

Framing the afghanistan war in spanish headlines: an analysis with supervised learning algorithms

ENCUADRES SOBRE LA GUERRA EN AFGANISTÁN A TRAVÉS DE LOS TITULARES DE Prensa ESPAÑOLES: UN ANÁLISIS CON ALGORITMOS SUPERVISADOS

José Manuel Moreno Mercado

Universidad de Granada
josem.mr95@hotmail.com

Abstract

This article studies the presence of two frames, *security* and *human drama*, in the Spanish press, specifically in 10 newspapers, during the development of the *Resolute Support Mission* (2015-2020). Through computational research techniques, Support Vector Machines (SVM), 3,890 headlines have been analyzed. The article concludes that the Spanish press has undergone a process of securitization strongly influenced by the national context of Afghanistan and internationally.

Key words

Afghanistan, Spain, Press, Security, Human Drama, SVM

Resumen

Este artículo estudia la presencia de dos encuadres, *seguridad* y *drama humano*, en la prensa española, concretamente en 10 periódicos, durante el desarrollo de la *Misión Apoyo Dicidido* (2015-2020). Mediante técnicas de investigación computacional, Máquinas de Soporte Vectorial (SVM), se han analizado 3.890 titulares. El artículo concluye que la prensa española ha experimentado un proceso de securitización fuertemente influenciado por el contexto nacional de Afganistán e internacional.

Palabras clave

Afganistán, España, Prensa, Seguridad, Drama Humano, SVM

Summary / Sumario

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1. Introduction

The current pandemic caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus appears to have relegated news of international crises and armed conflict to the background. Indeed, the health crisis has been identified as one of the important factors that have enabled the establishment of a lasting ceasefire in Yemen (UN, 2020). However, various organizations, such as the World Bank or SIPRI, have signaled a rise in violent conflicts since 2017. Important examples would be conflicts born from the Arab Spring (Syria, Libya, Yemen), the upsurge in violence in the fight against terrorism (Iraq, Afghanistan, Nigeria) or the unresolved historical conflicts (Colombia, Palestine-Israel, Kashmir), among others. All this, in a context of information need but with a notable reduction in the number of war journalists (Sánchez-González, 2019).

In recent years, there has been a progressive interest in issues associated with manipulation of information, especially in the use of social networks, popularizing the term *fake news*. The expansion of this concept, in the field of communication and international relations, has served as a theoretical basis for the articulation of other classical definitions. It is becoming increasingly common to associate the expansion of *fake news* with concepts, such as *information warfare*, *influence operations* or *misinformation*, especially since the Russian intervention in the Donbass (Colom-Piella, 2019). However, the conceptual and methodological

revolution that political communication is experiencing is not limited only to the use of *fake news* on social media. Recent studies, such as Hatuel-Radoshitzky and Yarchi (2020), show how media in Israel use conventional military threat patterns, *rally around the flag*, when reporting on BDS's soft strategies.

From a methodological point of view, Political Communication has been considered a fragmented area of research (Entman, 1993). It is true that several authors point out that there is a certain scepticism when it comes to reconfiguring old concepts to the new parameters (Bennett and Iyengar, 2008) but it is also that we are facing new forms of exposure to information. Although, most studies are part of classical theories, studies on *flaming* or digital citizens, among others, are increasingly booming (Sierra and Rodríguez-Virgili, 2020). These elements, together with the progressive assimilation of the computational sciences, lead to the search for new methodological tools that allow to analyze massive volumes of data. One of these tools is the use of supervised learning algorithms, specifically Support Vector Machines (SVM), to locate frames.

The study of international crisis coverage and foreign policy, which is the subject of study in this paper, has certain elements that facilitate its analysis. On the one hand, a unanimous acceptance among scholars on the use of generic frames¹: *conflict*, *human interest*, *economy*, *morality* and *responsibility* (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000). These frames have been studied in both political events (Gronemeyer et al, 2020) and armed conflicts (Morera-Hernández, 2012; Al-Ibrahim and Shi, 2020). And, on the other hand, the search for certain shortcuts when building the news due to the absence of direct contact with the phenomenon. This reality involves assuming that news about armed conflict is often built, especially on the basis of defining the problem (Entman, 2004). In other words, it seeks to simplify information for the general public that allows us to understand the dynamics of conflict. This simplicity, often linked to a strong ideological position, is what makes authors like Sheaffer and Gabay (2009) compares coverage to *David vs Goliath*².

