

Framing the First Palestinian General Elections by Malaysia's New Straits Times

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ABSTRACT

The main focus of this study is the coverage of New Straits Times (NST) of the first Palestinian General Elections for two presidential candidates namely, Yasser Arafat and Samiha Khalil. This study aimed to explore if any of Entman's 1993 framing functions was used in the coverage of this issue and to explore whether the tone of NST coverage was negative, positive, balanced or neutral. To achieve the aims of this study, qualitative content analysis of elections stories from NST has been adopted. The number of news stories was eight, and the time frame started from 19th January to 13th February 1996, where three of these stories were published on the same day of 22nd January, two days after holding the elections on 20th January. Defining problems and diagnosing causes were the most prominent of Entman's four framing functions presented in all the articles. The moral judgment function was included in four news stories, and suggesting remedies was included in two news stories out of eight. The findings revealed that Yasser Arafat received 50% balanced coverage, followed by 37.5% positive coverage, and only 12.5% negative coverage, while Samiha Khalil received 67% balanced coverage, compared to 33% positive coverage.

Keywords: *Arafat, framing, media coverage, Palestine, presidential elections.*

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the years, research on political communication has been guided by several communication theories. After analysing several theories, the current study has adopted Entman's (1993) framing theory. Generally, news media is presenting the political issues stories by only using narrow perspectives range. However, unlike other political issues, the elections issues are getting more serious attention by ruling governments since their holding power and ruling depend on the outcomes of elections. Mostly, it should be considered that the campaigns of general elections for presidents and parliaments are being run at the same time (Katende, 2012).

Politics framing as a strategic game is considered one of the most significant concepts in media coverage on politics and more specifically during election campaigns (Aalberg, Strömbäck & De Vreese, 2012). There is a necessity for understanding the way of using frames and how they persist in policymaking, since there is lack in documenting all the utilized frames by entrepreneurs of policy to shape policy debate (Fucilla & Engbers, 2015). Recently, news framing concept has achieved a considerable amount of studies. The supplied frames by journalists provide their audience with means for understanding and organizing new information. However, through stressing on specific features or elements of a broad controversy, news frame may influence the policy preferences and opinions of individuals (Tewksbury, Jones, Peske, Raymond & Vig, 2000).

Framing the news by editors and reporters aims to facilitate the readers' understanding, and to shape the perceptions of society in line with the media agenda (Kasim, Ismail & Wahab, 2018). The framing of a message influences the attitude and behaviour of the audience towards the organization (Ahmad, Ashari & Samani, 2017).

The term 'framing' in general and in political campaigns in specific, has appeared in popular discourse like other concepts in the research of mass communication, specifically about political campaign. The importance of media framing term lies in helping the audience to understand the influences of mass communication, being an alternative for the old bias and objectivity paradigm, and offering useful suggestions for practitioners of communication. There are several important differences between framing and bias, yet framing is a more sophisticated concept that goes beyond the notion positive or negative, favourable or unfavourable, pro or con (Tankard, 2001).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What functions among the four framing model functions have been used by the Malaysian media in its coverage of the first Palestinian General Elections?
2. What tones of news coverage have been used by New Strait Times newspaper on the first Palestinian General Elections?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To explore Entman's framing functions that have been used by the Malaysian media in its coverage of the first Palestinian General Elections.
2. To explore tones of news coverage that have been used by New Strait Times newspaper on the first Palestinian General Elections.

LITERATURE REVIEW

First Palestinian General Elections

The first Presidential and Legislative Palestinian General Elections were held on January 20, 1996 (CEC, 1996; Pina, 2006) in accordance with the Law of Palestinian Elections in 1995. There were only two presidential candidates: Yasser Arafat who won the elections with 88.2 per cent of the votes and Samiha Khalil who achieved 11.5 per cent (CEC, 1996). Arafat won that presidential elections overwhelmingly and become the first president of the Palestinian Authority (Pina, 2006). The elections included 16 electoral districts, 5 in Gaza Strip, and 11 in the West Bank. The number of observers in the elections were over 2000 local observers, and 519 International observers who have considered that elections process as democratic and occurred in a free manner (CEC, 1996). The Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) is considered as the legislative arm of the Palestinian Authority and has the authority to approve all governmental cabinet positions, and confirm the Prime Minister. During those elections, Arafat's Party (Fatah) won 49 seats, affiliated candidates won 15 seats, and the remaining 24 seats were taken by other independent candidates (Pina, 2006).

