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American media framing of Bush, Obama, and Trump speeches
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Abstract: Framing Theory is frequently used to understand the way individuals and agencies use word choice, connotation, and other factors to influence how others react to the information provided. For example, journalists use slant to influence the interpretation of their articles by the public. Through an examination of framing, individuals and agencies can gain insights into the reasons viewers or listeners react to communications in the way they do. The main goal of this article is to analyze how the American media frames presidents’ Bush, Obama, and Trump speeches regarding the Middle East and Iraq in particular, during their presidency of the United States.

Subjects: Mass Communication; Persuasion; Political Communication; Public Relations; Rhetoric; Sign Language, Braille & Other Linguistic Communication; Linguistic Theory

Keywords: media framing; American presidents; communication; American media; presidential rhetoric

1. Introduction
The media influence public opinion by changing the minds of individuals around a certain and consistent opinion. As it supports individuals by urging them to exercise freedom of expression and decision-making. It also provides societies and individuals with information and societal opinions about political, economic, or social positions in many different geographical spots, making it one of the most important means of influencing public opinion. In the modern era, the media plays a very important role in the process of shaping public opinion. This article addresses the essential element used in the media that works to shape public opinion on important issues in the political arena, which discussed of how American media portrayed the three presidents Bush, Obama, and Trump. While some media outlets may seek to frame news stories in a specific way, the Framing Theory is considered the most commonly used application in the media platform. In fact, framing theory began in the media with application in journalism through slant, and provides a way for objective journalists to influence audiences in a desired way without appearing to be obviously slanting events and reporting (Daly, 2012).

Framing Theory focuses on the interaction between the way a message is communicated on the one hand and the way that it is interpreted on the other. Framing Theory is primarily important when
it comes to analyze the media and its role in shaping public discourse. In this context, framing is the process through which individuals shape opinions about a communication. Scheufele (1999) identifies four processes as integral to Framing Theory: (1) frame-building; (2) frame-setting; (3) individual-level effects of frames; and (4) journalists as audiences. Frame-building focuses on the dynamics of speakers in the choice of specific frames during communication. It is within this aspect that word choice and other factors are used to craft the communication. Frame-setting addresses the influence of those frames in communication on thought and psychological processes (Scheufele, 1999). Within this context, the communicator can identify the desired effect of the framed communication. Individual-level effects of frames address the influence of frames on behaviors and attitudes of individuals exposed to the communication (Scheufele, 1999). This is the impact of the framed communication. Finally, journalists as audiences examines the way the behaviors and attitudes then impact the frame-building process (D'Angelo, 2002). In other words, journalists as audiences are the reciprocal aspect of framing theory, in which the effect of the framing has an impact on future communications and the way in which they are framed. It is within this context that Framing Theory is frequently and effectively applied to communication, marketing, media, and other similar fields. However, it should be noted that, overall, Framing Theory is highly adaptive and loosely defined, which facilitates broad application in social sciences fields, including politics, psychology, and other areas of study (R. M. Entman, 1993).

Framing theory also provides valuable tools when it comes to considering the rhetorical ways in which the presidents use messaging within their speeches and the effects that they intended to produce through such use. Along the previous lines, Athena and Moore (2019) applied framing theory in analyzing how previous studies addressed the War on Terror discourse against Arabs and Muslims. Considering how framing theory involves linguistics and social scientists examining how media sources create a socio-political narrative received by audiences, many American outlets accepted an anti-Arab and Islamophobic discourse to gain popularity. One of the most prominent examples has been the way that Fox News for years since 9/11 has framed the war on terror and drawn associations between brown people and terrorism, like with the manufactured controversy over the mosque near the World Trade Center (Abdelaziz et al., 2019).

In many ways, the application of framing theory is like that which involves agenda-setting theory based on the ability of media to influence public opinion (Athena & Moore, 2019; Neuman et al., 2014). Sometimes, news outlets fall into the normalcy bias trap and will uncritically help push some of these narratives. Yet, that same view implied that Americans were wholly incapable of committing terrorist acts, even though, all terrorist groups have a supported infrastructures and rights in Europe and North America (Atran, 2010). There is a white supremacy problem, and there are plenty of examples of terrorism, like the Planned Parenthood shooter. To this day, the events at Columbine and Oklahoma City still both serve as major inspirations for extremists who want to follow in the footsteps of the American terrorists who made those attacks possible (McDonnell, 2020). American media, thus, framed the speeches made by President Bush as contributing to the greater god vis-à-vis the stigmatization of racialized others (Athena & Moore, 2019; Dimitrova et al., 2005; Khalaf & Tahat, 2019; Robert M. Entman, 2003). Further, media outlets intentionally advanced a clash of civilizations thesis to indicate that American audiences must separate themselves from anyone with an actual or perceived Muslim, Arab or Middle Eastern identity and all others living in the US who were not born in the country, with some examples present within right-wing AM radio (Strömbäck et al., 2008). By advancing the clash of civilizations’ thesis, American media outlets let audiences feel vindicated in defending an arguably exceptional culture. A key concept here is that the way that a topic is framed through rhetoric can significantly affect the meaning that is conveyed within particular situations. Journalistic “slant” one such tool for framing a topic. The specific words and sentence structures that are used by presidents within specific contexts can also serve to affect the frame. Framing is being here to mean “meaning”. Obviously, people use specific words and sentences to convey meaning.
This study examines how American media frames the three American presidents’ (Bush, Obama, and Trump) speeches regarding the Middle East and Iraq in particular, during their presidency of the United States. The choice of speeches was motivated by their reference to Middle East issues which have been kept under the magnifying glass in international politics. Framing theory is the cornerstone of the analytical framework for this study. The aim is to understand the nature of media frames and to explore mechanisms through episodic and thematic frames. Thematic frames point up broader directions or basic information or take form in-depth in details of a particular event or issue, it attributes responsibility to, for example, political forces (Dimitrova et al., 2005; Springer & Harwood, 2015). Meanwhile, episodic frames define as a powerful form in the communication process that has a permanent effect through remembering or depicting and transmitting a specific information or isolated news to the public (Dimitrova et al., 2005; Springer & Harwood, 2015). It, in turn, places responsibility on certain groups or individuals. Usually, episodic frames create a reduction of complexity of social problems by allowing in the details of human interest in the future to put a real face in the presentation of a particular issue or event and illustrate it to the public (Dimitrova et al., 2005; Springer & Harwood, 2015).

