, comprising specific message inclusions as well as (un)intended omissions. For instance, types of manifest frames that could emerge from an interpretive textual analysis of newspapers might coincide with how a newspaper is organized through beat reporting, including city, nation, world and feature stories. Additional manifest frames could subdivide content from that point. In this application, the interpretive textual analysis of newspapers applies framing theory to consider the cultural, social, political and other spheres of interpretation to attempt to make sense of what is being (un)said. This requires assessment of "...organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world" (Reese, 2003, p. 11). All the findings highlighted in this study are latent news frames.

We also convened constantly to discuss both the stories and the frames. We did this for two reasons. One was to counter "the low relevance of reliability in qualitative research" (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, 239). Another was to ensure objectivity of the findings through intersubjective agreement (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, 292) as well as dependability, which accounts for both factors of instability *and* factors of phenomenal or design-induced change: "It can be argued that this naturalist view is broader than the conventional [concept of reliability], since it accounts for everything that is normally included in the concept of reliability plus some additional factors" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, 299). In the Rojecki (2005) and Esser and D'Angelo (2006) traditions, the goal of this qualitative study has been to identify what kinds of topical and, even more importantly, whispered, culturally-embedded frames emerged from this coverage.

Results

The research questions posited, How have Pakistani news media framed the death of its first Muslim female leader? Given the relationship between Pakistan and the United States, how does Pakistani news coverage of the assassination compare with U.S. news reports? Applying framing research to the more than 200 Pakistani press reports unearthed at least two general kinds of latent frames. One is prevalent latent frames, or frames that emerge from materials included in news reports. The other is absent or trump latent frames, which surface from considering materials omitted from news reports. The prevalent latent frames include "Domino effect," which summarizes the devastating effects of her death; "Oracle," which includes the fulfillment of a prophetic demise; and "The secret," which speaks to the many efforts to keep the assassination's details under wraps. The absent or trump latent frames include "Non-issue," or how Ms. Bhutto's gender and religion were obscured, and "Not an option," or how BB seemed to be a candidate without an election. For a summary, see Table 2 below.

Table 2: Bhutto Assassination Pakistani National News Framing Typology

Frame	Presence	Associations
Domino effect	Prevalent	Assassination sends (inter)national shock waves
Oracle	Prevalent	BB is a doomed daughter of destiny and dynasty
The secret	Prevalent	BB's cause of death is averted
Non-issue	Absent	Gender and religion are absent or erased
Not an option	Absent	BB is a candidate without an election

Pakistani Prevalent Latent News Frame One: Domino effect

In the Pakistani press, Benazir Bhutto was heralded as democracy's savior to Pakistan and appeared the nation's only hope to restore a democratic society to the land Gen. Pervez Musharraf seized control of through a 1999 coup. Press reports indicate her assassination was like a nuclear blast to the nuclear-armed country hoping to return to a "normal" government/situation in at least three respects: it blasted any possibility for the government to return to any democratic form; its repercussions occurred in waves, affecting individuals, businesses and economic stability on various levels; and it rushed in an apocalyptic era.

The domino effect for democracy

The three papers echoed sounds of Benazir Bhutto's death being a national tragedy. More pertinently, they presented factual evidence to support how death to Benazir Bhutto in Pakistan affected not only the future Pakistani elections, but also the ideological possibility of democracy coming any time soon to Pakistan. Shock effects reverberated through the neighboring countries, and farther. For example:

Her death was viewed not only as a serious threat to nuclear-armed Pakistan's democratic process, but also more broadly to stability in the region. "The world has much at stake in the success of Pakistan's democratic institutions," said US Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, who described Bhutto, the first woman to be elected leader of an Islamic country, as a close personal friend and "courageous figure."

"It's a great tragedy because she stood for moderation, for rule of law, for democracy in her country, and her death is a loss for the cause of moderation, democracy, and rule of law for Pakistan," Khalilzad told reporters. (*The News International*, December 29, 2007)

The domino effect's individual and economic repercussions

With Benazir Bhutto's passing, a lack of authoritative accountability had tangible, measurable results. At least 38 individuals shocked by and reacting to the news died and/or killed themselves the first day; emotional people charged their streets causing widespread chaos and destruction; and survivors looked for someone and/or something to blame for their pain and loss of hope. One *Dawn* example states,

Shops were shuttered, weddings were cancelled and daily life was on hold for tens of millions of Pakistanis on Saturday as the nation mourned the assassination of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto.

On the second day of official mourning for the slain opposition leader, most people were unable to buy food or petrol, with almost all shops, fuel stations, banks and offices closed down. (*Dawn*, December 30, 2007)

Such emotional tremors were felt throughout the society, and globally, according to the press. Particularly, economic relations are affected across the world when a leader is assassinated. *The News International* summarizes,

The economic cost of the death of Benazir Bhutto would bring about difficulties for the government to meet its growth, revenue and export targets which were already under pressure due to government's reluctance to take hard economic decisions in the election year.

The country has lost billions of rupees in revenues and exports besides colossal loss to property and life in two days of strike and riots after the death of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto. (*The News International*, December 31, 2007)

The Post specifies,

Oil prices surged towards 100 dollars per barrel this week after Pakistani opposition leader Benazir Bhutto was killed by a suicide bomber.

On Friday, geopolitical jitters and weak US energy stockpiles drove New York crude to 97.92 dollars. That was just 1.37 dollars off the record 99.29 hit on November 21.