Framing

This study is based on the theory of framing. Since there are several approaches about framing, the study has depended on the framing model that was developed by Entman (1993). Framing is considered as a significant concept that has been applied widely in mass communication and political communication areas.

The four functions by Entman (1993) which were used as the basis of this study to identify framing, namely *define issues or problems, identify causes of those problems, make moral judgement and suggest solutions or remedies* for the mentioned problem. Sometimes, those four functions might be included in the same sentence, and other times some sentences may not include any of them. Yet, those four functions are not necessarily to be included in a particular text (Entman, 1993). Applying the four functions model could be helpful in this study to show the prominent and hidden frames. By employing the theoretical framework of framing, this paper has attempted to explore the tone of news coverage by Malaysian newspaper "New Strait Times" (NST) on the first Palestinian General Elections.

Bateson (1972) and later Goffman (1974) introduced the framing concept to social science, and then Tuchman (1978) introduced it to journalism. Another leading theorist of framing was Entman (1993) who has extended framing understanding in mass media. Entman introduced the theory of framing which refers to the attributes chosen on a specific issue, which shapes a narrative that makes them more prominent than others. The framing theory is usually used in the studies about news stories (Mokhtar, 2018).

Since the mid of 1960s, the framing theory has faced a rapid development, when it has arose in sociology field. It became a multidisciplinary approach that allows studying the holistic media influence on audiences and individuals. Framing exists in four communication process elements: sender, receiver, message and culture (Ardèvol-Abreu, 2015). Framing became a significant tool to present somehow complex issues in an efficient way and then make those issues accessible to their audience. Framing describes the process of presenting features and information by people regarding issues as they shape impressions for them (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

Since there was frequent use of the framing theory in political communication research, it became pertinent for examining types of frames used in candidate coverage (O'Gara, 2009). Few researches have dealt with the political campaigns coverage in the countries that having both political and social change especially in Third World countries (Woo, 1996). Usually, people are less familiar with foreign candidates and parties so their opinion could be more fluid, and therefore influenced by media coverage (Boomgaarden, Vliegenthart & de Vreese, 2011). The International news stories include various types of topics, and the way of framing international news in the news reports may determine the size of salience cues, which will have different influences on public (Wanta & Hu, 1993).

Presentation of mass media news appears as a powerful means for political framing influences. Primarily, defining political issues is done via news reports, and since the coverage of news is an inevitable matter that is expressed in specific frames, so the media influence on public opinion could be significant (Iyengar, 1990). Media coverage is giving more attention and importance to some stories and issues than others by highlighting them in any type of media to make the public aware about them. Sometimes media coverage has several aims: to highlight or ignore some aspects of the story, to control the public opinion whether with or against the issue, to create perceptions, to reveal the truth, and because they are forced to cover specific issue by pressure groups (Sadaf, 2011).

It seems reasonable that news media should be the main source of persuasive information to convince the public to support one candidate or another since much of the public do not have other consistent good information regarding the election process (Domke, Fan, Fibison, Shah, Smith & Watts, 1997). News framing gives a guidance template

for journalists to assemble questions, facts, and other elements in the news story as well as guides the audience's interpretations (Han, 2007). In general, framing mostly stresses on constructed nature of media messages, and often discusses media portrayals of an issue as clues to framing decisions of journalists, whose decisions in return give significant evidence about the power flow in the society (Maher, 2001).

Framing is a selection of some parts of perceived reality and making them more prominent in a communicating text, in a way that controls a specific definition of the problem, moral evaluation, causal interpretation, and/or having treatment recommendation for the described item (Entman, 1993). Entman's four functions constitute a framework, as a particular look on the world that forms the context for interpreting and presenting events by news media (Jørndrup, 2016). The four functions of Entman are helpful for understanding the nature of frame influence on individuals' thinking, which facilitates easy measuring and identifying of frames (Hewege & Mitchell, 2013).