2. American media and president Bush’s term of office
   - Speech 1: Inaugural address (20 January 2001).
   - Speech 2: Address following the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks.
   - Speech 3: Address announcing war against Iraq following 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks (17 March 2003) Address to the Nation on Iraq.
   - Speech 4: Remarks at the UN General Assembly (12 September 2002).
   - Speech 5: State of the Union Address (28 January 2003).

Framing theory applies to how the presidential administration of George W. Bush publicly addressed problems in the Middle East after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 like terrorism sponsorship, persecution, and to hunt and bring to justice Osama bin Laden (Tarish 2019b). Azpiroz (2013) observed that War on Terror discourse influenced how mass media outlets in the United States (US) framed and critiqued the speeches made by Bush to define the problem, provide a causal analysis, suggest a remedy, and deliver a final evaluation. Many media outlets ran with the framing presented to them by the administration and even acted as cheerleaders to an extent, letting a sense of jingoism override sensible decision-making abilities. There was even a point in time when a New York Times reporter would report whatever the administration told her, and then the White House would cite her reporting at press conferences as evidence that things were going well. Accordingly, these four functions considered endemic to framing theory support the development of policies during the Iraq War that specifically targeted Arabs and Muslims, like the NYPD surveillance of Muslims that secretly went on for years after 9/11. The same functions also produced significant implications for mediatic and public diplomacy after President Bush issued multiple declarations in press conferences and interviews. Yet, one speech delivered to the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) on 12 September 2002, indicated the media reception of Bush’s speeches directly reflected what the former President constituted as a threat to members of the international community. While Bush stated that Iraq represented a significant threat, American media outlets allowed a similar discourse to unfold in a State of the Union speech delivered on 28 January 2003. Bush argued that Saddam Hussein posed enough of a threat where America needed to intervene before he had the chance to use chemical weapons and weapons of mass destruction, which the Bush administration alleged Iraq to have (Tarish 2019b). Subsequently, framing theory applies here to indicate that media outlets in the US were responsible for allowing President Bush to define Hussein as an ultimate threat because they acted more as stenographers than journalists who show skepticism, run things by a number of relevant experts, and push the administration harder for specifics and the truth.

Despite how the earlier research by Dimitrova et al. (2005) initially suggested that gaps concerning the application of framing theory remain, the current analysis of how audiences received speeches made by President Bush reinforces the strong need to consider factors like the national
reputation of media publications, demographic reach, and access to online news. For example, media outlets like CNN, ABC, and CBS relied on their penchant for technological innovation to shape the evolving War on Terror discourse and champion itself as a trusted news source by offering multimedia links to video and audio content (Dimitrova et al., 2005; Elsamni, 2016; Mhamdi, 2017). As the Internet became increasingly available to the public, audiences could watch Bush’s speeches from the comfort of their home and construct unique opinions about what the President believed would enhance national security. Audiences who watched video recordings of Bush’s speeches could also participate in online polls that allowed them to quickly answer one or two Yes/No questions about how well the President addressed national security issues (Dimitrova et al., 2005). Not surprisingly, the earlier research highlighted where many American media outlets allowed the political environment of the time to foster an anti-Arab and anti-Muslim discourse. They failed to bring on more varied and diverse voices, especially those of people of Middle Eastern descent, and they spent too much time playing up dramatic and scary images than calmly and thoroughly interviewing experts and people within the administration to better explain to their viewers what is happening and what the context of everything is. Because the US increased its military efforts during the War in Iraq, media outlets also focused on how the President and Congress adopted strategies for sending more soldiers and aircraft to prepare the American public for an ongoing clash of civilizations, which may have kept too many journalists distracted from who was getting awarded military contracts, why, and if they were necessary, ethical, and in the best interest of the soldiers.

The recent findings confirm what Robert M. Entman (2003) noted when he applied framing theory to advance a model that established the relationship between media and the government in foreign policy decisions. Audiences who viewed and listened to the speeches made by President Bush relied on the media to contain social discord. American media outlets also promoted the War on Terror by readily accepting government propaganda as truth by acting as stenographers instead of asking tough questions. However, audiences wanted to accept a mediated discourse that did not deviate from how Bush framed imminent national security threats. Audiences believed further that the media were responsible for defining the political landscape as problematic and informing the moral judgments against Arabs and Muslims directly targeted by the President as can be seen by the political sway and way that cable news can still frame the Beltway narrative (Robert M. Entman, 2003). Because thousands of Americans died in the September 11 terrorist attacks, audiences needed an information source that defined a scapegoat for them (Robert M. Entman, 2003, Tarish 2019b). Considering each of the four framing functions, American media outlets like CNN delivered a reductionist cultural logic that defined the problem as directly caused by foreign nationals who did not practice Christianity and abhorred Western standards (Azpíroz, 2013; Mhamdi, 2017; Robert M. Entman, 2003). Unfortunately, few media sources widely available to the American public offered a strong counter-frame that provided an alternative narrative of problems directly impacting Arabs and Muslims (Dimitrova et al., 2005; Robert M. Entman, 2003). To the extent that Bush developed a foreign policy discourse within a national security context, framing theory applies here to suggest that audiences depended on misplaced linguistic referents in constructing a distinct cultural Other, with the Middle East and those who live there and deal with those conflicts feeling so foreign and removed. In turn, American media decoded Bush’s speeches by framing them as exclusively bound to the War on Terror discourse.

