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# The ‘other’ in the bowels of the hegemon: US media portrayals of Guam during the United States–North Korea tension

## ABSTRACT

*This article explores how America’s mainline institutional media portrayed Guam, an unincorporated US territory in the Pacific Ocean that is home to important American military bases, in a time of heightened tensions between the United States and North Korea. Guamanians represent marginal racial ‘others’ who are nonetheless ensconced in a consequential part of the US military architecture. Using a combination of topic modelling and network analysis, our study analysed 2480 articles from 44 different mainstream newspapers in the United States between April 2017 and June 2018 in order to examine the contradictory depiction of an ‘other’ that is simultaneously foreign and domestic. Our results present evidence of a hegemonic portrayal of Guam as an intrinsic part of the US as well*

## KEYWORDS

Guam  
framing  
hegemony  
alterity  
North Korea  
US media

*as a depiction of the threat to Guam as an attack on the US without acknowledging the marginality of Guam and its inhabitants in US politics.*

The institutional news media formation in the United States has historically been defined by an enduringly negative reportorial impulse in its portrayals of immigrants, often associating them with illegality, disease, even pathologizing their identities and national origins (e.g., Farris and Mohamed 2018; Parrott et al. 2019). It is also implicated in the unwitting circulation and naturalization of odious stereotypes against racial minorities (Fabregat and Kperogi 2019; Dixon 2008a, 2008b, 2006; Busselle and Crandall 2002; Dixon and Linz 2000; Fujioka 1999).

At the same time, the national identity discourse of the American news media, particularly in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, has tended to valorize the military, to evince the sort of patriotic fervour that dispenses with procedural notions of journalistic objectivity (Bennett et al. 2007; Hutcheson et al. 2004), and to partake in what Wong has called ‘media patriotism’ or ‘patriotic journalism’ in which ‘ones [*sic*] devotion to country comes before ones [*sic*] devotion to ones [*sic*] profession’ (2006: 126). How would America’s mainline institutional media portray marginal racial ‘others’ who are nonetheless ensconced in a non-American location that is home to America’s military bases in a time of possible war when a hostile foreign power targets such a location? In other words, when hegemony embeds alterity, what gives?

This study investigates how the US news media reported on America’s heightened tensions with North Korea in 2017, which catapulted the unincorporated island of Guam to the centre stage of American public consciousness. Did the reporting on the conflict reverse the age-old media representations of the ethnic ‘other’ on account of the patriotic passions the conflict activated? This is significant because this moment imbricated two contradictory impulses: racial ‘others’ in Guam that are often negatively portrayed or erased from national consciousness in the US media and the presence of symbolic patriotic sentiments in the American mainland as a result of the North Korean threat. How did the media navigate this confounding imbrication?

As Namkung and Lee (2012) point out, US military bases constitute up to 30 per cent of the Island of Guam, which means the island performs a ‘power-delivering function’ for the United States (2012: 29) and is ‘the key military base for the United States’ power establishment in the Asian Pacific region’ (2012: 30). Most significantly, though, as Viernes observes, American military presence in Guam has been invoked to legitimize the trope of a ‘welcoming and enthusiastic island people accepting of American military’ and to ‘position Chamorros [the major indigenous ethnic group in Guam] as childlike, dependent, and feminine, justifying the need for a masculine and paternalistic American system to be established on Guam’ (2009: 104).

In other words, in the American imaginary, Guam is simultaneously foreign and domestic, is on America’s geographic fringes but also at its military core and, therefore, in some sense, merges the binary between alterity and hegemony. How did these dynamics play out in the US media reporting on the United States–North Korea tensile strain that put Guam in the eye of the storm? We deployed the ANTMN method (Walter and Ophir 2019), combining topic modelling and network analysis, to analyse the dominant frames major national and local US newspapers employed to depict of Guam during

the crisis. In what follows, we provide a historical background of Guam's relationship with the United States, the conceptual outlines that inform our deployment of framing, an explication of our methods and the results and discussion of our study.