All of the four functions are held together in a cultural logical way, where they support each other to sustain with connections among them that enhance more through convention and custom than by syllogistic logic principles (Entman, 2009). The four functions of Entman are explained as following: First, frames can define problems by identifying what is done by causal agent negatively or positively, and is mostly judged by the cultural norms. Second, through identifying causes, frames can determine the sources that made an issue. Third, through making moral judgments, the frames are able to judge whether a causal agent is bad or good. Fourth, through justifying and offering solutions for the problem, frames are able to suggest remedies (Marinescu & Balasescu, 2013).

Elaborating on Entman's four functions is as following: (1) defining problems by identifying the benefits and costs, describing the problem core, and measuring them through the common values of the culture, (2) identifying the problems causes is through determining the forces that create the problems, (3) making moral judgment is through evaluation of that judgment, and (4) suggesting solutions by offering remedies and justifying them. Based on that, it can be seen that determining the frames is through argumentations and information they include or ignore, and creating guidance for audience that influences the way of remembering a problem and evaluating it (Ciompová, 2014).

Frames are enhancing or introducing the appearance and availability of certain ideas to evaluate a political object. Slanted framing is a result of cultural norms, the developments of real world interaction, and journalistic decision rules with several efforts to compete elites for managing the news. The essence of slant is emphasizing on one side of the news story and derogating or ignoring the other side. Emphasizing on some elements and suppressing others encourages the audience to give attention for evaluating attributes that support favoured interpretation side (Entman, 2010). Slant describes supporting one side over another in news editorials and reports in the dispute (Entman, 2007).

News tone is defined as the negative or positive media coverage valence (Bleich, Stonebraker, Nisar & Abdelhamid, 2015). Eshbaugh-Soha (2010) has divided the slant or tone to positive and negative slants. Positive sentences contain descriptions of an enthusiastic, or applauding statements, or audience that support the president. Negative sentences contain descriptions of protests, negative analysis of policies or remarks of the president, or context of statements that remind readers of something negative. If some sentences include different ideas, the coding depends on overall content of a sentence.

The negative tone indicators used to describe political failure in Lengauer, Esser and Berganza's (2012) study were failure, scepticism, flop, disaster, deterioration, cynicism, defeatism, frustration, threats, fiasco, rejection, resignation, disappointment, denial, crisis, default, collapse, and neglect. Meanwhile, the positive tone indicators that depict political success were accomplishment, sustainability, problem solutions, achievement, enthusiasm, advance, benefit, improvement, gratification, hope, prosperity, and gain. The neutral tone was mentioned if the report did not reflect positive or negative tones.

In communication studies, it has been well established that frames in communication (phrases, words, images, etc.) influence the way of presenting and receiving the information (Gupta, Sharman & Rao, 2011). Political parties are working hard to have the supportive frames for their argument into the main discourse. Their competitors in contrary also promote their own framing; while other public sphere actors such as (interest groups, opinion makers, journalists, etc.) add also to the total framing of an issue. Hence, parties are rarely having a monopoly over the way of defining issues (Van der Pas, 2014).

In framing theory, viewing an issue can be from various perspectives and can be construed as having implications for several considerations or values. Framing mostly means the process that the people reorient their thinking or develop a specific conceptualization on that issue. A lot of attention is on how the elites of communication such as media outlets, politicians, and interest groups affect the attitudes and frames of citizens, which called framing effect (Chong & Druckman, 2007).

Framing of journalists' stories is affected by the value of news that refer to the issue, and the nature of information that they got from their sources. There is number of situational factors that influence approaching and shaping of stories such as event, location of event, and the involved people in that event (Vossen, van Gorp & Schulpen, 2017). Frames are helpful presumed scripts that help people make sense of social world, and framing is considered as a main tool for communication within media. The held cognitive frameworks by audience in a society are influenced by framing and broadsheet of news media through the attached degree of salience and the selected topic (Devitt & O'Neill, 2016).

METHODOLOGY

The adopted research design for this study is descriptive qualitative content analysis, which suits the focus of the study that aimed to explore Entman's framing functions that have been used by the Malaysian media in its coverage of the first Palestinian General Elections, and to explore the tone of news coverage by Malaysian newspaper New Strait Times on the issue.