Alternatively, the thesis posited by Gross (2012) suggested that elite framing dominated media critiques of speeches made by President Bush. In his address to the nation on 11 September 2001, the early stages of the so-called “Bush Doctrine” established that the administration would not distinguish between terrorists and their enablers (Gross, 2012: 13). Extended to the media, the Bush Doctrine encouraged supporters of the President to combat terrorism through military expansion, justify the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and introduce the use of enhanced interrogation techniques on detainees at Guantánamo Bay in Cuba (Azpíroz, 2013). Notwithstanding how the Bush Doctrine also provided the blueprint for creating the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), framing theory applies here to illustrate how American media outlets shape public opinion
and political discourse for the next decade (Gross, 2012; Neuman et al., 2014). Concerning the cascading activation model, American media outlets were responsible for closing knowledge gaps between governments and the audiences who received Bush’s address (Gross, 2012; Robert M. Entman, 2003). If the Bush administration could not accurately identify blameworthy scapegoats, it needed to create them by casting moral judgments on an entire population from one geopolitical region (Robert M. Entman, 2003; Gross, 2012, Tarish 2019b). Thus, framing theory explains how the media and governments collaborate to develop an elitist discourse supported by exceptionalist views about how the US will remain a global superpower, even in light of contradictory evidence.

For Mhamdi (2017), framing theory applied to how President Bush and the White House created a national political discourse that evolved directly from media coverage of speeches. CNN was also responsible for ensuring that audiences who viewed presidential speeches did not rely on nuance to form their opinion about the War in Iraq. While journalism represents how President Bush issued the Bush Doctrine, it also established the context in which international conflicts would take place as exemplified by the framing that followed in the years after (Gross, 2012; Mhamdi, 2017). Moreover, journalism by media outlets like CNN intentionally polarized American public opinion by framing the War in Iraq as necessary to combat terrorism and fulfill broader national/homeland security objectives as can be seen by the increasing polarization and playing on that polarization by media outlets. Despite how CNN attempted to present itself as a neutral journalist source, the media outlet relied heavily on episodic and thematic types of framing to discuss how President Bush addressed specific events as well as take advantage of the general events in which the War in Iraq occurred (Dimitrova et al., 2005; Elsamni, 2016; Gross, 2012; Mhamdi, 2017). Not surprisingly, the emphasis on episodic framing led to an increase in public support for military intervention in Iraq. By deferring to public opinion in this manner, CNN wanted to ensure that audiences would uncritically support an aggressive national security model, and that is why they kept showing military action.

Interestingly, Neuman et al. (2014) applied framing theory to distinguish between episodic and thematic types. While this research does not explicitly address the speeches made by President Bush, it does indicate that audiences must receive linguistic referents to concrete historical events like the September 11 terrorist attacks. By contrast, thematic framing would have required audiences to think abstractly about what Bush intended. These findings align with what Papacharissi and de Fatima Oliveira (2008) highlighted in their study on episodic coverage in US newspapers of speeches delivered by President Bush. Some newspaper publications like The New York Times and The Washington Post applied dissimilar frames by utilizing different linguistic referents to achieve a dramatic effect or present specific issues as they happened. Whereas The New York Times provided more dramatic coverage of Bush’s speeches after the September 11 terrorist attacks, hanging on his words and dramatizing them in headlines instead of being critical, The Washington Post did not mince words when suggesting that Arabs and Muslims were de facto members of terrorist organizations like al-Qaeda. Concurrently, The New York Times relied more on discourse analysis when describing the profiles of characters presented in news stories while The Washington Post invoked military and policy discourse in its coverage of Bush’s presidential speeches for both cases, the prevalence of episodic framing meant that a deconstruction of specific themes would shape the future.

Similarly, the research by Strömbäck et al. (2008: 119–120) highlighted where The New York Times criticized Bush for adopting an “abuse frame” in place of a “torture frame” when the Abu Ghraib prison scandal first received media attention. The abuse frame reinforced how Bush advanced military objectives and promoted enhanced interrogation techniques supported by media-consuming audiences. While other newspaper publications attempted to adopt a counter-frame that described how Soldiers tortured detainees at Abu Ghraib, The New York Times sponsored the abuse frame because it did not want to further alienate an already polarized audience (Azpiroz, 2013; Dimitrova et al., 2005; Robert M. Entman, 2003; Strömbäck et al., 2008). Since
American, by and large, supported the War in Iraq, the abuse frame seemed more palatable to voters who approved of how Bush handled national security issues. In turn, President Bush stated that the US does not engage in torture to downplay the extent of human rights abuses (Gross, 2012; Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2008). If Bush stated in his speeches that the US deliberately engaged in torture to protect national security interests, some audiences might have expressed discomfort by decreasing their approval of a President whose policy views presented only the appearance of diplomacy. Put differently, the abuse frame was more germane to American interests when Bush advanced policy goals suggesting that security threats were imminent yet remained at a great distance.

