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FRAMING OF AFGHAN CRISIS AFTER ASHRAF GHANI REGIME: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CNN AND AL JAZEERA WEB NEWS						
Dr Rooh Ul Amin Khan	Dr Rooh Ul Amin Khan Assistant Professor, Department of Media and Communication Studies, International Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan roohul.amin@iiu.edu.pk					
Yousaf Khan	M.Phil. Scholar, Department of Media and Communication Studies, International Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan					
Dr. Bin Yamin Khan	Assistant Professor, Department of Communication And Media Studies, Hazara University Mansehra, Pakistan khanbinyamin@gmail.com					

ABSTRACT

The fall of the Ashraf Ghani regime in Afghanistan in August 2021, led the Taliban's return to power, garnered extensive international media attention. This study examines how *CNN* and *Al Jazeera*, framed the Afghan crisis in their web news during the first three months of Taliban government. Using quantitative content analysis, this research project focused on language, sources, thematic emphasis, and the portrayal of key actors. Preliminary findings indicate that CNN predominantly employed the "dominant crisis" theme, which underscores a perspective of instability and chaos while Al Jazeera heavily focused on the submissive crisis & reality view theme which emphasizes on grounded and factual perspectives of the crises. Despite these differences, both news organizations shared a common focus on the instability and uncertainty, though with varying emphases on causes and consequences & offers insights into the impact of media on global public opinion.

Keywords: Afghan crisis, media framing, Taliban, conflict reporting

Introduction

For the last few decades, Afghanistan has faced significant challenges, including political instability, armed conflicts, and foreign interventions. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 marked the beginning of a protracted conflict that lasted for nearly a decade. The subsequent Afghan civil war further destabilized the country, paving the way for the rise of the Taliban, a fundamentalist Islamist group, in the 1990s. The 2001 invasion by a U.S.-led coalition, in response to the 9/11 attacks and the Taliban's support for terrorists, overthrew the Taliban regime. This marked the beginning of the war in Afghanistan, which continued for years as the international community aimed to stabilize the country, establish democratic governance, and combat insurgent groups (Taye, 2021).

Ashraf Ghani's regime in Afghanistan spanned from 2014 until his sudden departure in August 2021, was characterized by a mix of challenges and accomplishments. Ghani assumed the

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presidency after a contested election that led to a power-sharing agreement with his rival, Abdullah Abdullah. His tenure aimed at addressing critical issues facing the country, including security concerns, economic development, and political stability. One of the primary challenges during Ghani's presidency was the persistent threat of insurgency, particularly from the Taliban. Despite efforts to strengthen the Afghan security forces and engage in peace talks, the security situation remained precarious, with frequent attacks impacting both urban and rural areas. The Taliban's resurgence posed a significant hurdle to Ghani's vision of a stable and secures Afghanistan (Andisha, 2022).

Economically, Ghani's administration faced difficulties in promoting sustainable development. Afghanistan's economy relied heavily on international aid, and efforts to diversify revenue streams faced obstacles due to on-going conflict and political instability. The country struggled with high unemployment rates and a fragile infrastructure, hindering the progress of economic reforms. Ghani's leadership style, characterized by technocratic expertise and a focus on meritocracy, aimed at building efficient and accountable governance. However, this approach faced criticism for its perceived elitism and a perceived lack of inclusivity. The power dynamics within the government, coupled with allegations of corruption, created challenges in building a cohesive and united administration (Rashid, 2021).

In the later years of Ghani's presidency, his government engaged in peace talks with the Taliban, culminating in the Doha Agreement in 2020. However, the peace process faced setbacks, and the abrupt fall of Kabul to the Taliban in August 2021 marked the end of Ghani's regime. His sudden departure seeking asylum in the United Arab Emirates generated controversy and left a power vacuum that contributed to the ensuing crisis in Afghanistan. Ghani's presidency, while marked by efforts to address various challenges, ultimately concluded amid a rapidly changing and tumultuous geopolitical landscape in the region (Taye, 2021).

CNN's & Al Jazeera during the Crisis

The framing of the Afghan crisis following the Ashraf Ghani regime holds significant importance in understanding how major international news outlets like Al Jazeera & CNN interpret and portray complex geopolitical events. According to Jasperson & El-Kikhia, (2004) CNN and Al Jazeera may prioritize different aspects of the crisis, such as political developments, security concerns & humanitarian issues etc. However, their framing choices may reflect differing perspectives on key stakeholders, including the Afghan government, Taliban insurgents, neighboring countries, international actors, and Afghan civilians.