## BACKGROUND OF STUDY

On 5 April 2017, North Korea launched a series of midterm-range missiles towards the Sea of Japan in defiance of the UN-imposed ban on nuclear weapons development, which provoked condemnations from the international community and caused then President Donald Trump to deploy the US Navy around the Korean Peninsula.

On 4 July, North Korea launched an intercontinental ballistic missile (Sang-Hun 2017). The situation escalated when Trump threatened to 'totally destroy' North Korea to which North Korea responded by announcing that it would attack Guam. A series of back-and-forth exchanges between the United States and North Korea intensified until the Singapore summit of 12 June 2018 brought a cessation of hostilities. During the period of heightened tensions between North Korea and the United States, the island of Guam, an unincorporated US territory in the Pacific Ocean, got caught in the middle of both countries' threats. Kim Jong-Un backed off his threat to Guam in mid-August 2017. However, he stated that he could change his mind if the US persisted in its 'extremely dangerous reckless actions' (Cheng 2017), which he did in October 2017, reigniting the threat to Guam (Ripley 2017). Bob Woodward told CBS News' *60 Minutes* that the American public 'did not realize' how close the United States came to starting a war with North Korea, disclosing privileged information President Trump shared with him in his book *Rage*. He revealed that, 'Trump had instructed former defense secretary James Mattis to shoot down any North Korean missiles aimed at the U.S.' (Walker 2020, para. 3).

Guam became a US territory in 1898 following the Spanish–American War that annexed the last Spanish colonies in the Americas and the Pacific (Nogues 2018). Nonetheless, despite being home to some of America's most important military bases, Guam, like other US territories, is in America's political margins. Although Guamanians are US citizens, the 1901 Supreme Court Insular Cases established the political status of Guam in the United States as an unincorporated territory, which means the constitution does not apply to them, they cannot vote in US elections and their representative in the US Congress is a non-voting member (Immerwahr 2019).

Chamorro place names that served as testaments to the history and culture of the people have been replaced with English names, and the archipelago of the Marianas is targeted with US military development projects and foreign tourism (Na'Puti 2019). Furthermore, as Spitzer (2019) shows, institutions and processes that were originally dedicated to preserving and advancing the cause of indigenous people's rights – such as the Office for Hawaiian Affairs, land management in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and the right to vote on the status of Guam – are now shared with the white settler population in the island.

It is worth noting, however, that, according to Bosqui and colleagues (2018), Guamanians strongly identify with the United States, even though a small but significant group of Chamorro people believe the US stole their land and has shut them out of basic democratic liberties. Research has found strong

support for a US identity among inhabitants of the island based on a content analysis of the *Pacific Daily News*, Guam's local newspaper. The support comes in the form of a predilection to reinforce adherence and loyalty to the United States, to frame the US Marines in the island as liberators (Dalisay 2009), to depict Guam as a multicultural American community (Dalisay 2012) and to marginalize dissenting voices (Viernes 2009). Nonetheless, the island's constitutional status is at best ambiguous, and has been referred to as being in a meta-political limbo (Spitzer 2019).

Given the centrality of Guam in the conflict between North Korea and the United States, we believe this study makes significant contributions to the scholarly conversations on media portrayals of marginal people in dominant media narratives by examining the portrayal of Guam, its indigenous people and its colonial marginality in America's mainstream media. In this research, we explore the frames used by the mainstream US press in the depiction and coverage of Guam – and all its political, military and ethnological complexities – between April 2017 and June 2018. A total of 2480 articles from 44 different press outlets were analysed using topic modelling.

### ***Hegemonic articulation and propaganda in the US news media***

To understand the curious uniformity in the editorial temperaments and framing of US news media coverage of the United States–North Korea crisis, it is helpful to explicate conceptions of the mass media in critical journalism studies that undergird this. Critical media scholars point out that mainline oligopolistic news media formations usually function as ideational instruments in the production and reproduction of the self-interested consensus of the dominant classes in the society (see, e.g., Kperogi 2015; Fuchs 2014; Halin 1992).