Overall, the speeches made by President Bush during his two terms in the Oval Office indicate a preoccupation with framing military solutions and national security goals as humanitarian issues. While the US wanted to act diplomatically toward Iraq, the relationship between government and media spoke differently as can be seen in the following years by all of the things that were happening behind the scenes (Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2008). Concerning the use of episodic framing, Bush’s speeches fulfilled the grander desire of ensuring that media-consuming audiences would absorb rhetorically convincing arguments tailored specifically to their ideological interests. In effect, episodic framing during the Bush administration reinforced an exceptional view of individualism as distinctly American. However, the impacts of these speeches on Arabs and Muslims reinforced how the clash of civilizations’ thesis guided foreign diplomacy and international relations (Strömbäck et al., 2008). The presidential speeches delivered by President Bush aimed to transform how audiences understood the foreign policy and international diplomacy. However, such an aim illustrated how American media outlets advanced Western democracy as the only legitimate form of government permitted anywhere (Azpíroz, 2013). American centrist is a big part of cable news and especially took hold during the Iraq War, and this framing comes with some cognitive biases. Part of this attitude also came from the false dilemma set up by the administration and Republicans that someone had to either be with America or else they were on the side of the terrorists. Media outlets also promoted nation-building by suggesting that Arabs and Muslims could not possibly understand the intrinsic value of American/Western democracy, and this type of rhetoric lined up with what the Bush administration wanted. It wanted to have the war be seen as a successful effort in which America liberates a people oppressed in their own country. By shaping the public discourse during the War on Terror, media outlets spread the message that only counter-terrorism through military strategies could achieve peace in the Middle East. Meanwhile, episodic framing was prevalent when media outlets conflated military intervention and human interests.

3. American media and president Obama’s term of office

- Speech 1: Inaugural address (21 January 2013).
- Speech 2: Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address (20 January 2015).
- Speech 3: Remarks on the Situation in Iraq (June 2014).
- Speech 4: State of the Union Address (20 January 2015).
- Speech 5: Statement by the President on ISIL (10 September 2014).

Framing theory applied to the presidential speech made by Barack Obama based on how media publications like The New York Times portrayed themes of war, conflict, and violence in the Middle East, such as, an article entitled “Paths to War, Then and Now, Haunt Obama”, published by The New York Times, by Baker 13 September 2014, framed Obama’s speech Statement by the President on ISIL, 10 September 2014. In this context, Baker pointed out how President Obama perpetuated border wars between Iraq and Syria by focusing his attention on individuals to generate emotional responses from audiences, which was easy to do with the chemical warfare that was taking place on Syria’s own citizens. As such, Obama relied on anecdotal cases to maintain public support for the War in Iraq even as audiences grew increasingly wary over the continued need for military intervention (Ramasubramanian & Miles, 2018). In an earlier scholarly work, Mislan (2009) applied
framing theory to note how publications like the Defender frame Obama's speeches as couched in racial politics. Since Obama was the first African American President, media outlets initially championed him as a healer who would save the US from what Bush effectively caused (Mislan, 2009). Media outlets also framed Obama as capable of reaching white voters dismayed by the clash of civilizations thesis enshrined by the Bush administration (Mislan, 2009; Strömback et al., 2008). Especially when Obama embarked on his presidential campaign, he insisted that reaching white voters would help him achieve victory. However, the ongoing War in Iraq required the candidate to make careful political calculations that depoliticized race as Bush supporters questioned his citizenship and ethnicity, although Obama would have faced these issues regardless because the Republican party is almost entirely built on a platform of racism and maintaining the white status quo.

Before Obama served his first presidential term and while he served as a Senator for the State of Illinois, media outlets and other detractors insisted that his middle name—“Hussein”—had some affiliation with the former Iraqi leader who was sentenced to death by hanging for engaging in crimes against humanity. Similarly, media outlets picked up on how ultra-conservative Americans mocked the presidential candidate by calling him “Obama bin Laden” after the former leader of al-Qaeda. Applying framing theory, Tariq and Moody (2009) noted that CNN, as well as arch-conservative outlets like FOX News, intentionally searched for news transcripts that connected Obama with Islam. While this event did not refer to any speeches delivered by Obama, it set the tone for how Americans would respond to proposals for ending the War in Iraq. CNN and FOX pointed out that Obama attended a madrassa while living in Indonesia during his youth. The two major media outlets also pointed out incidents involving the removal of hijabs from Muslim women during a campaign rally and a magazine cover for The New Yorker depicting the Senator as dressed in traditional Muslim garb. Taken together, all three incidents supported the application of thematic framing to indicate that most American media outlets wanted a scapegoat who could not withstand criticisms about his alleged Muslim upbringing (Betts & Krayem, 2019; Tarish 2019b; Tariq & Moody, 2009). Alternatively, the research by Chappuis (2018) and Tarish (2019b) noted that American media outlets defended Obama as a candidate who did not need to prove his Christian faith. While many American media consumers doubted that Obama was a Christian and simultaneously believed that he had direct connections with terrorist cells, journalists noted how religious tests should not apply to the establishment of programs or policies designed to serve the public (Tarish 2019b). It did not matter how true it was that Obama was indeed a practicing Christian because the right-wing propaganda machine insisted that he was a secret Kenyan Muslim usurper. Some of these outlets also contradicted themselves by suggesting Obama was a radical because he spent time with Reverend Jeremiah Wright. Religious tests would have violated constitutional protections granted by the First Amendment, while they also ushered in a wave of veiled racist commentary against Arabs and Muslims.