The aim of this paper is twofold. First, it is intended to study the use and weight of frames, specifically *human drama* and *security*, in the Spanish press when they report on the war in Afghanistan (2015-2020). Secondly, the purpose is to explore the potential of SVM as a methodological technique for Political Communication studies. The use of this research technique is intended to overcome the classic methodological approaches of media studies and to strengthen the statistical potential of this technique. In addition, thanks to the large volumes of information that allows us to analyze, an attempt will be made

1. For more information on framing theory in conflicts, see: Evans (2010) or Bartholomé et al (2018).

2. The study in question refers to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

to answer the question of whether the Spanish press is undergoing a process of media securitization when reporting on violent conflicts.

2. Media and Conflicts: The crisis of Afghanistan

The violent dynamics ravaging Afghanistan (Heider, 2020) have historical and social roots that make it one of the most original conflicts that unfold today. This uniqueness of Afghanistan is evident in works, such as that of Ahmed Rashid (2010): *Taliban: The Power of Militant Islam in Afghanistan and Beyond*. The Asian country has shown itself to be an essential enclave in international relations during and after the Cold War. Firstly, as one of the last military fronts of the Soviet Union, the ineffectiveness of conventional war tactics against insurgent movements with national will is evident (Forigua-Rojas, 2010). And secondly, for being one of the main scenarios in the War on Terror fostered by the United States after the 9/11 attacks.

The previous heading pointed to the framing of conflict as one of the generic frames of the war-fighting. However, several authors point out that security-related narratives have been consolidated in coverage of violent conflict (Vultee, 2010; Atanesyan, 2020) and their consequences, such as refugee crises or immigration (Qadri, 2020). This explains the increasingly frequent emergence of studies that studying the presence of this frame in information on international crisis management (Moreno-Mercado, 2018). This is why this study considers it very relevant to study the weight of this frame in a conflict of the utmost international relevance, such as the Afghan conflict.

Unlike other conflicting scenarios, such as Syria and Iraq, the Afghan conflict possesses other singularities. In the field of security, the media representation of the Taliban movement has professional routines strongly dependent on the origin of the media. For example, in the case of the Pakistani press, the Taliban are seen as one of the main internal and regional threats in the area (Umar-Naadem et al, 2019). While in the Spanish press a more global concept of security is used (framed in the War on Terror), emphasizing Taliban-Al-Qaeda relations and the drama experienced by vulnerable groups, such as women (Martínez-Foullon, 2011). The latter aspect is very relevant because even though the Taliban find their theological foundation in Sunni radical Islam they do not possess the Salafist (global) dimension of organizations, such as Al-Qaeda or ISIS, even though they have collaborated militarily in regions such as Khorasan (Ruiz-Arévalo, 2016).

The case of the Spanish media, which addresses this research, has published important literature on the media image of the Afghan conflict. This literature has left a number of elements that are generically newsworthy in the Spanish

media field. First, a gender perspective with a special interest in the use of the burka not only as traditional apparel but as an element of Taliban oppression towards women (Vidal-Valiña, 2013). Second, a polarization in the face of Spain withdrawing or maintaining its military presence (Del Viso-Pabón, 2010). And, third, a constant appearance of Afghan reality in the press, especially in the case of refugees (Martín-Cano and Ther, 2020).

However, the construction of framing and narratives associated with conflict also has elements common with other studies that analyze the role of the Western media. Primarily, the defense of American military intervention in the fight against terrorist movements operating in the country as a necessary element for international security (Bose, 2020). For women, we also find studies that reinforce the importance of the role of Afghan women in news coverage (Hatef and Luqiu, 2020). This last aspect is very significant, as it is assured that President Donald Trump decided to keep troops in Afghanistan after seeing a photo of Afghan women in miniskirts from 1970 (Rucker and Costa, 2017).