CNN, a prominent American news network, themed the Afghan crisis through the lens of Western interests and geopolitical implications. The coverage often emphasized the potential threats posed by the Taliban resurgence, highlighting concerns about regional stability and the impact on global security. CNN's narratives frequently incorporated perspectives from U.S. officials, providing insights into the American government's response and its stance on the evolving situation in Afghanistan. Di Giacomo, (2022) investigated that the CNN framing strategy tended to underline the challenges faced, after the fall of Ghani regime's collapse, by the international community

The coverage of crises in Afghanistan and the framing used by Al Jazeera shows that it has more likely focused on local perspectives, like the versions & voices of Afghan people. The channel has always offered a deep analysis of Afghanistan's socio & geo-political dynamics along with rich culture, & history of the country. Al Jazeera's coverage aims to provide a deep analysis of the condition by addressing the impact on the people of Afghanistan as well as the personal stories.

According to the finding of Gerhards & Schafer, (2014) found that the fundamental prejudices and priorities of both CNN & Al Jazeera are exposed through their web news coverages. Al Jazeera's in its news coverage of the issue hugely focused the local and regional aspects however, CNN played the role by emphasizing on the global security and western interest. The research of Feldman et al., (2012) concluded that CNN coverage of an issue always remain in the best interest of US. They also found that the CNN also play a vital role in establishing public discourse on national and international issues.

Al Jazeera, the Doha based international News channel is often followed of its innovation and in-depth reporting on a wide range of subjects including politics, education, conflicts and social issues globally. However, Al Jazeera has also faced controversy & criticism from time to time from number of foreign governments for its editorial decisions and perceived bias. Despite all these controversies, Al Jazeera has always shown a commitment towards journalism and journalistic integrity and which this channel has always been praised and awarded plenty of times on international forums. The network's digital platforms and various channels ensure a broad and diverse audience, making Al Jazeera a significant force in shaping global perceptions of events in the Middle East and beyond (Sadig & Petcu, 2019).

The Problem & Objectives

The fall of the Ashraf Ghani regime in Afghanistan in August 2021, followed by the Taliban's rapid takeover, marked a significant turning point in the nation's history. This event not only led to profound geopolitical and humanitarian consequences but also highlighted the critical role of global media in shaping international narratives and public perceptions. As prominent news organizations with distinct editorial policies and audience bases, *CNN* and *Al Jazeera* provide valuable case studies for understanding how different media outlets frame a complex crisis

Since the issues & crises of afghan government after the takeover of Taliban has been a major focus of researchers across the globe and dozens of research articles focused on individual media outlets or general media coverage without delving into specific comparative analyses that account for varying geopolitical perspectives and editorial approaches. However, the researchers have identified a clear gap during the literature review process on the comparative analysis of *CNN* and *Al Jazeera* on the Afghan crisis post Ashraf Ghani's regime. This study therefore, tends to understand the role media framing (common themes, news sources used) by CNN and Al Jazeera, on the Afghan crises post Ashraf Ghani regime.

Literature Review

News framing plays an important role in shaping public discours on international issues, like the political crises in a country. Entman (1993), who came up with the notion of Framing theory

which maily focuses on "how media outlets select specific aspects of a perceived reality and present them in ways that promote particular interpretations". The theory is specifically relevant to understand the framing of Afghan crises, as the international news organizations may frame it their ways or differently based on the organization policies, political affiliation, and its target audiences.

Crisis Afghanistan has always been so complex and interconnected with a variety of challenges, which include political instability, insecurity, and other social and humanitarian issues. Among the most recent events that change the Geo-politics of the globe was the recent takeover of the Taliban, in August 2021. The withdrawal of international forces, particularly the United States, played a significant role in the Taliban's resurgence.

According to Hasan, (2022) the Taliban's takeover was reported by Asian media outlets, especially those from nearby nations like India and Pakistan, with an emphasis on the geopolitical implications for the area. however, Kokoshina, (2022) expressed that the geopolitical landscape and the well-being of the Afghan people, after the takeover, continue to be of global concern.

Hussain & Jehangir, (2023) found the international press vital in spreading knowledge, raising public consciousness, and influencing how the world saw the Taliban's invasion of Afghanistan. The multiplicity of viewpoints offered by various channels highlighted the complexity of the issue and the necessity for viewers to interact critically with news coverage in order to comprehend the events as they are happening on a more in-depth level.