More pertinent to this discussion is how the speeches made by Obama when he first ran for President allowed media outlets like CNN and FOX to rely on thematic framing. Since Obama was in a presidential primary race against Hillary Clinton, gender became the overarching theme ever as the latter candidate supported an extension to the War in Iraq. Here, Wasike (2011) suggested that the emphasis on gender required Obama to focus on social issues that distracted away from media coverage of the War in Iraq. Despite how Obama wanted to address the War on Terror, he made speeches, such as, Remarks on the Situation in Iraq, June 2014; and Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address, 20 January 2015, that largely catered to the needs of a younger generation that grew increasingly reliant on social media for news and other pertinent information. During the War in Iraq, media outlets based in the US struggled to frame competing narratives of war and peace because of political differences and the need to attract audiences. Along these lines, Cozma and Kozman (2014) distinctly noted that the war narrative relied on sensationalism to shape public opinion and galvanize support. Conversely, the peace narrative entailed that media outlets would focus on transformation and conflict resolution, which meant all but forgetting about the past few years, the mistakes the media made, and not holding anyone
from the Bush administration accountable. Everyone wanted to move forward. Despite how Obama promised that he would achieve peace in the Middle East, media outlets like CNN and FOX played a zero-sum game by attempting to draw from the episodic framing used while critiquing the speeches made by Bush during his two presidential terms.

Episodic framing was more apparent when Obama had his multi-racial identity scrutinized by American media outlets during his 2008 presidential campaign. Irreri (2014) cited *The New York Times* as one publication that attempted to define Obama's speeches as containing liberal views. Unfortunately, most newspapers in the late 2000s refrained from covering political divisions without resorting to old and tired both sides journalism that puts forth a false balance out of fear of taking sides, even though it winds up taking sides and distorting reality. Considering how *The New York Times* is a member of the elite press, the control placed in private hands meant that few legal restrictions applied when Obama had to navigate the difficult political territory. Accordingly, the status of *The New York Times* as a highly reputable news source suggested that American audiences had to embrace Obama as an executive leader who could bridge gaps between party lines.

Audiences also had to code Obama's speeches as somewhat influenced by his racial background. In this context, any speeches delivered by Obama before and during his presidency drew from a critical race discourse that left contingent impacts on campaign outcomes as could be seen by the historic African-American turnout and his big overall victory over John McCain at a time when it still seemed impossible to so many people for there to be a Black president (Tarish 2019b). As the first African American President of the US, however, Obama had to struggle with multiple foreign policy issues that not only impacted how American media-consuming audiences would view the War in Iraq and other major conflicts in the Middle East (Drissel, 2015; Entman & Livingston, 2010). While terrorist organizations in Iraq and throughout the Middle East used social media like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube as recruitment tools, Obama needed to continuously make public statements about which strategies the federal government should have adopted.

Drissel (2015) noted here that speeches made when the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) first received media attention were embraced by social media users who relied less on physical newspapers and depended more on the Internet to receive information. However, social media continuously used thematic framing based on how younger audiences tend to embrace technological innovation, mimicking the style, pacing, and messaging commonly associated with the media that younger people use, crossed with classic propaganda tactics to recruit and radicalize. Unlike Bush, who was distracted by the War in Iraq, the most significant instrument that played the main role during Obama's presidency campaign is the internet in communication (Tarish 2019a). He understood that social media have the potential to bring people together. For major American media outlets like CNN and FOX, such an understanding seemed ludicrous. Wasike (2011) suggested here that news organizations did not define social media as tantamount to journalism because of generation gaps. Generations of Internet users follow different agendas from what mainstream news organizations have to offer, like how they can get information from blogs, podcasts, video shows from independent media on places like YouTube, social media, and comments sections. Yet, the abundance of media coverage about speeches and other declarations made by Obama meant that framing discussions on how the President would achieve peace in the Middle East would necessitate more hardball tactics.

For example, Entman et al. (2007: 205) noted that the ability of President Obama to frame progress during the War in Iraq as a “light at the end of the tunnel” reinforced the need for American media outlets to rely on scripts that questioned whether the world leader could effectively manage the crisis that Bush created. Media commentary on the speeches made by Obama reinforced what Americans believed about the need for administrative and military intervention in the Middle East (Tarish 2019b). In this context, thematic framing applied when the federal government introduced its narrative and insisted that media outlets follow scripts that maintained
Western dominance. Despite how Obama did not explicitly express support for the ongoing War on Terror, American media outlets framed presidential speeches by questioning whether the President supported the troops (Entman et al. 2007). Irrespective of any policy failures created by the Bush administration, the cascading effects indicated media outlets posed questions about why some developments took longer than necessary. Similarly, media outlets maintained that President Obama had to prioritize escalation over withdrawal so that audiences could believe that he authentically represented the American public interest.

Similarly, the research by Ha and Lee (2014) noted how thematic framing applied when, during the 2009 UN General Assembly sessions, President Obama criticized the covert efforts of Iran to manufacture nuclear weapons. While Obama stated that Iran was unwilling to meet its obligations to the UN and other members of the international community, media outlets encouraged audiences to code sound bites as indicating an emphasis on foreign policy issues (Esfandiary, 2014; Ha and Lee 2014). Interestingly, journalists from the US paid more attention to how democratization and human rights issues within so-called rogue states subsequently influenced foreign policy discussions. The humanitarian issues emphasized by the media placed a critical spotlight on how the Iranian government cracked down on citizen protests. Accordingly, journalists affiliated with American media outlets framed Obama’s statements as morally superior to those made by leaders like Mahmoud Ahmadinejad who effectively denied that major historical tragedies like the Holocaust were real (Ha and Lee 2014). While Obama also responded to the ongoing War in Afghanistan and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, media outlets framed their coverage when journalists insisted that they knew more about foreign policy than what US government officials claimed, saying they were working off of exclusive reporting they have from on-the-ground sources.