Of course, a war so long lasting and with so many elements has left an unfathomable literature from political science, communication and international relations. And, as mentioned above, news coverage has had a journalistic strategy conditioned by geographic variables. An illustrative example is the Pakistani media have used the conflict to show an image of Pakistan conducive to international peace and security (Saaed and Hammeedur-Rahman, 2019), while the Arab media, such as *Al-Hayat*, have focused their coverage on the humanization of victims and the destruction of the country (Fahmy, 2010).

In short, information management during the Afghanistan war has left a catalogue of lessons learned, also applicable to other conflicts. Excessive information dependence on information agencies (Torres-Soriano and García-Marín, 2009), the existence of closed debates with very specific narratives and a media position conditioned on the geopolitical position of the country of origin. Although, the latter has yielded interesting and problematic data, such as the case of the British press that strongly criticized US actions in Afghanistan as outside British national interests but supported the military route as a fight against terrorism (Safdar, Manzoor and Zaheen, 2020).

3. Methodology and research design

The aim of the paper is to analyze the existence of two exclusive frames (*security* and *human drama*) used by the Spanish press to report on the Afghanistan conflict over the past five years. The two frames are, from our point of view, the most relevant to this study as they are usually common in conflict coverage (Moreno-

Mercado and García-Marín, 2020). Moreover, the very socio-political dynamics experienced in the Asian country justify the analysis of these two frames. On the one hand, it is in this period that there have been important developments for regional stability, such as the confirmation of the death of Mullah Omar, the bombing of Achin District against ISIS positions or the peace agreement signed in Doha (Qatar) between the Taliban and the US. And, on the other hand, the conflict has experienced upturns of violence and conflict coming, in the first six months of 2017, to have the highest death toll since the 2001 military invasion (UNAMA, 2017)³.

Hence, the questions that this research seeks to solve are:

RQ1: Has it occurred in the process of media securitization in the Spanish press?

RQ2: When does the press use one frame or another?

To answer these questions, most Spanish newspapers⁴ will be analyzed (in their online and written version): *20 Minutos*, *ABC*, *El Correo*, *El Mundo*, *El País*, *El Periódico*, *La Razón*, *La Vanguardia*, *Okdiario*⁵ and *Público*. The selection of these media has been based on two fundamental criteria. Firstly, the existence of divergent ideological lines. And secondly, the large number of readers that all of them have. The time frame for the analyses is from 1st January, 2015 to 20st February, 2020. The period coincides with the last US military mission in Afghanistan, the *Operation Freedom's Sentinel* (OFS). Likewise, it is in this period that the NATO *Resolute Support Mission* (RSM) is developed that replaced, in January 2015, the *International Security Assistance Force* (ISAF), in which Spain currently has 70 military personnel (MINISDEF, 2020).

Analysis units have been extracted from the *MyNews* database, using the words "*Afganistán*", "*talibán*" and "*talibanes*" (Afghanistan and Taliban (singular and plural) in Spanish) in the title or the body of the article. After the sample is cleaned, 3,890 news stories have been analyzed.

The first reading of our sample justifies the study of the two frames analyzed since the coverage of the Afghan conflict was not covered under a unique frame. These frames correspond to the classic frames present in all armed conflict and have a very specific dynamics:

3. For more information, see the official reports of *United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan* (UNAMA): <https://unama.unmissions.org>

4. To see the importance of each media, see the Spanish General Media Survey: <http://reporting.aimc.es/index.html#/main/diarios>

5. *Okdiario*'s selection can be controversial to some readers over the professional routines of the medium itself (Sánchez-Gutiérrez and Nogales-Bocio, 2018). However, the number of readers makes it a means of relevance (*Okdiario*, 2019).

- (1) The *human drama* frame: the news story refers to the suffering of the Afghan population, aspects of the humanitarian situation, violent deaths of women and children, gender oppression on traditional aspects (burka use), refugee movements to Europe and Pakistan.
- (2) The *security* frame: the news story refers to the instability of the region, ISIS actions, relations between terrorist groups and the Taliban, aspects of the securitization of the migrations flows.