Qualitative content analysis is a research method that is used for analysing visual or verbal, and written communication messages (Cole, 1988). It is used when a phenomenon is fragmented or when no previous studies have dealt with that phenomenon (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). The aim of using content analysis in this study was to build a model for describing a phenomenon in a conceptual form.

The population of this study was New Straits Times newspaper, which is the oldest English language newspaper in Malaysia (Chibundu, 2013; Jones, 2012; Lavric, 2008). It has a wide coverage locally and is considered one mainstream English language daily newspaper (Chibundu, 2013; Manan, 2001; Zaharom, 2000). This newspaper has strong affiliations with

the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) which is the ruling political party in Malaysia and somehow this newspaper is controlled by UMNO (Jones, 2015; Manan, 2001).

The sampling technique used for this study was the purposive sampling. Eight newspaper stories which related to the issue of study were chosen and analysed, and all the other articles that did not focus on the issue of study were excluded. The time frame for this study consisted of all editions of the NST published from January 19, 1996 to February 13, 1996 when the winner Yasser Arafat was sworn in as the elected President.

The data were collected from the library of the National University of Malaysia. The coding sheet was the main instrument used for gathering the data. It has indicated clearly both content categories and sub-categories which have been coded accordingly.

The source and type of articles measurement were adopted from Okeke (2012). The measurement of section of articles was retrieved from NST newspaper. The coverage/tone of articles measurement was modified from Scharrer (2002). The negative tone according to Scharrer was the stories or articles contained clear and blatant words used to connote a sense of disapproval or disregard, accusations or unflattering comments, or words or phrases that portrayed the subject in a bad light throughout the article. The positive tone was if the article used clear words to connote praise, approval, flattery, or any angle that portrayed the subject in a good light throughout. Finally, this study used face validity which is simply based on judgment by experts from the field.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It can be seen that the first coverage of New Strait Times about the elections was on January 19, which was only a day before the election date of January 20. It can be said that the NST did not pay real attention to the first historic general Palestinian elections. The sequence of publishing news story date was as following: the first article was on January 19, the second was on January 20, the third, fourth, and fifth articles were on January 22, the sixth was on February 8, the seventh was on February 12, and lastly the eighth article was on February 13 which marked the day of Arafat's sworn in.

Regarding the coverage size about the two candidates, all eight news stories mentioned the name of PLO candidate Yasser Arafat (67 years at that time) who won the elections later by 88.2 %, and only three news stories on January 19 and 20 and February 8 mentioned the name of the other candidate Samiha Khalil who got 11.5% only.

News stories prominence and design were adopted from Budd (1964), and covered five items which are: headline, place of story on page, column, picture, and whether the story was on the first page or not. Firstly, the length of headline was two columns or more in width for the whole eight stories. Secondly, seven out of eight stories have occupied $\frac{3}{4}$ of a column or more except the article on January 12. Thirdly, six news stories out of eight have attached pictures. Fourthly, five articles out of eight were placed above the fold/measured page centre. Fifthly, only one article out of eight was placed in the front page, and the other seven were placed in the other sections. The most prominent article was from the front page on January 22 and achieved five scores out of five, and the less prominent article was on February 12 which achieved only one score out of five.

Regarding the source of news stories, the study found that the source of four of these news stories were from local news agencies specifically NST, and the other four news stories were from international news agencies, three from AFP, and one from Reuters. On the other hand, all eight news stories are considered as straight news. However, regarding the section of these stories, the result showed that five news stories were under World

News section, one was under National section, one was under Front page section, and the last story was under Life and Times section.

On the other hand, all 8 articles were analysed based on the four framing functions model of Entman (1993) as follows:

(1) Regarding the first article on January 19; two functions were found here, the issue/problem and the causes of that problem. The first function which is defining issue/problem was considering the Presidential candidate Samiha Khalil in critical position as “weak candidate”. The following quote is giving further elaboration about that:

Arafat’s challenger cast for protest votes... Unlikely to get more than 10 per cent of the votes... Mrs Khalil’s campaign manager, Dr. Mohamed Abu Zed, who is also her personal physician, said he would be happy if she gets 10 per cent of the vote (Ismail, 1996, Jan 19, p. 22).