Two prominent strands in critical media scholarship help to situate the ideological contours of the US media reporting on the United States–North Korea conflict: the hegemony and propaganda models. Antonio Gramsci propounded the theory of hegemony to explain the rhetorical strategies, by means of cultural institutions like the media, that the ruling class in capitalist society deploys to construct, circulate and naturalize its 'intellectual and moral leadership' over subordinate classes in the society (Gramsci 1971: 57) and to 'build around its own project a new system of social alliances, a new "historic bloc"' (Mattelart and Mattelart 1992: 62). The ruling class does this by conferring universality and normative commonsensicality to its class interests. By making its self-interests seem like 'common sense', it achieves identification with a broad segment of the society. However, 'common sense is not something rigid and immobile, but is continually transforming itself' (Gramsci 1971: 326).

As Hall argues, hegemony is 'a way of representing the order of things' that 'makes them appear universal, natural and conterminous with "reality" itself' (1982: 65). This requires the perpetual negotiation and renegotiation of the assent of the subordinate classes because 'people's material social experiences constantly remind them of the disadvantages of subordination and thus poses a threat to the dominant class' (Fiske 1992: 291). The media are core instruments for these negotiations. In other words, the media are constitutive of the ideological field of contest in capitalist society where journalists might enjoy professional independence but are, in reality, socialized into and internalize the conventions of the dominant culture. As Gurevitch et al. posited, the media, taken as a whole, communicate

interpretive frameworks consonant with the interests of the dominant classes, and media audiences, while sometimes negotiating and contesting these frameworks, lack ready access to alternative meaning systems that would enable them to reject the definitions offered by the media in favor of consistently oppositional definitions.

(Gurevitch et al. 1982: 1)

Hegemony, most importantly, is especially effective when it is not seen as such, when it has 'come to dominate everyday life' (Hepp 2012: 10). Theodor Adorno characterized this as the 'abstract' character of domination by the 'dictatorship of the self-appointed elite' (as cited in Cook 1996: 6–7) and Zizek called it 'ideological disidentification' (Boucher and Sharpe 2005: xiv). That is why the frames the US news media uses to report on major and minor national events might come across as natural and unproblematic, particularly to American audiences.

Herman and Chomsky (1988) also popularized a five-tier propaganda model to explain why the news media and the state in western societies, in spite of protestations to being independent of each other, are often united particularly in times of war. The first tier of the model concerns the nature of media ownership. The abiding logic of profit motive that drives media ownership predisposes the news media to give expression to impulses that align with the state. The second tier is the emergence, since the 1800s, of advertising as the lifeblood of the news media (Kperogi 2013). Advertising not only reduces news to formulaic commodities to be sold in the market, it also privileges a view of society that is congruent with the Establishment (Kperogi 2015; Murdock and Janus 1985; Murdock 1982).

The third tier in this propaganda model is the news media's over-reliance on 'official' sources in the form of press conferences and releases in routine news reportage – and a corresponding exclusion of marginal voices in news narratives. This privileges and normalizes the official line in everyday consciousness. The fourth is the news media's fear of inviting 'flak' from government sources in the form of denial of privileged access or even humiliation when they deviate from the norm. This fear compels conformity. The final tier is the convergence of ideological commitments between the news media and states in western society in the preservation of capitalism and opposition to any system that challenges or undermines it.

Boyd-Barrett (2004) added a sixth tier to the propaganda model, which he characterized as 'the direct purchase of media influence by powerful sources, or the "buying out" of individual journalists or their media by government agencies and authorities' (2004: 436). He cited Carl Bernstein of 'Watergate' fame as having revealed in 1977 that 'that over 400 US journalists over 25 years had been employed by the CIA, ranging from freelancers to CIA officers working under deep cover', pointing out that 'nearly every major US news organization had been penetrated, usually with the cooperation of top management' (2004: 436).