Bhutto's assassination on Thursday also sent funds flowing away from equities and into precious metals as investors sought a safer haven for their cash amid fears of spreading turmoil in the region. (*The Post*, December 30, 2007)

The domino effect suffocates hope

According to the news stories, Benazir Bhutto represented more than a person to her people; she was considered a savior, someone chosen and prepared to bring a new rule of democracy and freedom back to her people. Her assassination was beyond an election disruption; her death represented the suffocation of the nation's hope, "a national tragedy" (*The Post*, December 28, 2007). Press reports harmonized a national state of mourning. In particular, *The Post* announced Pakistani President Musharraf's decree, "as a sign of respect for her" and with "the national flag at half-mast during the days" (*The Post*, December 28, 2007).

Although Musharraf, who, in many ways, was a Bhutto foe, made the pronouncement, he followed traditional Islamic funeral practices by evoking the three-day mourning period. Still, Benazir Bhutto death's was foretold and foreshadowed.

Pakistani Prevalent Latent News Frame Two: Oracle

Benazir Bhutto, "Daughter of Destiny"—as she referred to herself in one of her autobiographies—and "often hailed as the all-important figure in that return to a parliamentary process" (*The Post*, January 1, 2008), was a daughter of privilege. Raised in a very political and wealthy family, trained abroad at the best universities, and groomed at her father's side to be his political successor, Benazir Bhutto was the youngest world leader at age 35. She had, through bloodlines, inherited power and prophetic demise, like the U.S. Kennedy family members (*The News International*, January 2, 2008), as Pakistani reports shadow. In the

public spotlight for numerous reasons, and a powerful influencer, Benazir Bhutto was not the first of her family to die for a public cause nor was her martyrdom unsuspected. "In many ways, Benazir Bhutto's family could be said to be star-crossed" (*The Post*, December 28, 2007). Twice, she struggled to gain power as the PPP's leader and succeeded in her elections to prime minister. Her third election attempt sealed her destined death through lack of security, her legacy to continue to lead from the grave, and her dynasty through her son, her heir.

The Oracle's imminent death

Once she decided to return to her homeland, Benazir Bhutto negotiated her re-entry, relying upon presidential promises and attempting (inter)nationally to secure her well-being. As a Bhutto with a strong familial history of death via politics, she was a sure target, as shown by the publicized threats from Al Qaeda and others. Pakistani press reports clearly spoke of the risk, particularly reporting on the first attempt against her life in October 2007. Once the deed was done, reports dot some *how* and *why* murder details. For example,

Officials from Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party have complained that security arrangements for her were woefully inadequate, given the seriousness of the threats against her from al Qaeda, the Taliban and others. She relied largely on using a "human shield" of loyal followers who would form a ring around her, but as the attack Thursday proved, it was little protection against a determined assailant. (*The Post*, December 31, 2007)

Additional reports emphasized her human shield:

Pakistani officials have rejected criticism of their security efforts, contending that they took careful precautions for Bhutto's safety. But when she was fatally attacked Thursday, she had no police escort, only her own force of volunteer guards surrounding her car, putting their bodies between her and any attacker. (*The News International*, January 1, 2008)

The Oracle lives on through her bloodline

Like father, like daughter; like daughter-and-later-mother, like son. Benazir Bhutto and her family foster the Bhutto dynasty through practice and blood. Specifically having requested to be buried by her father rather than her husband (when the time comes), "Benazir Bhutto's body would be brought today (Friday) to Larkana for burial besides her father Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's grave in Garrhi Khuda Bukhsh. The graves of Shahnawaz Bhutto and Mir Mutraza Bhutto, brothers of Benazir, are also there" (*The Post*, December 28, 2007). The same newspaper also states,

Groomed by her father Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, as she was grooming her son Bilawal, Benazir became prime minister of Pakistan for the first time in 1988 but was removed from office 20 months later, on alleged corruption charges. (*The Post*, January 1, 2008)

Further,

Ghinwa Bhutto submitted before the "will" of Benazir Bhutto and accepted Bilawal Bhutto Zardari as the new party chairman, saying this was the last wish of her late sister-in-law and she would not dispute it. (*The News International*, January 1, 2008)

The Oracle's lasting memorial

Regardless of her heir's future, and although a tangible representation of the ideals for which the Bhuttos have struggled, Benazir's legacy shouts out. Thus,

A strong, representative democracy in Pakistan will defeat terrorism and extremism, show the path to a more stable, prosperous future, and stand as a lasting memorial to the life's work of Benazir Bhutto. We owe it to her memory to strive together to achieve that goal. (*The News International*, December 31, 2007)

And,

The establishment of true democracy in the country would mean best revenge of Bhutto's killing, [Afrasiab Khattak, president of the Awami National Party] added. (*Dawn*, January 1, 2008)

According to the newspaper coverage, Bhutto's life and death were prophetic, larger than life, godlike. In fact, because Benazir Bhutto could not have served as prime minister again unless she and her party secured the election and a decree were changed (*Dawn*, December 28, 2007), her death further eulogized her legacy. Resembling others who have lived powerfully, she has become more powerful through death. "And the rapturous welcome by millions of supporters passed into the legends of history along with those of Ayatollah Ruholla Khomeini of Iran and Cory Aquino of Philippines" (*The Post*, December 28, 2007). The manner of her death, however, has been hotly contested.