Identifying the cause of problem, which is the second function, revealed that the candidate Samiha Khalil is challenging “legendary leader” Yasser Arafat who has a huge popularity among his people which puts her in that critical position. Identifying the cause was through the following paragraph:

Let’s face it. We are running against a legendary figure. People in Gaza and the West Bank see Arafat as this larger than life. So Mrs. Khalil will probably collect protest votes (Ismail, 1996, Jan 19, p. 22).

(2) Also, only two functions, were found in the second article on January 20 which are the problem and its causes. The issue identified as “disturbing elections process” by Israeli army who have tried to obstruct the elections through their procedures. The following paragraph explains that:

The Israeli army announced it was sealing of the West Bank and Gaza from Israel until early Sunday, effectively imposing an Election Day holiday on Saturday... It gave no reason for the closure (NST, 1996, Jan 20, p. 20).

The cause of this problem showed that the Israelis were against the Palestinian democratic and against the success of Arafat as following:

As Palestinians eagerly awaited their turn at democracy building... PLO chairman Yasser Arafat is widely expected to beat easily his only challenger (NST, 1996, Jan 20, p. 20).

(3) The third article on January 22 has revealed three functions out of four, namely defining problems, finding the causes, and making moral judgment. The issue has been described as “victory of Arafat” by repeating many phrases and words about his winning as following:

PLO chief takes 85pc of vote in historic Palestinian President election... Landside victory for Arafat... Yasser Arafat won a crushing victory to become the Palestinians' first elected President, according to results issued today by the official election commission (NST, 1996, Jan 22, p. 01).

The cause for that issue is considered as "supporting Arafat's strategy" in dealing with Israel and forward achieving the independence for Palestinian people. It showed how Palestinian people were craving for their independence as seen in the following paragraph:

The election was unanimously seen as a huge vote of confidence for Arafat and his step-by step strategy for peace with Israel and Palestinian independence (NST, 1996, Jan 22, p. 01).

The moral judgment was through considering the "elections expressed the voters' well" from what has been mentioned by the election observers as the next paragraph stated:

A coalition of 650 election observers also declared the vote fair, saying in a joint statement that the presidential and council elections results can reasonably be regarded as an accurate expression of the will of the voters on polling day (NST, 1996, Jan 22, p. 01).

(4) The fourth article on January 22 has included all the four functions. Regarding the first function which is define the issue or problem, it can be seen that the problem here is "worries about election" as explained in next sentence:

But what was the experience for thousands of ordinary Palestinians going through their very first general election?. More importantly, could they vote without fear and worry? (NST, 1996, Jan 22, p. 10).

The main reason for this problem was the "procedures of Israeli occupation" against election process which was the main reason for the worry of Palestinian people who went for election stations as stated below:

Well before 7am that day, Israeli security personnel were stationed on almost every street and back lane in the Arab side of Jerusalem. Many were also swarming around polling stations and forming barricades in front of the select post offices where electing was permitted in the Old City (NST, 1996, Jan 22, p. 10).

The moral judgment on this issue could be considered as "cruelty of Israeli occupation" through the harsh and strict procedures by Israeli army that caused fear and tension for Palestinian voters. It can be seen that there were many sentences that focused on this function and made it more dominant as stated below:

The unfortunate events which occurred in and around the Arab quarter of Jerusalem on polling day reminded many Palestinians of the tension, hostility, and fear which they had experienced under 28 years of Israeli

occupation... About the same time, a number of Palestinians were detained by Israeli police for entering polling stations reportedly without the necessary accreditations... There were also minor scuffles and more arrest at different occasions during the day... Brought together, these events seemed like a recurrent nightmare... Former US President Jimmy Carter an observer of the election process, was compelled to say that Israel may have tried to reduce voter turnout by intimidating Palestinians with large number of police men on the streets and photographing and videotaping the Palestinians who were going to vote... Interviews with several people living in East Jerusalem confirmed carter's concerns. They were not only alarmed by the presence of Israeli police but also worried that voting might somehow jeopardise their status as residents in the city (NST, 1996, Jan 22, p. 10).