The two frames have been established from the Entman categories (2004), specifically on the basis of the definition of the problem. The assumption of the presence of both frames is due to two reasons. First, violence in Afghanistan has left 17,709⁶ deaths since the end of ISAF in December 2014. Similarly, there is worrying data on violence against women, with 46% violence in the family (Metheny and Stephenson, 2019), and children, where 1.3 million children under the age of 5 need treatment for malnutrition (UNICEF, 2020). Secondly, since the 9/11 attacks, there has been a progressive phenomenon of securitization on the agendas of Governments and International Organizations (Kauert and Léonard, 2018) which has also moved to the media complex (Kovář, 2019, Hotchkiss, 2010). Of course, the case of Afghanistan has been a key element in security and defense documents and reports in recent years, especially because of relations between the Taliban movement and jihadist organizations, with one of Mullah Omar's daughters marriage to the late Al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden.

The progressive advancement of text automation and the rise of neurosciences in Political Communication studies (García-Luengo, 2016), has led us to use a hybrid methodological strategy. The analysis was carried out from the newspaper headlines of the selected media. In our view, the dichotomous nature of the frames (presence/absence), being the headline a faithful reflection of what is stated in the news, is not a methodological weakness, there is an extensive literature that has addressed this issue with optimal results (Tien-Vu and Lynn, 2020; Van-Dalen, 2012). At first, we have applied a traditional content analysis on 500 news stories in order to locate the two frames (following Krippendorff, 1990) to subsequently apply an automated procedure.

The software for automated analysis has been Orange Data Mining (Demsar et. al., 2013) under Python 3. The texts were pre-processed into smaller units (*tokens*), filtered and standardized. In other words, the text was transformed by removing the punctuation marks (and the Spanish "ñ"), capital letters, numbers, whitespaces and *stop words*. The data cataloging technique has been done using the supervised SVM⁷ (Support Vector Machines) algorithm. This algorithm is a machine learning

6. Data required by UNAMA: <https://unama.unmissions.org/key-documents-and-reports>

7. The kernel used has been sigmoid (c=1,30).

technique that separates attribute space with a hyperplane, thus maximizing the margin between instances of different classes or class values. This technique usually produces very good results (García-Marín and Calatrava-García, 2018). The implementation of SVM was "LIBSVM"⁸ (Chang and Ling, 2011).

The result of the application of the algorithm was the total coding of the sample taken as training the 500 articles encoded by the author (75% training 25% test). The result achieved 98% reliability and 95% AUC, being truly exceptional data. The data is very good probably because the encoding has been mutually exclusive. That is, the presence of one frame nullified the presence of the other. The results obtained in the rest of the sample, more than 3,000 news stories, demonstrate the effectiveness of this type of techniques in studies on Political Communication and the location of frames in both content and headlines.

4. Analysis

Once the texts have been classified and automated, they have been analyzed. Figure 1 shows the behavior of the press since the start of *Resolute Support Mission* on January 1, 2015. The Figure integrates all newspapers and the two frames.

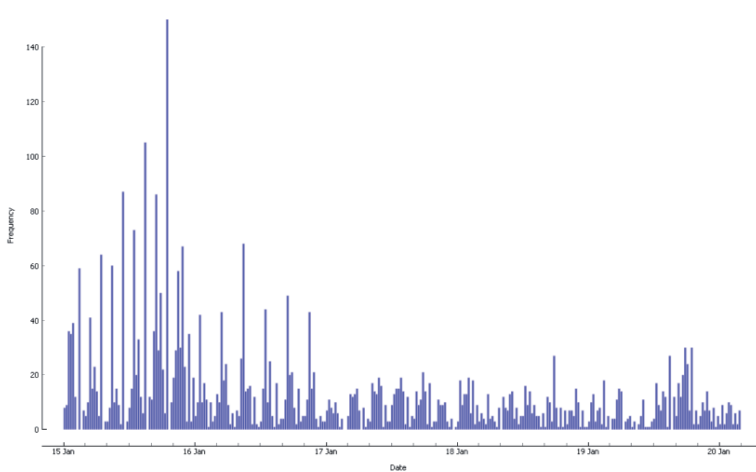


Figure 1. Number of stories per month and year. Source: own elaboration.