In summary, the US news media's performance is not only circumscribed by the prevailing logic of media hegemony, it is also delimited by both overt and subtle pressures from the US Government, especially in periods of war and in types of news coverage in which issues of national security predominate (Kellner 1992; Knightly 2002). This background foregrounds the framing of the United States–North Korea with lenses that privileged the official

version of the crisis and relegated alternative and marginal perspectives, as our analysis will show in subsequent sections of this article.

### ***Conceptualizing framing***

Framing is a process through which certain elements of a story are made more salient (Entman 1993). Two different types of frames have been identified: equivalency frames, which use different but equivalent words to recount the same event, and emphasis frames, which emphasize specific aspects of the event (Iyengar 2005). The way information is framed will invoke particular interpretive schemas recognized by the audience, which determine how the information is processed (Cacciatore et al. 2016). The implication is that frames work as tools for both presenting and interpreting news (Scheufele 1999).

Emphasis frames focus on certain aspects of the event in order to present an interpretation (Gitlin 1980). An important aspect of frames is that they call attention to certain aspects of the event, while concealing other elements (Entman 1993). Research has identified two types of emphasis frames. They are issue-specific frames, which deal with specific topics or events, and generic frames, which underline approaches to different news topics (de Vreese et al. 2001). Generic frames can take the forms of episodic and thematic frames (Iyengar 1996), the frames of responsibility, conflict, human interest, economic consequences and morality (Semetko and Valkenburg 2000). They can also assume the distinction between strategic and issue frames (Cappella and Jamieson 1997), or the difference between game frame and strategy frame (Aalberg et al. 2011).

Media attention is the result, partly, of the logic of the news media themselves. The use of certain biases, such as dramatization, negativity or personalization, is often a response to media outlets' need for attention (Oppenhuizen et al. 2019). Studies suggest that coverage of crisis situations tends to use a responsibility frame, attributing responsibility for the situation, or its solution, to a government or specific individuals, followed by the conflict frame, and the economic frame (Semetko and Valkenburg 2000). However, the morality frame, which contextualizes the conflict around moral and religious principles, tends to be used in preventable crises (An and Gower 2009). There are situations that might affect the success of a given frame and thereby condition its results. The strength of previous attitudes and beliefs, the use of cues to form opinions, the effect of social networks, the degree of choice in the media environment and the length of the exposure to the frame all have an impact on how successful a frame might be (see Busby et al. 2018).

Hence, given the tense situation that existed between North Korea and the United States, and the political relationship between Guam and the United States, this research attempts to unearth the frames used in the depiction of Guam during the North Korea crisis. It is important to understand the way Guamanians, who are US citizens without full access to the rights of US citizenship, are depicted in America's news media. In other words, the goal of this research is to unmask how the mainstream US media formation depicted one of America's unincorporated territories, especially in a moment of tension with a foreign country, which put it in the crosshairs because of its political ties with mainland United States. Two specific research questions stem from this generic goal: (1) what are the frames used in the depiction of Guam during the North Korean crisis between April 2017 and June 2018? And



(2) how do the dynamics between alterity and hegemony based on the political relationship between the United States and Guam play out in US newspapers? The next section explains our method of analysis.