News Media Framing

Framing has been extensively studied as a tool for influencing public opinion and policy debates. Pan and Kosicki (1993), reveals that framing is something that make use of rhetorical devices, narratives, along with visuals in order to spotlight one side of a story while ignoring the other. According to Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) the commonly used news frames for the guidance of general public in the international media organizations comprises the conflict, human interest, responsibility, and economic consequences frames.

Covering the global issue i.e. the Afghan crisis, CNN and Al Jazeera have been identified as the most suitable and acceptable in their news delivery in shaping the global discourse (Khamis & Vaughn, 2011). These researcher further added that CNN, though has been found to keep a pro west approach, and been seen to often emphasizing themes of conflict and power dynamics. On the other hand, Al Jazeera, frequently emphasises on local perception of individual and often reflect and highlight the humanitarian aspects.

Media Coverage of the Afghan Crisis

The later months of 2021 saw incredible events among which the fall of Ashraf Ghani government & the rapid takeover of Taliban was the one which changed the global political landscape in general and of Afghanistan in particular.

Both the national and international media used a variety of frames while covering the crisis comprising the portrayals of victimization, geopolitical implications, and international responses. According to the findings of Hoskins & O'Loughlin (2010), among the international news organizations CNN, is the one which look in to such crises through using the national

security and terrorism frame, and emphasizes on the implications for world peace, stability and interests of the west. Entman's (2004) endorsed the idea of Hoskins & O'Loughlin and revealed that U.S. based media are more likely to follow the narratives that are relevant and align with their country's foreign policy.

On the contrary, Powers & El-Nawawy, (2009) investigated that the Doha based international news organization i.e. Al Jazeera always prioritize the local and regional issues along with the perspectives of the civilians. The coverage of this organization has also been observed to have focused since long on the humanitarian toll, the difficulties of refugees, and the failures of global community's interventions.

Media Framing a Comparison

During the comparative media framing studies researcher have highly observed the existence of huge differences in how news organizations construct public discourse around the same events.

Episodic framing, is generaly followed in Western media coverages (Iyengar, 1991). Such a frame highly focuses on specific incidents. On the other hand thematic framing or analysis is generaly used by organization like Al Jazeera. Thematic frame is the one which helps the researchers to provide broader context of an issue or crises.

Fahmy and Kim (2008) worked on the Iraq war and studied the visual framing of the war by western and media in the middle East. These researchers found that media in the west emphasized on the military operation however, media of the middle east focuses on civilian casualties. In the context of Afghanistan crises CNN may use security and geopolitical narratives and Al Jazeera may prioritize the humanitarian & local aspect.

Research Methodology

The researchers collected the data (Talk shows) from TV web news for content analysis involves systematic procedures to ensure a comprehensive and structured approach and identify the key themes i.e. dominant crises, Submissive Crises, Reality view & Ambiguous View themes, for analyzing within the TV web news that align research objectives on the basis of different factors such as viewership, popularity, and thematic relevance to ensure the selected shows which represent the research goals.

The researchers used the purposive sampling technique which helped them to access to talk shows and report whose interest lies only in Afghan Crisis and its consequences. Before the data collection a coding scheme and set of categories were created, aligned to research questions & which reflected the elements that researchers wanted to analyse.

Tool for the data collection included coding scheme and space for notes and chooses to record the web news and then transcribe the content. Before starting the full-scale coding process, the researcher conduct a pilot test on a small sample of web news for identification of any ambiguities in the coding scheme and ensures that coders understand and apply the criteria consistently.

Time period for this study is from 1st September, 2021 to 30st Nov 2021. The key reasons for selecting these first three months is based on the need to understand the Taliban's remergence as rulers of Afghanistan after more than 20 years. The selection of time period is

furthered driven by the need to understand how two international media organizations navigated the coverage of fall of Ashraf Ghani's regime and re-emergence of Taliban regime in Afghanistan.

Data Analysis

Table No. 1 Data representation of *CNN* Web news about Afghanistan Crisis in September 2021

Sr. No	Crisis Status	01-10 September	11-20 September	21- 30 September	Total
1	Dominant Crisis	12 times	13 times	9 times	34 times
2	Submissive Crisis	2 times	2 times	4 times	8 times
3	Reality View	1 time	3 times	4 times	8 times
4	Ambiguous View	5 times	2 times	3 times	10 times
	Total	20 times	20 times	20 times	60 times

The data demonstrates the *CNN* themes used about Afghanistan crisis in September 2021 (post Ashraf Ghani Regime). According to the above data *CNN* used 34 times the dominant crises theme for the crises in Afghanistan in the month of September, while used 8, 8 times submissive & Reality view theme respectively for the same crises. On the other hand the same channel used Ambiguous theme 10 times for the crises in Afghanistan.