8. More information about the library can be found at the following link: <https://www.csie.ntu.edu.tw/~cjlin/libsvm/>

If we take a chronological tour of the events that occurred during the mission, we note that the informational increases and decreases were expected. However, it can be emphasized that coverage has been constant for the past 5 years. The largest volume of news is concentrated in the first two years, 2015 and 2016. The explanation can be found in internal and external causes. From an internal point of view, important events were taking place for the Spanish security forces deployed in Afghanistan. 1) The attack on the Spanish Embassy in Kabul which killed 10 people, including two Spanish policemen. 2) The abduction of a Spanish cooperador, a member of the Red Cross, in Kunduz. And, from an external point of view, the conflict also underwent significant dynamics. 1) The official creation of Islamic State Khorasan (IS-IK), as a subsidiary of ISIS in Afghanistan. 2) Large-scale attacks in the peak period of ISIS in Iraq and Syria, such as Save Children Jalalabad Attack, the Attack on Dehmazang Square, or the bombing of the Quetta police academy that caused 62 deaths, among others. 3) Confirmation by the Taliban insurgency of the death of Mullah Omar and the subsequent elimination of his successor, Akhtar Mohammed Mansur.

As the Figure indicates, the Afghan conflict remains an ongoing news occurrence in the following years. Two increments are observed at the end of 2018 and 2019. These increments also correspond to very specific events. Parliamentary elections to elect *Wolesi Jirga*⁹ deputies framed at the start of US-Taliban peace talks. Formalization of meetings between the US and Taliban authorities in Doha and the establishment of an official roadmap with the Afghan government.

One of the major challenges in the field of Political Communication is to know the effects and impact of *frame building* processes. From the perspective of public opinion, the conflict in Afghanistan has special roots in Spanish society. The data currently held has multiple limitations although there are some notes that need to be warned (Figure 2).

In recent years, especially after its update in 2018, tools, such as *Google Trends*, have been tremendously useful for communication researchers. It is true, that this application has various conditionings that prevent us from making resounding statements. To cite some of these limitations we would highlight, the impossibility of knowing the number of specific searches, information conditioned on the country of origin from which the search is carried out or the conditions of the "relative interest" of the terms. However, steep peaks help to understand moments of high popularity. Figure 2 is quite illustrative about this. There is some agreement between web searches and the biggest informational growths in the press. The most popular moment (100) corresponds to the week

9. In English "House of the People". Lower House of the National Assembly of Afghanistan.

in which the attack on the Spanish Embassy occurred in Kabul. As the scientific literature marks, *Google Trends* is not a valid tool for cybermetrics analysis (Orduño-Malea, 2013) but allows to yield relative data on the behavior of audiences.



Figure 2. Interest about "Afghanistan War" in Spain by *Google Trends*. Source: own elaboration.

The main barometers of public opinion indicate that Spanish society follows international events with some interest. The latest available study from the *Centre for Sociological Research*, 2016, notes that 44.5% of Spaniards follow international news with great interest compared to 32.2% that do not. However, when the news is related to the Middle East, they are only followed with a lot of interest by 35.9% (CIS, 2016). More current but less statistically ambitious analyses, such as the barometers of the *Elcano Institute* provide more concrete data that are significant for this study. In 2015, combating jihadist terrorism was, for Spanish society, the main challenge that Spanish foreign policy should face. This perception of the jihadist threat has been declining in recent years, being in 2020, the third priority and the fight against ISIS the eighth (Elcano, 2015, 2016, 2018, 2020). The data indicates a strong relationship between the decrease in threat perception and the progressive loss of influence of ISIS. The results are expected as the jihadist organization has directly and indirectly influenced all MENA countries (Durán-Cenit and Bados-Nieto, 2017).