Pakistani Prevalent Latent News Frame Three: The secret

Documented reports officially state that Benazir Bhutto died when her head hit the sunroof of the vehicle in which she was being driven during a political rally in Rawalpindi. Two voices whisper through the coverage. One says there is more to this than what the government is letting on. Another suggests that those in power must push through the current circumstances, holding to the government's decree as truth, regardless of what the evidence presents.

Keeping quiet

Although Bhutto's medical report was "signed by seven doctors" (*The News International*, January 1, 2008) decreeing her reason for death to be accidental and vehicle related, facts such as vehicle manufacturer opinion, footage and personal/eyewitness accounts contested the reports. Those in authority seemed to be keeping quiet. For example, *The Post* revealed doctors' forced consent to secrecy:

The government authorities have *pressured the medical personnel* who tried to save former prime minister Benazir Bhutto's life to *remain silent* about what happened in her final hour and have removed records of her treatment from the facility, the Washington Post quoted the doctors as saying... *Sweating and putting his head in his hands, he said: "Look, we have been told by the government to stop talking. And a lot of us feel this is a disgrace."* The doctors now find themselves at the centre of a political firestorm over the circumstances of Ms. Bhutto's death. (*The Post*, January 2, 2008, emphasis added)

International world leaders' condolences and political leaders' commentaries juxtapose the Pakistani government's silence regarding Benazir Bhutto's assassination. Press reports clearly tell this controversy,

Sherry Rehman, a PPP spokesperson, said: "She had a bullet wound at the back of her head on the left side. It came out the other (side). That was a very large wound, and she bled profusely through that."

Ms Rehman prepared the slain leader's body for burial.

"She was even bleeding while we were bathing her for the burial. The government is now trying to say she concussed herself, which is ludicrous. It is really dangerous nonsense." (*Dawn*, December 30, 2007)

Pressure to learn Benazir Bhutto's true cause of death allowed international intervention. Although Pakistani government officials had initially rejected foreign offers to investigate the cause of death, a Scotland Yard inquiry was finally allowed. The report—released February 8, 2008—stated that she died from the impact of a suicide bombing, not bullets fired at her moments earlier as she left a political rally (Tran, 2008). Regardless of the reason, Benazir Bhutto is dead, and those in power forge ahead.

The united secret

It's an illogical role over reason for the Pakistani government:

Meanwhile, commenting on General Musharraf's remarks in his address that Mohtarma Bhutto was assassinated by some terrorists, the PPP spokesperson and former Senator Farhatullah Babar has said that blaming the nameless terrorists for the assassination of Mohtarma Bhutto is designed to skirt the issue, not address it. (*The Post*, January 3, 2008)

In brief, Pakistani press reports synchronize on the news elements who, what, when and where: Twice-former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto died December 27, 2007, in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, after a political rally. The *how* and *why* news elements remain sketchy, because many invalidated versions conflict, and all sources contest what is being reported. Not only the details are unclear. In fact, specific, blatant details are absent from coverage. Two other frames, which we term absent or trump frames, reveal the lack of discussion on at least two key points. As previously stated, absent frame one is "Non-issue" and absent frame two is "Not an option."

Pakistani Absent Latent News Frame One: Non-issue

In a predominantly Sunni Muslim nation,² "a nation where Islam is something more than a religion, and anti-Americanism runs high" (Wines, 2002), how is it that a woman can lead not once, not twice, but almost a third time, and a Shi'a Muslim woman at that? Benazir Bhutto, a minority at least in her gender and her religion, is thought of neither as a feminist nor as a radical female, but she is a role model who is female. In fact, she is one of the world's most popular and important female leaders, having been recognized through a 2007 survey conducted by Gallup and *USA Today* as one of the top ten women Americans admire the most (*Dawn*, December 28, 2007).

While Pakistani press reports strip gender from "chairperson" Benazir Bhutto by rarely referring to her femaleness, they report on other public acts women participate in, singling them out by and/or because of their gender. For example,

The ceremony was attended by PPP workers and people of the area *and women* including Saeeda Jamal Labar, Zohra Mai, Maryam and other PPP *women* workers. (*The Post*, December 31, 2007, emphasis added)

Further,

The news of PPP leader Benazir Bhutto's assassination came as a bombshell in the city, making the people cry over the loss of the national leader. The city was gripped with shock and many grief-stricken people, especially women, fell unconscious after hearing the tragic news through the electronic media. (*Dawn*, December 28, 2007)

In the few press reports when Benazir Bhutto's gender is noted, her religion is obscured through a Judeo-Christian metaphor:

² Pakistan's predominantly Muslim population is 77 percent Sunni and only 20 percent Shi'a.

That was her enduring image; *a female David*, wrestling against formidable obstacle [sic] of Goliathic dimensions—chauvinism, conservatism and authoritarianism—with empty hands. (*The Post*, December 28, 2007, emphasis added)

Or, it remains unaddressed:

Ms Bhutto, a former two-time prime minister, was an incredibly brave and courageous woman who had returned from exile to her homeland to lead her party in the forthcoming elections. (*The News International*, January 2, 2008)

Another obvious absence from Pakistani press reports is Benazir Bhutto's candidacy.