In 2013, American media outlets framed President Obama’s response to the crisis in Syria by insisting that military action was necessary to promote peace in the Middle East. For Athena and Moore (2019), the crisis in Syria was a logical step that reflected how the US government did not respond effectively to the first and second battles of Fallujah in Iraq. During Obama’s presidency, the media framed how Obama announced the proposed withdrawal of troops from the Middle East by suggesting that the president was blameworthy for allowing tensions in Syria to mount. While Obama delivered several speeches from January 2009 to January 2017 declaring that that War in Iraq would end, the mass murder of Syrian protesters and chemical attacks on civilians supported by President Bashar al-Assad fueled media criticism. Subsequently, the emergence of ISIS-led Obama to announce airstrikes against the Islamic caliphate (Athena & Moore, 2019; Elsamni, 2016). Media responses to the airstrikes reinforced how Obama was unable to restore peace in the Middle East while audiences grew increasingly wary of false promises (Athena & Moore, 2019; Elsamni, 2016). Media criticism of how Obama declared an end to the War in Afghanistan was also warranted based on how the President echoed Bush in stating that the US government does not engage in torture (Gross, 2012). The abuse frame was apparent here when Obama maintained that counter-terrorist strategies involving the military would galvanize public support for continuous interventions.

For Ramasubramanian and Miles (2018), the media discourse framed Obama’s response to the Syrian crisis by reinstating past claims that the President had covert ties to terrorist organizations with members who practice Islamic fundamentalism. While Obama declared that he would resettle approximately 10,000 refugees across 231 cities, American media outlets framed his statements as influenced by pressure by the international community (Toosi, 2016). Because of how Obama declared that he would accept Syrian refugees in the US, governors from 31 states responded with indignation as major organizations like CNN and FOX followed suit. Thematically, the claims made by governments and the media indicate that collusion was apparent in making legally baseless yet politically charged claims about the right to bar Syrian refugees from entering the country.
During Obama’s second term in office, the November 2015 terrorist attacks at a railway station in Ankara, Turkey, allowed US-based media organizations to thematically frame the speeches that followed. El-Nawawy and Hamas Elmasry (2017) noted how Obama responded to the terrorist attacks by underscoring Western values. Accordingly, the President did so after the January 2015 shooting at the Charlie Hebdo publication office in Paris, France, led to a broader questioning of Obama’s beliefs about Western superiority. An article published in The Washington Post declared further that both attacks required world leaders like Obama to apply a humanization frame (El-Nawawy & Hamas Elmasry, 2017). However, Obama implicitly needed to reinforce his identity as an American who believed that any attacks on Western soil also constituted an attack on human rights and democracy. The irony was, nevertheless, lost on audiences who believed that Muslims from the Middle East were responsible for the attacks. As The Washington Post framed Obama’s response to the terrorist attacks as an attempt to humanize the victims, many members of the Fox News audience readily accepted arguments that relied on terrorist frames to structure media coverage.

4. American media and president Trump's term of office
   - Speech 1: Announcement of Candidacy (16 June 2015).
   - Speech 2: Donald Trump’s Foreign Policy Speech (27 April 2016).
   - Speech 3: Inaugural address (20 January 2017).
   - Speech 4: President Trump’s Speech to the Arab Islamic American Summit (21 May 2017).
   - Speech 5: Trump’s Speech Recognizing Jerusalem as the Capital of Israel (6 December 2017).

During the Trump administration, both episodic and thematic framing applied insofar as the President relied on social media—specifically, Twitter—to broadcast his opinions about how media outlets like CNN and The Washington Post influenced public opinion about the American federal government (Diddi, 2018). More specific to US-Middle East relations, the influence of social media on public opinion indicated that a professional code of ethics need not apply when American audiences grew increasingly afraid of ISIS and other terrorist organizations as evidenced by the increasing gruesome reporting that was featured (Azeez, 2019; Swoffs, 2018, Tarish 2019b). As explained further, the application of framing theory to speeches delivered by Trump extends to how political communication in modern democracies often represents a disconnect between media-consuming audiences and their relationship with government (Bennett & Pfetsch, 2018). Moreover, the framing of presidential speech, such as, Foreign Policy Speech 27 April 2016, Trump represents a strong need for audiences and researchers to evaluate the normative assumptions underlying foreign policy models that inform diplomatic relations with the Middle East. For Diddi (2018), news media and journalists frame Trump’s speeches by going with what they believe is true and accurate to the best of their interpretations, which is hard to do with someone who lies and is incoherent. During the 2016 presidential campaign, American media outlets such as The Washington Post provided negative coverage of Trump and refused to cast a positive light on his ability to captivate audiences (Sides & Leetaru, 2016). After all, Trump cited organizations such as CNN as purveyors of so-called “fake news” by insinuating that journalists deliberately obfuscate the real political situation facing Americans (Bharali & Lahkar Goswami, 2018: 120–1; Diddi, 2018: 32). In noting that such statements about journalists constitute only half-truths, a cavalcade of episodes led media outlets, such as, CNN, New York Times, The Washington Post in 2020 to declare that Trump was unfit to play an executive leadership role, from being impeached to catching COVID-19 and still acting as a danger to himself and others as he fights off this disease that could kill him (Gangol et al., 2020). More specifically, American media outlets framed Trump during the campaign to announce his candidacy for the presidency of the United States, 16 June 2015, as dangerous based on his comments about Arabs and Muslims (Gamboa, 2016). Concurrently, Trump is one of many arch-conservatives who initially believed that Obama was not born in the US until the former President released a certified copy of his birth certificate filed with the State of Hawaii, and in fact, he was the primary pusher of this myth and was on Fox and Friends almost every day in 2012 to push these lies for which he never apologized (Krieg, 2016).
Likewise, the research by Swolfs (2018) applied framing theory to indicate that media watchdog groups must prioritize critical objectivity to not only provide citizens accurate information but to also preserve democratic institutions. Considering the anti-Arab and anti-Muslim comments made by Trump, like calling for and instituting a Muslim ban, the online coverage of presidential speeches by CNN directly reflected foreign policy narratives advanced by Republican members of Congress. For example, the Battle of Raqqah (Syria) that took place in 2017 is only one of many episodes that present significant conflicts of interest over how American media-consuming audiences should interpret the event. Since terrorist organizations like ISIS were heavily embroiled in the Battle of Raqqah, CNN took the opportunity to apply a human-interest frame by describing how residents of the ravaged Syrian city felt about Trump. During this episode, CNN framed public responses to calls for military intervention by Donald Trump by characterizing the Battle of Raqqah as a just war (Swolfs, 2018). To the extent that Trump declared ISIS a major threat to international security and democracy, CNN encouraged American audiences to accept foreign policy views at face value. In doing so, the media organization framed this episode as a positive highlight of how Trump addressed the ongoing war in Iraq.