### **Method and sample**

We analysed 2480 news articles from 44 different US newspapers that reported on Guam between 1 April 2017 and 31 June 2018. The time frame followed the events during the North Korea–United States crisis, starting in April 2017 and ending in June 2018 after the North Korea–United States summit in Singapore. The news articles were identified using the keyword 'Guam' in the Pro Quest US newsfeed database with the idea of capturing all articles that discussed Guam. We also expanded our sample to as many newspapers as possible. Since the goal is to understand the dynamic between alterity and hegemony, we also wanted to capture how local newspapers covered Guam, especially since the local press plays an important role in disseminating political information (Moy et al. 2004; Hayes and Lawless 2015) and a very important number of local newspapers belong to big media conglomerates (McChesney 2004). We intentionally left out *The Pacific Daily News*, the daily newspaper from Guam, because our interest is to see how the mainline US news media depicted Guam during the crisis. The outlets with the highest number of articles were the *Wall Street Journal* with 225, *The New York Times*, 178, and the *Honolulu Star Advertiser*, 146. *The Indianapolis Star* and the *Baltimore Sun* had the lowest number of news articles, with 26 and 24, respectively. Our sample contains the principal US national newspapers – *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, *USA Today* and the *Wall Street Journal* – as well as some well-regarded provincial dailies with respectable circulation and name recognition such as the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Los Angeles Times* and the *New York Post*.

The frames through which Guam was depicted were uncovered using the method ANTMN developed by Walter and Ophir (2019). ANTMN combines topic modelling with network analysis in order to unearth the frames used in the coverage of a specific event. This method has the advantage of allowing the researcher to quickly identify thematic structures in large volumes of data, while helping to reduce the researcher's bias by providing quantitative measurements with an inductive approach (Maier et al. 2018).

The pre-processing removed news articles that were shorter than 300 characters and that were duplicates, leaving the final number of articles to 1833. Following the guidelines established by Maier et al. (2018), stop words were removed, all words were converted to lowercase and punctuations, numbers and words that appeared in fewer than 0.1 per cent and more than 99 per cent of the documents were removed.

A fivefold cross-validation was used for establishing the correct number of topics, testing the perplexity of different models in jumps of between ten and 100 topics (see Wang and Blei 2009), which resulted in 40 topics. The topics were then interpreted and labelled using exclusive words with the highest frequency (see Roberts et al. 2014). Boilerplate topics, topics with no substantive meaning as the result of the statistical distribution of words, were removed, leaving the final number of topics to 33. In order to create the topic network, we established the cosine similarity between the topics with the matrix resulting from the topic modelling. We applied a clustering algorithm (Pons and Latapy 2005) to establish topic communities. The network was created with the topics as the nodes and the cosine similarity as the edges.



RESULTS

The topics were interpreted and labelled manually by the researchers. The labels contextualize the themes discussed in the topics. Figure 1 shows the network of topics, where all topics are understood as frame elements. Each cluster of topics represents a frame used in the coverage of Guam during the North Korean–United States crisis between April 2017 and July 2018. We can find three different frames, conflict, as an issue-specific frame, in red, politics, another issue specific, in green and, finally, a generic frame in blue. Table 1 shows, for clarity, the distribution of topics by frame.

The first frame, conflict, has twelve elements. Most of the elements of this frame are concerned with the idea of conflict between North Korea and the United States, with frame elements that discuss the heightened tensions between the United States and North Korea. They referenced the North Korean threat to Guam and Trump’s response to the threat. Some other elements also covered North Korea’s nuclear missile tests and mentioned Pyongyang’s capability of striking Guam and US allies like Japan, the annual United States–South Korea joint military exercises and the military planes that took off from