Pakistani Absent Latent News Frame Two: Not an option

Pakistani news reports have been able to separate Benazir Bhutto's death from the political context in which it occurred. With only one exception from *Dawn*, none of the more than 200 news stories refers to Benazir Bhutto as a candidate in the then-scheduled-for-January 2008 election. Press reports are very clear that her purpose in returning to Pakistan was to participate in the election, yet her candidacy—her specific electoral role—is not noted. She is not an option for her people to elect. Or, she is a candidate without an election. For example,

While addressing a huge public gathering at Liaqat Bagh Rawalpindi before falling prey to a suicide attack, Benazir Bhutto (late) said her party, after coming into power, will create opportunities for the poor so that they can live their lives without having any financial problems while she accused the rulers of promoting bomb blast culture in the country, either to put off the forthcoming elections or get the results of their own choice. (*The Post*, December 28, 2007)

In short,

Benazir Bhutto was killed in a suicide attack on Thursday, just two months after the former premier returned from exile for a political comeback. (*The News International* 28 December 2007)

The press separates the person from the event, then it equates the person with a separate event through her assassination. Benazir Bhutto becomes an unelectable candidate taken out of the running through her assassination. Perhaps ironic, her death and subsequent absence from the election seems to enliven the election:

PPP Punjab Secretary General Ch Ghulam Abbas . . . said that the assassination of Benazir Bhutto was taken place for halting and sabotaging the process of election in the country. (*The Post*, January 3, 2008)

Again,

The attack targeting Pakistan's most prominent opposition leader . . . dealt a new shock to a world already troubled by political terrorism and clouded the process of the general election set for Jan 8 and the country's political future. (*Dawn*, December 28, 2007)

Yet, the chances for the general election initially marked for January 8, 2008, were clouded, since it would have taken a constitutional amendment for a former two-time prime minister to have been elected a third time. The Pakistani Press never mentioned the legalities of this glitch, or the fact that Ms. Bhutto was technically Not an option on the ballot.

In brief, applying framing and framing assassination research to the more than 200 Pakistani press reports unearths at least the prevalent latent news frames Domino effect, Oracle and The secret along with the absent latent news frames Non-issue and the Not an option.

While the Pakistani newspapers' coverage is quite homogeneous, a look at U.S. press reports and op-ed pieces tells a more varied story—one with different emphases and organizing principles. Thus, whereas in Pakistan the stories almost ignored matters of gender and religion, the U.S. newspapers highlighted Bhutto's condition of a trailblazer female in a Muslim country. They cited Bhutto's break from traditionalism, saying she was "...an influential figure who broke the gender barrier ... to become prime minister..." (*Christian Science Monitor*, January 2, 2008). They also widely speculated that her assassins might be radical Islamists or Al Qaeda operatives.

Not surprisingly, the coverage in U.S. newspapers tried to make sense of the assassination in terms of U.S. interests and events that an American audience could understand, with emphasis on the danger posed by Bhutto's death to U.S. security and the assassination's impact on Pakistan's chances of democratic government. Likewise, far removed from Pakistan and less familiar with the Bhutto family, the U.S. newspapers' narrative allowed for conflictive and alternative interpretations of Benazir Bhutto' figure—presenting her as a flawed heroine. For instance, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Times* reported on the criminal probes of the Benazir and her husband's financial dealings being opened in France, Poland, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. Dailies like the *Los Angeles Times* referenced Bhutto's husband and his "Mr. 10 (Percent)" moniker "for his alleged take from every government contract signed during his wife's premiership" (January 3, 2008). Thus, while the coverage cast her often time as a herald of democracy, there was also room for critiques to her (supposedly) democratic bona fides and highlights to her autocratic ways.

Additional analysis of U.S. news reports regarding Benazir Bhutto's assassination percolated two prevalent latent news frames. The first is Secret diplomacy. The second is Danger. Table 3 below summarizes this information.

Table 3: Bhutto Assassination U.S. National News Framing Typology

Frame	Presence	Associations
Secret diplomacy	Prevalent	Benazir's return to Pakistan was negotiated
Danger	Prevalent	Individual and national security are questionable

U.S. Prevalent Latent News Frame One: "Secret diplomacy"

One of the prevalent latent news frames that emerges from the more than 200 U.S. news reports on Benazir Bhutto's assassination is Secret diplomacy. This is a frame that underscores the special relationship between the United States and Pakistan. It suggests an understanding that at least governing officials in the U.S. and Pakistan considered Benazir's presence to have a potential unifying effect on her country and its relationship with the United States. The Secret diplomacy latent news frame incorporates democracy, including what it might mean and how it might be enacted. Finally, the latent news frame includes the U.S. press' use of synchronous U.S. and Pakistani elections to make Pakistani events more proximate to U.S. readers.

U.S. news reports clearly reveal that Benazir "Bhutto's political comeback was a long time in the works" (*The Washington Post*, December 28, 2007):

For Benazir Bhutto, the decision to return to Pakistan was sealed during a telephone call from Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice just a week before Bhutto flew home in October. *The call culminated more than a year of secret diplomacy*—and came only when it became clear that the heir to Pakistan's most powerful political dynasty was the only one who could bail out Washington's key ally in the battle against terrorism. (*The Washington Post*, December 28, 2007, emphasis added)

That this was a planned event echoed:

Behind the scenes, the Bush administration had *negotiated her return* to Pakistan after an eight-year exile. After Pakistan's military leader, President Pervez Musharraf, declared emergency rule, administration officials pressured him to relinquish military control and to allow parliamentary elections in January. (*San Jose Mercury News*, December 28, 2007)

Again:

Indeed, the United States supported the very brave Ms. Bhutto in the past, and helped broker her return to Pakistan this time. (*The Providence Journal*, January 2, 2008).