Discussing the solution of this problem was through suggesting "supporting elections" by Palestinian people to go and vote especially for Arafat who was going to create a better future for his people according to them as appeared in the following:

Palestinian citizens waiting in two lines to cast their votes at polling station in Gaza City on Saturday... Picking her words slowly Salwa Safran said: Yes I voted for Mr. Arafat and I fully support the peace accord... The fear is real. The Palestinians have lost so much and they aren't willing to give up more... Other Palestinians had other reasons for voting. Said an old man who was buying dates in preparation for Ramadan. Why not? This is for our future, the future of our children who will be better prepared to take over when we die... Besides, who other than Arafat can become President? Even if I opposed him. I would still vote for him because he knows best what Palestinians need today (NST, 1996, Jan 22, p. 10).

(5) The fifth article on January 22 has included two functions out of four. Defining the issue or problem was "mixed reaction about elections" that shows the various reactions whether by countries or parties forward election process.

The Palestinians historic self-rule elections were today warmly praised and harshly attacked in the Middle East by traditional supporters and opponents of the autonomy deal with Israel (NST, 1996, Jan 22, p. 22).

The second mentioned function was identifying the causes of problem which was "supporting and against deal with Israel" that revealed in the next sentence which is supplement for the previous sentence:

By the Traditional supporters and opponents of the autonomy deal with Israel (NST, 1996, Jan 22, p. 22).

(6) All the four functions were included in the sixth article on February eighth. The defined problem was describing Samiha Khalil as "daunting candidate" and not easy personality to deal with, which was clear in the next paragraph:

Fearless khalil a daunting role model... Her selective understanding of the English language quite frustrating... pounding the tables to show her enthusiasm or displeasure... When it doesn't suit her, she can suddenly become hard of hearing or incapable of understanding the question posed by the journalist... She does not trust young people and she won't listen to them... She was in her I am too busy to talk mood and wore a scowl to match (Ismail, 1996, Feb 8, p. 6).

The identified cause of this problem was her "suffering from occupation" which caused her to be tough person as explained in the following:

Has landed in jail or been placed under detention several times for her anti-occupation work... her five children were banished from Ramallah for the same reason (Ismail, 1996, Feb 8, p. 6).

The moral judgment on this problem was her "contribution to society" and supporting the poor people.

But the woman has made huge contributions to Palestinian society... Thirty years ago she created almost single-handedly welfare cum training centre to equip girls from poor families with work skills (Ismail, 1996, Feb 8, p. 6).

The fourth function as suggesting solutions or remedies was "Continuing the struggle" by Mrs. Khalil and trying to live a normal life and holding the hope in future:

But somehow, Khalil was spared so she remained in her hometown and continued to work from within, pushing for change at the political social levels (Ismail, 1996, Feb 8, p. 6).

(7) Three functions were included in the seventh article on February 12, namely defining issue, identifying causes of issue, and finding moral judgment. The issue in this article was "sworn in" after winning the election by President Yasser Arafat:

Arafat to be sworn in today as the first Palestinian President (NST, 1996, Feb 12, p. 19).

The second function, diagnosing the causes of problem was "winning election" when Yasser Arafat won the election to be the first elected Palestinian President:

Winning a sweeping victory in historic self-rule elections... Arafat received 87.1 per cent of the votes (NST, 1996, Feb 12, p. 19).

The moral judgment on this election was by considering it as "democratic process" through electing several people to different positions:

Arafat to be sworn in before Salim Zaanun, acting President of the Palestine National council, Qussai Al Abadleh, the chief Palestinian judge, and Mohammad Abu Surdana, head judge of the Muslim religious court (NST, 1996, Feb 12, p. 19).

(8) The last article on February 13 included the whole four functions. The problem/issue in this article was same of the previous article about “sworn in”:

Yasser Arafat took the oath of office today (NST, 1996, Feb 13, p. 20).

The reason of sworn in was “winning election” by Yasser Arafat to be the first president with the vast majority of votes:

As the first popularly elected Palestinian President... Arafat, 67, won 87.1 per cent of the vote in the last month election for president (NST, 1996, Feb 13, p. 20).

The third function about moral judgment was considering the election as “historic day” and mentioning the responsibility of leadership:

This is an historic day. This is the start of Palestinian independent state... Arafat read verses from the Quran dealing with the heavy responsibility of leadership (NST, 1996, Feb 13, p. 20).