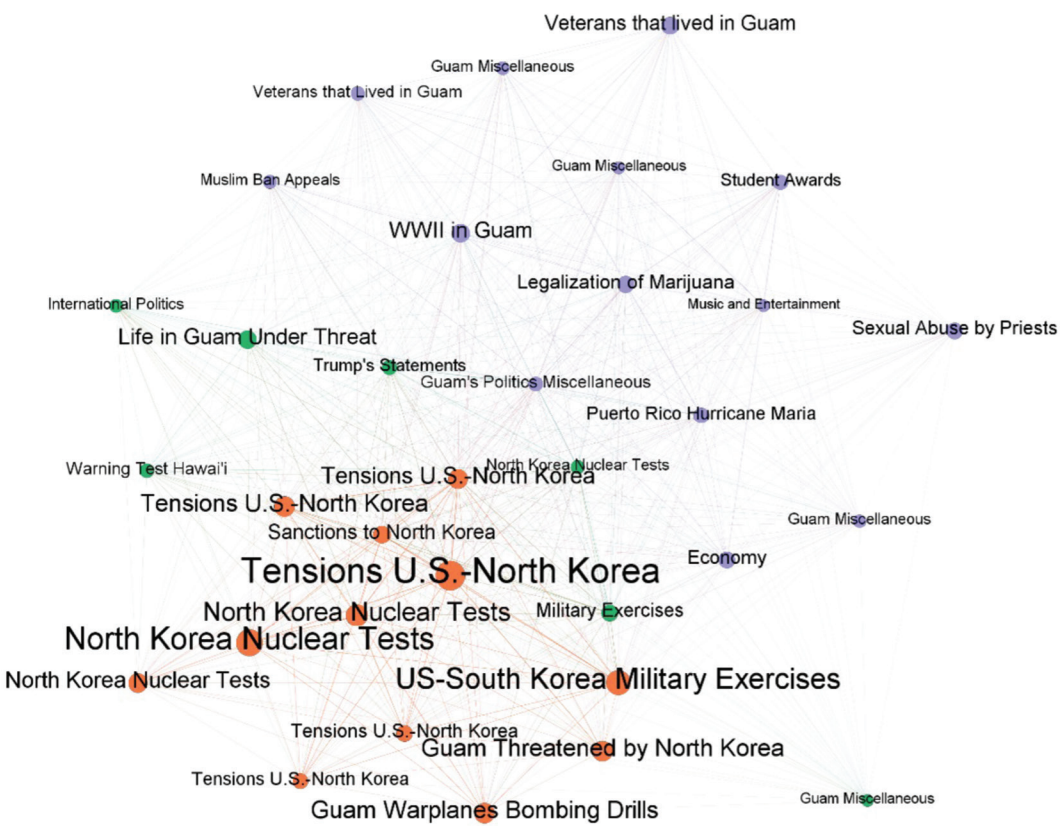


Figure 1: Topics network of the coverage of Guam. The nodes represent topics, the edges represent the co-occurrences of topics in different documents, the size is established by the prevalence of the topics, colours represent frames. The image was created in Gephi 0.9.2 using the Force Atlas 2 layout algorithm. Red is conflict, green politics, blue generic.

Table 1: Topics by frame.

Frame	Topics
Conflict	North Korea Nuclear Tests, Guam Warplanes Bombing Drills, United States–South Korea Military Exercises, North Korea Nuclear Tests, Tensions United States–North Korea, Tension United States–North Korea, Tensions United States–North Korea, Tensions United States–North Korea, North Korea Nuclear Tests, Guam Threatened by North Korea, Tensions United States–North Korea, Sanctions to North Korea
Politics	Life in Guam Under Threat, North Korea Nuclear Tests, Trump's Statements, Warning Test Hawai'i, Military Exercises, International Politics, Guam Miscellaneous
Generic	Muslim Ban Appeals, Student Awards, Guam's Politics Miscellaneous, Puerto Rico Hurricane Maria, Legalization of Marijuana, Music and Entertainment, Sexual Abuse by Priests, Guam Miscellaneous, Guam Miscellaneous, Guam Miscellaneous, Economy, Veterans that lived in Guam, Second World War in Guam, Veterans that Lived in Guam

Guam in the military exercises. Two other topics covered the North Korean threat to Guam as a way to punish the United States and frustrate the sanctions proposed by the United States on North Korea and accepted by China.

The second frame, politics, with seven frame elements, revolves around the political implications of the conflict between the United States and North Korea. Some of the elements found in this frame are Trump's statements regarding the situation with North Korea and its threat to Guam, the 13 January 2018 Hawai'i warning test, Life in Guam Under Threat, which covers the day-to-day lives of Guamanians during the time the island was threatened by North Korea – and their thoughts about US protection or the role of international political actors. Interestingly, the topic North Korea Nuclear Tests is similar to the topics found in the frame conflict; however, it deals mostly with White House intelligence reports and the reactions of the US Government.