Perhaps not surprisingly, given the United States' and other nations' efforts to influence (inter)national affairs, Benazir's negotiated return was engineered for the benefit of U.S. interests rather than for the benefit of Pakistan's future:

Regal, heir to a tragedy-stricken political dynasty, her rhetorical skills sharpened at Harvard and Oxford, the two-time prime minister was the *public face of the democratic, pro-Western leadership the U.S. government wants to see running Pakistan*. (*USA Today*, December 28, 2007, emphasis added)

And:

Her return had been promoted by Washington as part of an agreement to share power with Mr. Musharraf and rescue his increasingly unpopular government by giving it *a more democratic face*. (*The New York Times*, December 28, 2007, emphasis added)

As another dimension of the U.S. latent news frame Secret diplomacy, U.S. news reports were peppered with illusive references to democracy. The references were illusive, because they tended to define democracy not by what it is, but by what it's not: terrorism, or the antithesis of terrorism. Consider this string of demonstrative quotes:

She stood for democracy and she stood against terrorism (*The New York Sun*, December 28, 2007)

"It is the assassination of democracy," [Zafar Hassan, 35, the Atlanta bureau chief of The Urdu Times and the Pakistan Post,] said. "I hope and pray that Pakistan will remain on the path to democracy. We must be united and *fight this terrorism and extremism*, just as America is fighting. (*The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, December 28, 2007, emphasis added)

The Bush administration scrambled Thursday to deal with the assassination of former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto after having invested significant *diplomatic capital* in promoting reconciliation between her and President Pervez Musharraf... Irritated by the situation, Congress last week imposed new restrictions on U.S. assistance to Pakistan, including tying \$50 million in military aid to State Department assurances that the country is making "concerted efforts" *to prevent terrorists* from operating inside its borders. (*Detroit News*, December 28, 2007, emphasis added)

Former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani, a Republican: "Her death is a reminder that *terrorism* anywhere - whether in New York, London, Tel Aviv or Rawalpindi - is an *enemy of freedom*. We must *redouble our efforts to win the terrorists' war on us*." (*Houston Chronicle*, December 28, 2007, emphasis added)

...the only way *to fight terrorism was to protect democracy* - she knew what her enemies knew: that democracy in Pakistan is code for Bhutto's return to power. (*LA Weekly*, January 3, 2008, emphasis added)

As another component of the Secret diplomacy latent news frame, the U.S. news reports associate democracy with elections, here and there. Benazir's assassination occurred at a time when U.S. presidential primaries were flaring up. Concurrent presidential elections in two lands were used to localize the story and make it relevant to U.S. readers:

On Jan. 8, voters in New Hampshire will do their part in selecting this country's next president. America's transfer of power will be peaceful, relying on strong institutions, such as political parties, courts and a free media.

Pakistan is also scheduled to vote Jan. 8. Whomever is elected as America's next president should focus his or her attention on building democratic institutions in Pakistan, so that the next succession there can take place without violence. (*Portland Press Herald*, December 28, 2007)

The West hopes an election will bring stability to a country emerging from eight years of military rule while facing mounting violence from Islamist terrorists. (*The New York Post*, December 30, 2007)

The assassination of Pakistan's former prime minister occurred one week before the Iowa caucuses, the first test of the 2008 race for the White House, and provided a reminder of the importance of national security in an era of terrorism. (*Tulsa World*, December 28, 2007)

The reports also shouted out the role of voters and voting with regard to elections:

Voters should honor Benazir Bhutto's commitment to democracy by taking the time to caucus for a presidential candidate next week, Sen. Hillary Clinton said Thursday. (*Omaha World-Herald*, December 28, 2007)

What can American policymakers do now? Perhaps not all that much. But we could help a bit by urging democratic forces to unite to press General Musharraf to allow parliamentary elections scheduled for Jan. 8 to go forward –and to protect voters. (*The Providence Journal*, January 2, 2008)

U.S. news reports differentiated between the elections here and there:

Mr. Musharraf said troops and paramilitary forces would remain deployed until the elections Feb. 18, and warned opposition groups against increasing the country's "difficulties." The elections, he said, would be "free, fair, transparent and peaceful." (*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, January 3, 2008)

Opposition parties have been arguing for months that Musharraf's allies plan to rig the polls. Bhutto, who was seeking to win back her old job as prime minister, had been making the claim regularly. On Wednesday opposition leaders said the delay was one more attempt by the government to dictate the outcome of Pakistan's first national elections in more than five years. (*The Washington Post*, January 3, 2008)

U.S. news reports combine ideas of governmental collaboration, democracy, elections, and voting to build the prevalent latent news frame Secret diplomacy. The news media used the assassination as a reminder for U.S. leadership:

If it is not already the top priority for American foreign policy, it should be. (*Portland Press Herald*, December 28, 2007)

Proceeding on or about on schedule with the Jan. 8 election through which Ms. Bhutto hoped to return to power is the biggest immediate concern in sustaining an American policy of promoting stability, moderation and democracy in the volatile nuclear-armed nation, U.S. officials said yesterday. (*The Capital*, December 29, 2007).