Of course, researchers who applied framing theory critiqued how Trump in his Inaugural address, 20 January 2017, insisted to impose a travel ban on individuals from Muslim-majority countries who attempted to claim refugee status and seek asylum in the US because of the armed conflicts in the Middle East perpetrated by ISIS. Azeez (2019: 120–1) applied framing theory to suggest that media outlets function as sites of “ideological interpretation” that indoctrinate audiences into accepting one broad narrative as encompassing an absolute truth. When Trump made his speech declaring a travel ban, mainstream media outlets like CNN provided only a brief glimpse into the rise of anti-Muslim hate crimes cited by Amnesty International and other humanitarian organizations (Azeez, 2019; Chappuis, 2018). CNN also contributed to an increase in Islamophobic tropes that exacerbated what happened during the Bush administration like that all Muslims are terrorists or that all terrorists are Muslims. In turn, the dominant tropes found in the US media extended to countries like the United Kingdom (UK), Russia, China, the Philippines, and Mexico (Azeez, 2019; Diddi, 2018). Regardless of how Trump took to using Twitter as a platform for denying that he ever made anti-Arab and anti-Muslim claims, many viewing audiences in the US continued to deride media organizations like CNN as fake news. Thus, the media attempted to frame some episodes as indicative of how Trump relied on themes commonly associated with American exceptionalism, like how he talked about how the American Dream is dead.

Primarily because Trump insisted in many of his presidential speeches that media watchdogs represented fake news, framing theory applies here in suggesting that most American audiences living in “post-truth” era that reflects the near-incessant use of platforms like Facebook and Twitter to receive news (Bharali and Goswani 2018: 120). Considering diplomatic relations between the US and the Middle East, the post-truth discourse adopted by American media outlets also contained legal implications that reflected a spread of disinformation so that audiences would feel complacent about the current political theatre (Bharali and Goswani 2018: 120). Most likely because many younger individuals who identify as Millennials rely on social media for purposes other than retrieving news and information, the state of complacency was desired by mainstream outlets so that democratic institutions would not undertake risks of going under siege. Social media were, therefore, responsible for the spread of disinformation persuading younger audiences into believing everything Trump said about foreign policy issues, and these outlets have hardly stepped up their enforcement but have done more in recent months with warnings against false information about elections and the virus. From an international perspective, the episodic and thematic framing of speeches made by President Trump symbolized a need to raise questions about how the media can maintain democratic institutions. Overall, the post-truth era in which social media have a nearly ubiquitous presence led to audiences confusing which stories were fake or real. Because of this confusion, critical media literacy seems non-existent except in small niche markets because of the confusion and distrust created by
right-wing media and people not understanding how normal news outlets work and why they are much different than Facebook and Twitter.

The framing of presidential speech, such as, the speech held on 21 May 2017, to the Arab Islamic-American Summit addressed the leaders of more than 50 Muslim countries to outline his vision for relations between the United States and Muslims. Made by Trump, it also provided American media organizations with the opportunity to align broader cultural beliefs about Arabs and Muslims with a strong desire for narrative resonance. Bonikowski (2017) argued that successful framing depends on how media outlets present claims made in speeches to audiences receiving a distinct message. Despite how some of the claims made by Trump contain multiple platitudes and clichés, news and social media established a broad cultural narrative that delivered tropes about what to expect when the President discussed emerging issues like nuclear threats posed by Iran and the conflict in Syria (Bonikowski, 2017; Esfandiary, 2014). Yet, the thematic frames of Trump's speeches about diplomatic relations with the Middle East represented significant challenges to left-wing populist mobilization that was present when Obama served his presidential role (Bonikowski, 2017; Esfandiary, 2014). Increasing distrust in government institutions galvanized xenophobic public opinion about the human rights issues plaguing refugees from Syria and other parts of the Middle East (Bonikowski, 2017; Elsman, 2016; Ramasubramanian & Miles, 2018). Moreover, the nationalist rhetoric invoked in several of Trump's speeches indicate Americans still needed a scapegoat long after the September 11 terrorist attacks effectively caused the War in Iraq because this messaging perfectly plays into right-wing tropes and his desire to be an authoritarian strongman figure.