The third frame, the generic frame, has fourteen elements. What makes this frame interesting is the fact that Guam is rarely the sole focus of the news articles. In this frame, we find topics dealing with obituaries of veterans that served in Guam during the Second World War, life in Guam during the Second World War, legalization of Marijuana, Trump's Muslim Ban, situations of sexual abuse by Catholic priests that had served in Guam. The topic Puerto Rico Hurricane Maria, covered in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, mentioned how Puerto Rico and Guam became US possessions after the Treaty of Paris of 1898. The topics Guam Miscellaneous mention different situations that affect Guam (such as the fact that it does not follow daylight saving time), Guamanian food trucks in other parts of the United States or tourists travelling to the island. Finally, Politics Miscellaneous deals with Guamanian politicians and Guamanian representatives in the US Congress.

Figure 2 shows the frequency of news articles and frames about Guam during the North Korea–United States crisis. The frequency of news articles shows a high increase in coverage of Guam starting on 8 August 2017 and a steep decrease around late August 2017. However, the frequency of articles remains constant before and after the spike.

As for the frame frequency, we can see an increase of the frame conflict following the increase in coverage. The generic frame is the main frame used in the coverage of Guam in our period of study outside of the peak in coverage, while the frame politics remains at low levels for most of the time span

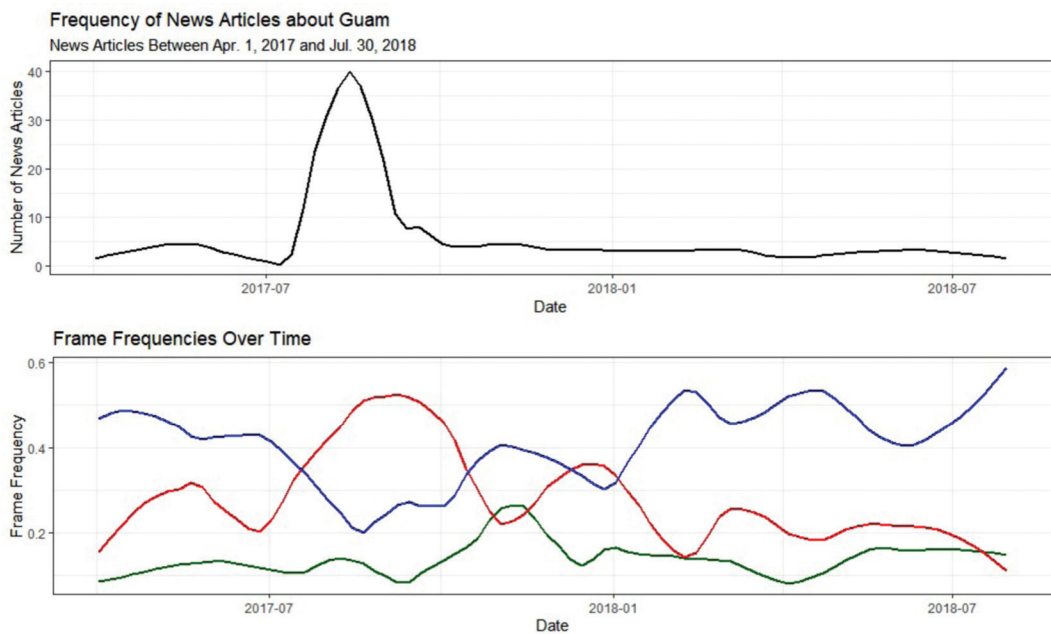


Figure 2: Top: frequency of news articles over time from 1 April 2017 to 30 July 2018. Bottom: frequency of frame usage over time from 1 April 2017 to 30 July 2018. Red is conflict, green politics, blue generic.

Table 2: ANOVA.