Ultimately, the Secret diplomacy prevalent latent news frame underscores fear and suggests safety concerns.

U.S. Prevalent Latent News Frame Two: Danger

The danger frame used in the American press to portray Bhutto's seemingly inevitable death varied widely. First, there was the individual danger, as Bhutto surely knew that returning to Pakistan and running for office once again was hazardous. In that sense, her assassination was presented as upsetting but unsurprising, as her family legacy was one of death and martyrdom. See, for instance, the following quote by Larry Wallace, an American friend of Bhutto:

"She was burning with a passion for freedom," he said. "She really wanted to [bring democracy to Pakistan], *even though it was risky, even though it was a huge burden on her and her family and her kids*. You couldn't have stopped her." (*Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, December 28, 2007, emphasis added).

And this report:

"There is a history of political assassination in India and Pakistan, [Neil] Joeck..., research associate at the Center for South Asian Studies at the University of California, Berkeley..., said. You couldn't predict it, but it is not surprising given that there had already been an attempt on her life . . . and that terrorism has been rising in Pakistan" (*Inside Bay Area*, December 28, 2007).

Indeed, Bhutto herself stressed that she was aware of the risks she endured returning to Pakistan:

"I put my life in danger and came here because I feel this country is in danger" she said in her final political address. (*The New York Post*, December 28, 2007),

Likewise, the tragic nature of the Bhutto family and the dangers they had lived throughout the years were encompassed in the following analysis from a Pakistani blogger, cited by the *USA Today*:

The single most tragic person in all of Pakistan . . . (is) Benazir's mother. Think about it. Her husband, killed. One son poisoned. Another son assassinated. One daughter dead possibly of drug overdose. Another daughter rises to be prime minister twice, but jailed, exiled, and finally gunned down. (*USA Today*, December 28, 2007)

Similarly,

Bhutto returned to Pakistan like a lamb to the slaughter. She must have known what awaited her there. Yet she believed so strongly in freedom, justice and democracy she was willing to put her life on the line for it. (*The Deseret Morning News*, January 2, 2008, emphasis added).

Tragic and unsurprising as it might be, Bhutto's death also endangered Pakistan's stability and future. Her assassination threatened the chances of a democratic turn at the upcoming elections—or at least a less authoritarian rule; the successful attempt against her meant that extremists were gaining power in the nation, and that chaos could ensue in this nuclear-armed country. For the U.S. press, Bhutto was not the only person in danger. For example, an editorial said:

The danger is tremendous. Pakistan, after all, has nuclear arms. *Imagine what could become of those weapons should Pakistan collapse* into the type of violence and chaos that Iraq experienced after Saddam Hussein's fall. (*The Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 28, 2007, emphasis added).

The assassination of Benazir Bhutto has left a huge political vacuum at the heart of this nuclear-armed state, which appears to be slipping into an abyss of violence and Islamic extremism. (*Inside Bay Area*, December 30, 2007).

Similarly, the attack on Bhutto serves to underscore how troubled the country is, as it could not offer protection to one of its most prominent politicians—one known to be at risk—let alone to the rest of the population, more so when there was no clarity on how the attack happened or who was to blame for it. Take, for instance, the following extract:

"If the security of that high status of a person is in doubt, what's going to happen to the security of the whole country?" asked Ahmad, a small business owner in Lodi. "It's scary. It's extremism to the hilt." (*Herald News*, December 28, 2007)

In that context, the reports of riots and widespread violence in Pakistan following Bhutto's murder further underscore the risk to the nation:

News of Mrs. Bhutto's death triggered rioting and looting in the port city of Karachi and a few other Pakistani cities, ultimately killing 44 persons and sparking tens of millions of dollars in wreckage. Among the ruins: 176 banks, 34 gas stations and nearly a thousand automobiles. (*The Washington Times*, December 31, 2007)

The danger does not stop there. An unstable Pakistan is also a risk for U.S and world security, making Bhutto's assassination unnerving and the focal point of questions about political and diplomatic interests in the region. The uncertainty regarding how she died and who committed the murder only stressed the lack of command and control in Pakistan, with serious consequences to the rest of the world. As an editorial from the *The Capital Times* posited, "The world is a more dangerous place today" (December 28, 2007).

The murder of Bhutto, thus, not only disturbs the already-tense Pakistani political situation, but also worries entire nations beyond South-East Asia. See the following editorials as examples:

The death of Ms. Bhutto . . . is a tragedy that creates difficulties at home and abroad... That's a specter that unnerves the world community. . . . The assassination Thursday shows how little control and influence the United States has in the region, and how dangerous Pakistan remains for those who live there as well as for those with political and diplomatic interests there. (*Chattanooga Times Free Press*, December 28, 2007)

What happens in Pakistan will have an impact on the United States and the world. (*The Berkshire Eagle*, December 28, 2007)

Political icon Benazir Bhutto was killed in a suicide attack, all but ending a bid by moderate civilian politicians to take on militant Muslims who have made Pakistan *the hub for global terrorism*. (*The Washington Times*, December 28, 2007, emphasis added)

The latent U.S. news frame Danger umbrellas individual, national and world concerns with the repercussions of Benazir Bhutto's return to Pakistan. The assassination uncovered errors in national and international security measures. According to news reports, Mrs. Bhutto's resulting death raises more poignant questions regarding the stability and future of a volatile area. Thus,