Finally, the suggested solution was “getting Arab support” by inviting them to attend the sworn in ceremony:

Representatives from Egypt, Jordan, and Qatar also attended (NST, 1996, Feb 13, p. 20).

The findings in table 1 below explain the four functions of Entman for the eight news articles. The results of this study were consistent with what Entman (1993) mentioned that all four functions might be included together in a particular text, but it is not necessary to include all of them. The fourth and sixth articles as seen in the table included all four functions, while the other articles included some of these functions.

Presenting the used functions gives a better option for researchers, specialists, and scholars to consistently analyse strategies of framing used in media (Akhmet, Kiang & Chang, 2015). The frames employed by NST showed significant differences using the four functions. The results of this study were similar to the findings of Arandas, Chang, Mohamad and Idid (2018) by paying more attention to define problem function and less attention to moral judgment function and suggest remedies function. Yet, this study employed the function of diagnose causes in all the news articles unlike Arandas et al.’s study (2018) which excluded this function.

Table 1: The revealed functions of Entman from eight news articles

No.	Dates	Define Problems	Diagnose Causes	Make Moral Judgments	Suggest Remedies
1	January 19	Weak candidate (Samiha Khalil)	Legendary leader (Yasser Arafat)
2	January 20	Disturbing elections process by Israel	Israel against Palestinian democratic
3	January 22 pg 1	Victory of Arafat	Supporting Arafat	Elections expressed the voters well
4	January 22 pg 10	Worries about election	Procedures of Israeli occupation	Cruelty of Israeli occupation	Supporting elections by Palestinians
5	January 22 pg 22	Mixed reaction about elections	Supporting & against deal with Israel
6	February 8	Daunting candidate (Samiha Khalil)	Suffering from occupation	Contribution to society	Continuing the struggle
7	February 12	Sworn in	Winning election	Democratic process
8	February 13	Sworn in	Winning election	Historic day

On the other hand, the coverage of the first Palestinian general election was evaluated in terms of positive, negative, balanced, and neutral content. The coverage of news story was already elaborated in the methodology section.

(1) The coverage of the first article on January 19 is considered as balanced coverage for both presidential candidates. It has included positive words about Arafat such as "legendary figure" and "larger than life". It has also included negative words such as "started wrong way" and "criticism of Arafat's leadership style". For the other candidate Samiha Khalil, the article contained positive words such as "spirited 72 years old", and it has also negative words such as "we would be happy if she gets 10 per cent of the vote".

(2) in the second article on January 20, the tone of coverage was positive for both candidates. Arafat has been described as "PLO chairman Yasser Arafat is widely expected to beat easily his only challenger". The coverage on Khalil was also positive by considering her as "veteran activist".

(3) On the first page on January 22 article, the coverage was balanced on Arafat's side; phrases such as "crushing victory" and "unanimously seen as a huge vote of confidence for Arafat" were used to show the positive coverage. While, other phrases were used to show the negative coverage such as "autocratic ways" and "concerns remain about his ability to lead a democratic regime".

(4) The coverage on the tenth page on January 22 article was also balanced about Arafat; "landslide victory" was used to express the positive side of the story, while "old autocratic leader who has sold out" has shown the negative side of the story.

(5) The coverage on the 22 page on January 22 article has balanced tone. The positive tone included the per cent of voting for Arafat "Eighty five per cent of Palestinians voted for Arafat", and also the comments of Egypt "historic step towards creating a Palestinian state" and Jordan about "democratic step in the Arab world". Whereas, negative tone included comments such as "vote was neither free nor democratic, it did not express the true will of Palestinian people", "opposite of democracy, liberty and true expression of

the Palestinian people”, “the elections were not democratic”, “despite the propaganda campaigns led by the backers of autonomy accord”, and “false victory”.

(6) The coverage on February 8 was about both Arafat and Khalil, but it was balanced on Khalil’s side, and negative on Arafat’s side. A comment by the campaign manager of Khalil included negative tone on both Khalil and Arafat. “She doesn’t trust younger people and she won’t listen to them. Complained the campaign manager in this she is very much like Arafat”. Another negative comment about Arafat was from Khalil herself when “she also claimed that Arafat was an autocratic bully that he wasn’t transparent enough in the handling of money and that he acted alone in the negotiations with Israelis which she said was terribly wrong”.