The total number of all the themes used during the whole month is 60. The table also shows that in the start of September 2021 i.e. 1-10 September CNN have highly used the dominant crisis theme regarding Afghanistan, However the number for the same theme increases in the middle of the month i.e. 11-20 September. The table clearly demonstrates that CNN during the month of September 2021 had hugely focused on the dominant theme (i.e. 34 times) during its coverage of Aghanistan crises post ashraf ghani regime.

Table No. 2 Data representation of *CNN* Web news about Afghanistan Crisis in October 2021

Sr. No	Crisis Status	01-10 October	11-20 October	21- 31 October	Total
1	Dominant Crisis	15 times	10 times	13 times	38 times
2	Submissive Crisis	1 times	2 times	1 times	4 times
3	Reality View	2 time	2 times	1 times	5 times
4	Ambiguous View	6 times	3 times	2 times	11 times

	Total	24 times	17 times	17 times	58 times	

The data demonstrates the *CNN* themes used about Afghanistan crisis in October 2021 (post Ashraf Ghani Regime). According to the above data *CNN* used 38 times the dominant crises theme for the crises in Afghanistan in the month of October, while used 4 & 5 times submissive & Reality view themes respective for the same crises. However, the same channel used Ambiguous theme 11 times for the crises in Afghanistan.

The total number of all the themes used during the month of October 2021 is 58. The table also shows that in the start of October 2021 i.e. 1-10 October CNN have highly used the dominant crisis theme regarding Afghanistan i.e. 15 times, However the number for the same theme decreases in the middle of the month i.e. 10 times. The table clearly exhibits that CNN during the month of October 2021 again had focused on the dominant theme (i.e. 38 times) during its coverage of Aghanistan crises post ashraf ghani regime.

Table No. 3 Data representation of *CNN* Web news about Afghanistan Crisis in November 2021

Sr. No	Crisis Status	01-10 November	11-20 November	21- 30 November	Total
1	Dominant Crisis	8 times	7 times	14 times	29 times
2	Submissive Crisis	4 times	1 times	5 times	10 times
3	Reality View	0 time	1 times	0 times	1 time
4	Ambiguous View	2 times	5 times	1 times	8 times
	Total	14 times	14 times	20 times	48 times

The data shows the *CNN* themes used about Afghanistan crisis in November 2021 (post Ashraf Ghani Regime). According to the data above *CNN* used 29 times the dominant crises theme for the crises in Afghanistan in the month of November , while used 10 times the submissive crises theme. The channel hardly focused on the reality view theme and used it only 1 time during the whole month for the crises in Afghanistan . However, CNN used Ambiguous theme 8 times for the crises during the month of November 2021.

The total number of all the themes used during the month of November 2021 is 48 . The table also shows that in the start of November 2021 i.e. 1-10 November CNN had used 8 times the dominant crisis theme regarding Afghanistan, However the number for the same theme decreases in the middle of the month i.e. 7 times. However the number of using this theme doubles in the end of November 2021 i.e. 14 times. The table clearly demonstrates that CNN during the month of November 2021 again had focused on the dominant theme (i.e. 29 times) during its coverage of Aghanistan crises post ashraf ghani regime.

Table No. 4 Data representation of *Al Jazeera* Web news about Afghanistan Crisis in September 2021

Sr.	Crisis Status	01-10	11-20	21- 30	Total
No		September	September	September	
1	Dominant Crisis	2 times	1 time	1 time	4 times
2	Submissive Crisis	12 times	10 times	13 times	35 times
3	Reality View	8 times	9 times	4 times	21 times
4	Ambiguous View	1 time	1 time	1 time	3 times
	Total	23 times	21 times	19 times	63 times

The data shows the *Al Jazeera* themes used about Afghanistan crisis in September 2021 (post Ashraf Ghani Regime). According to the data above *Al Jazeera* used 4 times the dominant crises theme for the crises in Afghanistan in the month of September, while hugely used 35 times the submissive crises theme for the afghanistan crises. The channel also focused on the reality view theme and used it 21 time during the whole month. However, *Al Jazeera* used Ambiguous theme only 3 times for the crises during the month of September 2021.