The horrifying assassination . . . is a sobering and frightening reminder of the challenges and threats and dangers posed to the United States by radical Islam, the nature of the struggle being waged against the effort to extend democratic freedoms in the Muslim world, and the awful possibility of a nuclear Pakistan. (*USA Today*, December 28, 2007)

Discussion

Once again, the research questions guiding this study have been, How have Pakistani news media framed the death of its first Muslim female leader? Given the relationship between Pakistan and the United States, how does Pakistani news coverage of the assassination compare with U.S. news reports? Pakistani press report analysis reveals shocking similarity among the three papers, deliberately chosen from three separate publishers and pronounced ideologies—*The Post*, from the anti-government-policy Khabrain Group of

newspapers; *The Dawn*, from the countering-Hindu-press, anti-Muslim-propaganda Pakistan Herald Publications; and *The News International*, from The Jang Group of Newspapers, which also caters to the UK-Pakistani community. The goal was to cut through extra-media influences to establish a professional distance with which to examine a subject, to unearth a story's unbiased truth (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). However, the construction of Benazir Bhutto's assassination story and memory of it and her are surprisingly alike. Why is this?

One reason for echoed latent frames could be decreased Pakistani press freedom. Before the assassination and state of emergency, Freedom House reports ranked Pakistan's press freedom as not free, coming in 139th place out of 195 countries ranked (Freedom House, 2007).³ Its democracy does not even rank in the 2009 or 2010 rankings.⁴ Evidence for lack of government transparency stems from the frame *The secret*, which shows some of the government's efforts to silence or hide information. At the same time, the *Dawn* and *The News International* openly criticize Musharraf and his government.

Another reason may reside in Benazir Bhutto's international acclaim and recognition. This is odd, in view of her and her husband's pasts; both had left Pakistan at least twice prior for reasons of fraudulent behavior and abuses of power. For example, Benazir Bhutto's husband, Asif Ali Zardari, who served in many government positions including Environment Minister to the prime minister, his wife, spent eight years in jail for charges ranging from corruption to murder. However, no fear of (inter)national retribution for a lack of positive coverage whispers through the reports. Another reason may be the positive collective memory; no *bad* dead guy exists, generally speaking. In the time and space continuum, distance may be needed to more objectively make sense of events and their press portrayal. Distance incorporates the issues of proximity (more than a local press inclusion) and time (more than the week following her assassination, when emotions of loss and fears of political instability, etc., run high). How might the Pakistani press portray her, for example, one year after her death?

Whatever the reason(s), Pakistani press reports seem to unite in their myth making. Benazir Bhutto, mentioned as "The world's most popular politician" in the 1996 Guinness Book of Records and also the youngest Pakistani/national leader (at age 35), seems larger after her death. International awards bequeathed postmortem further evidence (inter)national heralding. She appears absolved at home and abroad. The only disharmony reported is in terms of the controversy surrounding her cause of death. This extends to who is responsible. Some press reports guilt Musharraf, some say Al Qaeda did it, but no one group or party can be blamed clearly, at least at the time of these Pakistani reports. Even Benazir Bhutto, because of her decided return, could be held responsible in view of what her return meant personally and

³ Since 1980, Freedom House reports on press freedom in almost 200 countries. The one cited was presented after surveying countries with populations in excess of 1 million regarding the degree to which each's legal, political and economic environments permit the free flow of information (Freedom House, 2007).

⁴ Please see <http://www.democracyranking.org/en/>. "The Democracy Ranking of the Quality of Democracy."

nationally to and for Pakistan. The fact that her will named a successor, and caretaker of the position until the successor was of age/ability, is an indication that the self-proclaimed "party chairperson for life" (*The Washington Post*, December 30, 2007) was aware that her demise was likely and not far distant. This conflict further muddies the *how* and *why* assassination news elements, as previously noted.

This uniform reporting raises at least three additional concerns. One is the dynasty/democracy dichotomy. How could the Pakistani hopeful emblem of democracy, Benazir Bhutto, simultaneously engender a dynasty and royalty? Yet, press reports show this. Like Hickey (2001) found regarding JFK's U.S. assassination, a people participating in and/or hoping for democracy united communally to celebrate Benazir Bhutto's life, death and legacy, buying into a collective worship of a beloved leader. For instance, reports repeat a great majority participating in Ghaibana Namaz-e-Janaza, or funeral prayers in absentia. In line with Pantti and Wieten (2005)'s study debunking a nationwide feeling community, Pakistanis individually experienced her death, some committing suicide, others participating in mob-like behavior. As already hinted, one recommendation for further study would be to incorporate a media-issue-attention-cycle (MIAC) perspective, to stretch the sample's time frame over one year to further weigh how Pakistanis negotiate Benazir Bhutto's assassination (Downs, 2005; see also Galtung & Ruge 1965). Also helpful would be to include non-national voices in that dialogue. Such a study may lead to findings like Cohen's (2002), which found that although Israeli media integrated the nation after Prime Minister Rabin's assassination, it traumatized the population through continuous coverage. It is unlikely, however, given Benazir Bhutto's (inter)national notoriety, that Yadgar's (2002) press results of leader mythical status sacrifice could occur.