Notwithstanding how Trump declared himself a nationalist on multiple occasions, the application of framing theory illustrates how specific episodes occurring in the Middle East blocked progressive social change as audiences from predominantly White and lower-middle-class back-grounds felt Obama represented the least common denominator while Trump is currently losing voters of almost all stripes (Bonikowski, 2017). Insofar as Trump made diplomatic relations with the Middle East more turbulent, he also pointed the finger at CNN and publications like The New York Times by not appealing to a broader demographic. While Trump declared in his speeches that CNN and The New York Times were elitist media organizations, audiences wanted a leader who could speak plainly without using jargon to put radical Islamic terrorists in their place.

Similarly, the work by Majin (2019) demonstrated how mainstream media organizations in the US have reduced the credibility of mainstream journalism by allowing Trump to make speeches about documents that justified the War in Iraq and by endorsing his decision to backpedal in the face of criticism. When the Russiagate scandal concerning alleged interference by Russia in the 2016 presidential election broke, Trump wasted no time accusing journalists of spreading lies about his direct involvement with leaders like President Vladimir Putin. Concurrently, diplomatic relations between the US and the Middle East were similar in quality to those that were present when Bush was President. Despite how journalists attempted to frame various Trumpian episodes and themes as demonstrating sheer incompetence, most outlets insisted that increasing their ratings represented a more important task. For a sitting US President, the broader task of media organizations to increase ratings meant that audiences would also increase approval ratings for Trump. As such, framing theory has implications for explaining why American audiences wanted a President whose prejudices against Arabs and Muslims confirmed their opinions about who to blame for extending the War in Iraq.

Similarly, the findings presented by Radwan (2019) also indicated that episodic and thematic framing applied when Trump recognize Jerusalem as the official capital of Israel and declared that he would move the US Embassy to Tel Aviv. Given their proximity to Iran, the cities of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv were geopolitical hotspots for discussing how to resolve the six-decades-long Palestinian conflict. While the Trump administration changed course on how to achieve peace in Palestine, media coverage by publications like The Washington Post, The Los Angeles Times, The
New York Times, and Chicago Tribune framed speeches made by the President as setting a clear foreign policy agenda. In some ways, journalists with The New York Times downplayed the suffering of Palestinians and trumpeted the victories of the Israeli government. The New York Times also relied heavily on sources from Israeli than from Palestine in their coverage of foreign policy addresses. Because of the pre-existing anti-Arab and anti-Muslim sentiment expressed by Trump, mainstream media-consuming audiences in the US followed suit in accepting the tropes adopted by the President.

Considering how Trump is nearing the end of his first term in office, more research on framing theory may help with analyzing how governments and the media work in collusion to produce narratives that audiences may unquestionably absorb. Betts and Krayem (2019) noted how anti-Arab and anti-Muslim rhetoric buttressed the need for audiences to scapegoat a socio-cultural Other. Accordingly, President Trump found it incumbent to depart from accepted political norms and use Twitter as a social media platform to issue concise yet curt statements about foreign policy issues affecting diplomatic relations with the Middle East (Betts & Krayem, 2019; Diddi, 2018). On this note, media outlets also find it incumbent to frame presidential speeches by relying on sound bites and decontextualizing ambiguous phrases (Ha and Lee 2014). While journalists are responsible for engaging viewing and reading audiences, framing theory posits that a lack of context is highly problematic when interpretations of presidential speeches indicate a disconnect from the reality described. Yet, the frames adopted by American media outlets indicate that bias-free interpretations of episodes and themes are nearly impossible to produce. Whereas positive interpretations of presidential speeches rarely attract media and audience attention, negative interpretations are more effective at convincing the public into accepting xenophobic narratives against Arabs and Muslims with Middle Eastern origins. Milojevich and Beattie (2018) noted how media framing presents legitimate concerns about how audiences interpret reports by using specific linguistic referents to define issues and attribute values accordingly. Media-consuming audiences who receive their information from alternative sources often reject the mainstream values that allow news outlets and publications to maintain their influence on public opinion (Chappuis, 2018; Milojevich & Beattie, 2018). Concurrently, audiences who receive their information exclusively from one media source—e.g., CNN or FOX—may rely on narratives that confirm their biases and inform political behaviors.

5. Conclusion
Framing theory was the foundation of any analysis in the previous perspective, it also plays a role in this analysis in which discussions of how American media works to frame the words (deeds) of three presidents’ (Bush, Obama, and Trump). Concerning Bush, the thematic framing would have led to a broader public misunderstanding of the political and social forces that caused Bush to argue for military intervention. Similarly, audiences who watched Presidents Bush deliver speeches about the War in Iraq would not have understood the big picture if episodic framing were not present. Despite how a growing number of US audiences used the Internet to receive news and other information after the September 11 attacks, episodic framing was still necessary to reduce confusion over how Bush would advance national/homeland security objectives. While, the Obama’s administration that followed shifted gears after American media outlets focused their attention on the race of the President, his place of birth, and his alleged connections with radical Muslims in the Middle East. Such a focus introduced the possibility that one episode would unravel to produce specific themes for the media to analyze. The applications of framing theory to speeches made by President Donald Trump were both episodic and thematic such that the executive leader of the US government has a turbulent relationship with Iraq, Syria, and the Middle East. While media frames set the tone for American audiences to discuss which narratives or tropes are the most convincing, future analyses of presidential speeches should establish how emerging episodes and themes will shape foreign policy and diplomatic relations.
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