The total number of all the themes used during the month of September 2021 is 63. The table also reveals that AlJazeera during the month of September 2021 hugely focused on the submissive crises theme i.e. 35 times

Table No. 5 Al Jazeera Web news about Afghanistan Crisis in October 2021

Iable	Table No. 5 Al Jazeela Web news about Alghanistan Crisis in October 2021							
Sr.	Crisis Status	01-10	11-20	21- 31	Total			
No		October	October	October				
1	Dominant Crisis	4 times	4 times	1 time	9 times			
2	Submissive Crisis	15 times	3 times	6 times	24 times			
3	Reality View	7 times	7 times	6 times	20 times			
4	Ambiguous View	0 time	0 time	1 time	1 time			
	Total	26 times	14 times	14 times	54 times			

The data reveals the *Al Jazeera* themes used about Afghanistan crisis in October 2021 (post Ashraf Ghani Regime). According to the data above *Al Jazeera* used 9 times the dominant crises theme for the crises in Afghanistan in the month of October, while hugely used i.e. 24 times the submissive crises theme for the same crises. The channel also focused on the reality view theme and used it 20 time during the whole month. However, *Al Jazeera* used Ambiguous theme only 1 times for the crises during the month of October 2021.

The total number of all the themes used during the month of October 2021 is 54. The table also reveals that Al Jazeera during the month of October 2021 hugely focused on the submissive crises theme i.e. 24 times

Table No. 6 Al Jazeera Web news about Afghanistan Crisis in November 2021

Sr. No	Crisis Status	01-10 November	11-20 November	21- 30 November	Total
1	Dominant Crisis	2 times	6 times	6 times	14 times
2	Submissive Crisis	11 times	11 times	10 times	32 times
3	Reality View	5 times	9 times	6 times	20 times
4	Ambiguous View	2 times	2 times	0 time	4 times
	Total	20 times	28 times	22 times	70 times

The data reveals the *Al Jazeera* themes used about Afghanistan crisis in November 2021 (post Ashraf Ghani Regime). According to the data above *Al Jazeera* used 14 times the dominant crises theme for the crises in Afghanistan in the month of November, while hugely used i.e. 32 times the submissive crises theme for the same crises. The channel also focused on the reality view theme and used it 20 time during the whole month. However, *Al Jazeera* used Ambiguous theme only 4 times for the crises during the month of November 2021.

The total number of all the themes used during the month of November 2021 is 70. The table also reveals that Al Jazeera during the month of November 2021 hugely focused on the submissive crises theme i.e. 32 times.

Conclusion

This study offers a comparative analysis of the framing of the Afghan crisis following the fall of the Ashraf Ghani regime, as depicted by CNN and Al Jazeera's web news during September, October, and November 2021. The findings reveal significant differences in the thematic focus and narrative strategies employed by the two outlets.

CNN predominantly employed the "dominant crisis" theme, which underscores a perspective of instability and chaos. The data revealed that during a span of three months, CNN used this theme majority of the times i.e. 34 times in September, 38 in October and 29 in November. The same network less likely used submissive crisis and reality view themes which could possibly have offered a wider or more important understanding of this crises. Moreover, the same month the network made a moderate use of "ambiguous view" themes i.e 10 times, which reflects an attempt to introduce some complexity into the coverage but without overshadowing the dominant narrative.

On the contrary, Al Jazeera covered this event professionally i.e. balanced and with a more distinct approach. The data analysis helped the researcher to conclude that Al Jazeera heavily focused on the "submissive crisis" theme, during the three months span with frequencies of 35, 24, and 32. Following this theme in the coverage of Afghanistan crisis post Ashraf ghani

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regime suggests an effort to highlight the adaptive responses to the crisis. like Al Jazeera didn't ignored "reality view" theme and consistently focused it during the coverage. The frequency of reality view theme is recorded as 21, 20, and 20 times during the three months, which emphasizes that the network tended to present grounded and factual perspectives of the crises. The higly followed "dominant crisis" theme by CNN is less less frequently used in Al Jazeera's coverage, suggesting differences in the framing strategy of both the news organizations.

The study also concludes that the differences in the framing strategies of both CNN and Al Jazeera shows their stances, respective editorial policies and approaches to framing international crises.

The coverage of Al Jazeera and the themes it has focused shows their priority & emphasize on the adaptation and a more grounded reality however, the themes majorly focused in CNN underscores chaos and instability. These framing have been found significantly influencing the perception of audience on the Afghan crisis and underline the media role in shaping public discourse and understanding of complex geopolitical events.

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