Regarding, the positive phrases about Khalil she has been described as “Fearless”. Whereas, the negative side included “daunting role model”, “selective understanding of the English language quite frustrating”, “When it doesn’t suit her she can suddenly become hard of hearing or incapable of understanding the question posed by journalist”.

(7) On February 12, the articles used a positive tone about Arafat by saying “Yasser Arafat is to be sworn in today as the first Palestinian President after winning a sweeping victory in historic self-rule election last month”.

(8) Finally, the last article on February 13 was positive about Arafat, when it used phrases such as “Arafat, 67, won 87.1 per cent of the vote in last month” and “Yasser Arafat took the oath of office today as the first popularly elected Palestinian President, pledging to defend the national ambitions of his people”.

The findings in table 2 shows the per cent of news slant for both candidates. The findings indicated that 37.5% of the 8 articles from News Straits Times found to be positive about Arafat, 12.5% of the articles used negative tone, and 50% used balanced tone. Regarding Khalil, out of the total three articles, 33% were considered to be positive overall; whereas, the tone of 67% was seen as Balanced.

Previous studies (Duggan & Martinelli, 2011; Entman, 2007; Gunther & Christen, 2002; Zeng et al., 2014) showed that slants have a significant role in the framing of issues by favouring one side on another; hence, influencing the perceptions of the public. The slants assign relative weights, simplify the political reality, and give implicitly negative or positive correlation to many political issues (Duggan & Martinelli 2011).

Additionally, the media framing in one country has the ability to influence the perceptions of its own people on the image of people and governments in other countries (Kunczik, 1997). Most of the necessary resources for media come from the government and that media is sometimes owned by the political parties, so they are expected to follow the policies of such parties (Kalb, Saivetz & Larson, 2006).

Hence, the results of this study were in line with the previous studies mentioned above. New Straits Times asserted more on the positive slants than the negative ones based on its agenda. This matter reflects the influence of NST ownership on its coverage which might improve the image of the Palestinian leaders in the eyes of the Malaysian public. It shows also the support of the Malaysian government and its ruling party to the Palestinian leadership and reflects the strong bilateral relations between the two countries.

Table 2: News slant for both candidates

President	Positive	Negative	Balanced	Total
Arafat	(3 articles) 37.5%	(1 article) 12.5%	(4 articles) 50%	8 articles = 100 %
Khalil	(1 article) 33%	-	(2 articles) 67%	3 articles = 100 %

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study aimed to answer two research questions regarding the four functions of Entman that have been used by Malaysian newspaper the New Straits Times to cover the first Palestinian General Elections in 1996, and the tone or slant of news coverage on the same issue. The findings have been achieved through qualitative content analysis. Eight news articles were analysed; all of them included coverage about Yasser Arafat, whereas only three articles included coverage on his opponent candidate Samiha Khalil.

Regarding the first research question on the four functions of Entman, defining problems and diagnosing causes have been included in the whole eight stories. The moral judgment function has been included in half of the stories, and finally, suggesting remedies have been included in only two news stories. The most salient defined problems varied from the weakness of Arafat's opponent candidate, disturbing the elections process by Israeli occupation, to Arafat's victory and swearing in. Regarding diagnosing causes, the most salient causes were having a legendary leader such as Yasser Arafat, the procedures of Israeli occupation against the Palestinian democratic state, and winning elections by Yasser Arafat. The moral judgment was through considering that elections expressed the voters well, the cruelty of Israeli occupation, and the elections represented a democratic process and historic day for the Palestinian people. Finally, suggesting remedies was through supporting the elections by the Palestinians as a response to the Israeli procedures against elections, and continuing the struggle by the looser candidate Samiha Khalil.

Regarding the second question about the tones or slants of coverage, the findings revealed that the balanced coverage about Yasser Arafat was 50%, the positive coverage was 37.5%, and the negative coverage was only 12.5%. On the other hand, the balanced coverage on Samiha Khalil was 67%, and the positive coverage was 33%.

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