Another uniform-reporting question concerns press meaning-making and memorializing (Carlson, 2007; Kitch 2000) operable through the mediated public sphere but disabled in Pakistan. Pakistani press reports clearly indicated that not only was the assassination meant to be, but also Pakistan was meant to suffer. Benazir Bhutto alone embodied the future of Pakistan; an attack on her was an attack on Pakistan. The press seemed unable to come to terms with the death of Benazir Bhutto, let alone what this meant for Pakistan; it could not make sense of something that doesn't make sense. This may tie in with a larger mythical issue. Legally speaking, Benazir Bhutto (nor Nawaz Sharif, another former premier and opposition leader) could not have assumed the prime minister role a third time unless a presidential decree/ban against more than two terms be dismissed. Had Benazir Bhutto won, could she and/or her party have successfully changed the law? Was the election a farce to begin with? Ultimately, was Benazir Bhutto a trophy candidate?

A third united-press question taps into news normalization and routinization. How do press cover such a story? If this tale were written in the stars, why was the press so unprepared to cover it, especially since the first assassination attempt failed? This story is more than news; it breaks the boundaries of "What a

story!" events (Berkowitz, 1997; Tuchman, 1997). As 9/11 changed news reporting in the United States (see, for example, PEJ Analysis, 2006), will Benazir Bhutto assassination coverage have a similar effect on Pakistani press routines?

With regard to U.S. content, two prevalent latent news frames clearly surfaced from the newspaper dialogue. Secret diplomacy and Danger highlight at least the prominence, proximity, timeliness and oddity news values that would ensure Benazir Bhutto's assassination story be told to the U.S. populace. What is most interesting from the U.S. news reports is the background intrigue that carried Bhutto back to her people. A long time in the works, and serendipitously timed with U.S. presidential primary elections, Bhutto's return meant to herald a unique our/their democratic opportunity at both U.S. and Pakistani polls. While the connotations of democracy might be different in each land, the denotation of Bhutto representing a democratic hope for Pakistan was transborder.

U.S. news reports and op-ed pieces also latently framed how Benazir Bhutto's return to her homeland was dangerous for her, but her failure to return could have been a greater danger to her people. Her assassination proved her individual danger stakes were certain and called into question how dangerous a stable, negotiated future is for Pakistan, its region and its allies. At the root of the (inter)national danger looms religious extremism. A topic worthy of further consideration is if U.S. news coverage of the assassination of Benazir Bhutto could be considered a platform for giving voice to religious extremism.

Another interesting finding that arose from the U.S. newspaper coverage was that Benazir's death was considered tragic, but not at all surprising. In this regard, U.S. press articles purported much less myth-building than Pakistani, giving a localized but much more matter-of-fact report of the assassination. Again, Pakistani press reports echoed a doomed daughter of destiny returning home, and the U.S. press gave a more nuanced portrayal of Bhutto as a flawed politician, even baring her and her husband's embezzlement charges. In brief, Pakistan had the home-court disadvantage with its former two-time leader being killed in its own backyard, compared with the U.S. news media having the advantage of physical and emotional distance. In this sense, Pakistani press performed, then, similarly to the Israeli press when Rabin was assassinated; it created a "'surrogate public sphere' . . . [or] realm of ideological homogeneity, in which only one interpretative frame is presented, while others are either ignored or denied legitimacy" (Yadgar, 2002, p. 162).

Conclusion

Pakistani press reports speak of an accomplished leader who sacrificed her life while trying to gain power through the people's voice to help. A woman who had twice-lead her people, Bhutto straddled Eastern and

Western cultures, was revered in both and appeared larger than life at least nationally. Regardless of the religious culture in which she operated that would, traditionally, not have granted her access nor allowed her power, her gender and her minority religious status seemed invisible; no press reports spoke of them. Arguably, and as U.S. reports claimed, her class (she was a daughter of an extremely affluent family and married to one of the richest Pakistani men) trumped traditional religion and gender barriers to public participation, including her education and political grooming.

Nor did the Pakistani press speak to the reason for her return to Pakistan, her candidacy in the elections. A candidate without an election, Benazir Bhutto was prepared and heralded to rule Pakistan democratically—albeit with a not-that-democratic record while in office, as reminded by the U.S. coverage.

Some may argue that three leading national papers are not enough to break through extra-media influences to learn how Pakistani press constructed the story surrounding Benazir Bhutto's assassination. Although time and space reasons suggested may evidence this, the purpose has been to reveal how *Pakistani press* told their Benazir Bhutto assassination story, and compared it to the U.S. newspaper coverage as an added layer of interpretation and meaning. Future research could include other sources of comparison and analyze at least UK coverage, given Pakistan historical connection to the British Empire, the fact that *The News International* targets the large UK-Pakistani population, and that Scotland Yard investigated Benazir Bhutto's cause of death. Nonetheless, this multi-newspaper, inter-national study enriches framing theory studies through suggesting a framing typology that incorporates prevalent and absent latent frames. Application of this typology particularly to other assassination news reports could increase their transferability and credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The rise of *absent* or *trump latent frames* is this study's most significant theoretical contribution. While more subtle and multiple readings of these stories could occur, the analysis is anchored in framing theory, which allows for a more nuanced interpretation. Further, Pakistani and U.S. press report interpretive textual analysis, as screened through framing theory, snapshots a larger picture—a unique peek into the dynasty, destiny, death and secrets surrounding Benazir Bhutto and her assassination.

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