Barometers do not provide data that allows us to compare the interest of Spanish public opinion between different conflicts, such as Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan or Yemen. Nonetheless, the relative interest in international news, the constant volume of news and the (more or less continuous) search for information make the Afghanistan conflict of interest to Spanish society. Of course, this interest is strongly influenced by the context and military involvement of Spain. From our point of view, this statement is not only supported by news and opinion data but also by the historic consequences of the Afghanistan conflict for Spain. To name

the most representative, Afghanistan represents the international mission with the most lows (100 military, 2 policemen and 2 interpreters), the largest tragedy area of the Spanish army (accident of Yak-42) cost the lives of 62 servicemen traveling from Afghanistan and Kyrgyzstan and has been the mission with more Spanish soldiers on the ground for several years.

Table 1. Use of frames by newspaper

Newspaper	Security		Human Drama	
	n	%	n	%
<i>20 Minutos</i>	151	36,4	96	63,6
<i>ABC</i>	405	37,5	253	62,5
<i>El Correo</i>	807	55,3	361	44,7
<i>El Mundo</i>	493	36,9	348	63,1
<i>El País</i>	626	40,3	374	59,7
<i>El Periódico</i>	354	53,1	166	46,9
<i>La Razón</i>	76	52,6	36	47,4
<i>La Vanguardia</i>	761	50,1	380	49,9
<i>Okdiario</i>	42	28,6	30	71,4
<i>Público</i>	175	48	91	52
Total	3.890	45,6	2.135	54,8

Source: own elaboration.

The numbers we can see in Table 1 show the use of frames by newspaper. The initial premise that the *security frame* (45.6%) was to dominate of *human drama frame* (54.8%) it's wrong. If we analyze the detailed data only 3 newspapers have a greater presence of the *security frame* (*El Correo*, *El Periódico* and *La Razón*). However, the percentage differences with the other frame are minimal. Overall, humanitarian issues can be said to be a major media element, although speeches associated with security issues are very balanced.

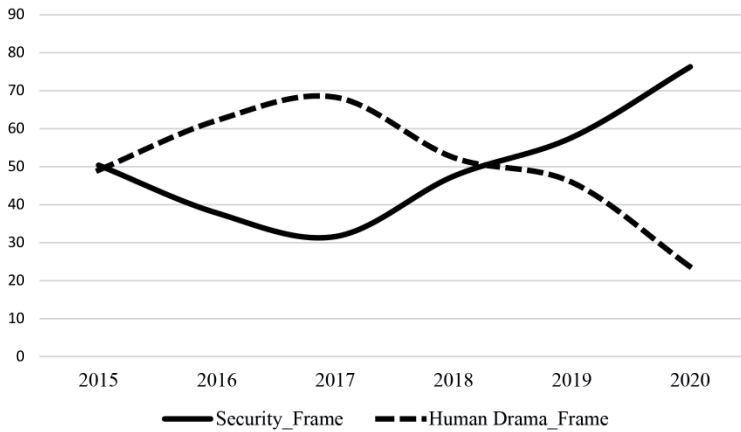


Chart 1. Use of frames in Spanish press per year (%). Source: own elaboration.

Binary encoding of frames means assuming that a greater presence of one is equivalent to one less than the other. The Chart 1 is very illustrative as to what Spanish coverage has been like over the last 5 years. Firstly, note that 2015 begins with a greater, albeit mild, presence of the *security frame* (50.9%). The result is logical when we consider the attack on diplomatic representation in Kabul framed in a period of ISIS boom in Syria and Iraq with large-scale attacks in Europe (Paris, Charlie Hebdo, Ankara, Copenhagen). Second, the *human drama frame* is widely dominant during the period 2016–2018. This result is due, in our view, to a number of reasons. On the one hand, the various UN reports that declared those years as the worst since the overthrow of the Islamic State of Afghanistan in 2001 (BBC, 2019). And, on the other hand, it is in this period that the amount of news concerning the death of children and women (in addition to stories concerning violence against women and its role in Islam) is increased exponentially. And, thirdly, linear growth in the last study period (2019–2020) of the *security frame*. Nevertheless, the themes associated with this frame change substantially. Coverage of ISIS activities does not cease but they go into the background. The coverage over the past two years is more closely associated with the security agenda in the country following the agreement with the Taliban. In other words, more questions are provided about Afghanistan's future after the US withdrawal, the state's ability to maintain security, or the possibility of further waves of violence by the Taliban insurgency. In our view, these results could be extrapolated to what López-Martín and Gómez-Calderón (2021) expressed.

Despite analyzing media with divergent ideological lines, common international agendas make the media use journalistic routines very close.

In conclusion, it can be said that the use of supervised learning algorithms has been extremely useful. Thanks to the large volumes of information that allows us to analyze, one can see how there is a process of media securitization strongly influenced by the political and geopolitical context of the conflict.

5. Conclusions

The aim of the research was to analyze the presence (or absence) of *security frame* and *human drama frame* in the Spanish press during the development of the Afghanistan conflict, specifically during *Resolute Support Mission* (2015-2020). Two research questions were raised from the development of an updated theoretical framework on media and conflicts. The first is to know if the Spanish press has undergone a process of media securitization (RQ1) and the second aimed at knowing when using one frame or another (RQ2). The choice of SVM algorithms applied to press headlines has been shown as a valid technique. Such algorithms have proven to be more reliable than human encoders if well trained (García-Marín et al, 2018). The following conclusions have generally been drawn.

Firstly, the results show that Spanish coverage has undergone a process of securitization, although strongly dependent on context. In absolute terms, the *human drama frame* has the majority but has not stopped declining from 2018 until the end of the mission. In our view, this is due to several reasons. On the one hand, an uncertain future about the political situation in Afghanistan following the withdrawal of US troops. In other words, the possibility of a new civil war as happened after the Soviet withdrawal in 1989. And, on the other hand, doubts about the Taliban's commitment to maintain peace, especially in the face of possible splits from the insurgency. Therefore, the first research question has an affirmative but conditional answer.

Secondly, the analysis on the use of frames has left significant results. The *human drama frame* is used against very narrow and delimited issues. This frame is used in a majority way in the face of the deaths of women and children, news on humanitarian aspects (lack of resources, illiteracy) and oppressive gender roles. However, from our point of view, the use of the *security frame* yields more noticeable differences. From the perspective of the issues this frame does not present the same use in the periods (2015-2017) and (2018-2020). During the first period the *security frame* is linked, especially in Taliban military actions and ISIS activities. It should be remembered, that it is during this space of time that

the jihadist group was at its peak. While in the second period, framing is more associated with domestic issues in the country, such as the state's ability to maintain order and security in the face of U.S. withdrawal. The results are logical when we consider that ISIS has been virtually defeated in Afghanistan (at least from a military aspect) and the Taliban movement is a national group that does not plan to expand globally. Likewise, if we look at the scientific literature the Taliban movement has only mentioned Spain in the last three years in its communiqués with no media impact in the European country (Moreno-Mercado, 2020).

In addition to the conclusions drawn from the two research questions, other relevant issues should be noted. The use of SVM algorithms has been very relevant when analyzing holders. This research has sought to consolidate the usefulness of these techniques, usually used in the content of news but poorly treated in headlines. Therefore, the present work consolidates the scientific literature that translates the techniques of the Computational Sciences to studies of Political Communication. Another noteworthy element is that, through the review of secondary data, a certain interest in Spanish society over the conflict in Afghanistan can be inferred. This issue is relevant as there is a general shortfall of studies combining inputs and outputs. However, the limitations of the tools used (*Google Trends*) and the studies presented mean that they are very cautious about this issue.

To conclude, this research provides novel data for studies that analyze media behavior during the development of armed conflicts. The results indicate the strong relationship between political (internal) and geopolitical (external) context with media coverage. It is aware that this investigation is limited to the Spanish case but from our point of view conclusions are easily exported to other countries with societies similar to Spanish. In spite of this, there are many questions that should be addressed in future research. Delving into the use of unsupervised algorithms (like LDA) for the location of frames, deepening the possible effects of agenda or comparing the media and political discourses in case an *indexing model* could be given.

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