Predictor	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	p	partial $\eta^2$	
						partial $\eta^2$	90% CI [LL, UL]
(Intercept)	29.18	1	29.18	649.72	0.000		
Frame	12.47	2	6.24	138.87	0.000	0.19	[0.16, 0.22]
Error	53.49	1191	0.04				

Note: LL and UL represent the lower limit and upper limit of the partial  $\eta^2$  confidence interval, respectively.

except for a brief period after the increase in coverage. We ran an ANOVA in order to establish whether the frame usage was significantly different. The results, in Table 2, show a significant difference in frame usage by type of frame ( $p < 0.01$ ). A series of  $t$ -tests also show significant differences between the frame conflict ( $M = 0.27$ ,  $SD = 0.22$ ) and the frame politics ( $M = 0.13$ ,  $SD = 0.14$ ) frequency ( $p < 0.01$ ), the frequency of the generic frame ( $M = 0.38$ ,  $SD = 0.25$ ) and the frame conflict ( $p < 0.01$ ) and the generic and politics frame ( $p < 0.01$ ).

Given that the ANOVA test, as well as the series of  $t$ -tests, showed significant differences between frame usage, we wanted to understand if the differences were driven by the salience of the subject, that is, whether an increase in the daily frequency of articles explained differences in frame usage. Table 3

Table 3: Correlation table.

	Conflict	Politics	Generic
Number of articles	0.32**	0.01	-0.23**
	[0.23, 0.41]	[-0.08, 0.11]	[-0.32, -0.13]

Notes: Values in square brackets indicate the 95 per cent confidence interval for each correlation. \* indicates  $p < 0.05$ . \*\* indicates  $p < 0.01$ .  $N = 396$ .

shows the results of a series of correlation tests. The results show a positive correlation between the number of articles and the usage of the frame conflict ( $r = 0.32$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), a negative correlation between the number of articles and the generic frame ( $r = -0.23$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and no significant correlation between the number of articles and the frame politics ( $r = 0.01$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). This indicates that an increase in salience increased the frame conflict usage, and decreased the generic frame, but had no impact on the frame politics, which might be affected by other factors like the US general political context.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Our results show three different frames used in the depiction of Guam. The issue-specific frame, conflict, dealt with the tension between the United States and North Korea, the nuclear missile tests and the United States–South Korea joint military exercises. The second issue-specific frame, politics, dealt with the political aspects of the conflict, focusing on Trump's comments and White House actions in dealing with the situation. Finally, the generic frame presents Guam in light of US political and social events. It presents Guam as part of the United States when it discusses the Muslim ban or the legalization of Marijuana.

As was pointed out, Guam is one of the world's most militarized places. Its strategic location allows the United States to provide security to the mainland as well as to its allies (Lutz 2019). This advantage comes with the freedom to evade having to answer to Guam's representatives or to foreign governments due to Guam's political status (Immerwahr 2019; Spitzer 2019), even if the Guamanian people have actively sought to resolve the situation by petitioning to establish a Commonwealth (Na'puti and Hahn 2013). Our results showed, however, that in the generic frame the US press gazed at Guam from a hegemonic prism and made it seem like a natural part of the United States. In the conflict frame, it also depicted the military conflict that put the island in the eye of the storm as an attack on America, thus privileging an interpretation of events that was consistent with the official position (Hall 1982; Fiske 1992; Gurevitch et al. 1982).

The issue-specific frames helped keep the situation divorced from the context that explains why an island in the Pacific Ocean would be threatened by a country that might have nuclear power. At the same time, by not placing the issue of Guam's political status at the core of the event, they absorbed the Indigenous *them* into the US *us* (Spitzer 2019). As a result of these mechanisms, the frames appear unproblematic. Hegemonic media discourse permeated the coverage of the conflict and influenced the way information about the conflict was presented (Hepp 2012).

Importantly, most Guamanians identify strongly with the United States (Bosqui et al. 2018) and US Marines are often presented in Guam's local

newspapers as liberators (Dalisay 2009, 2012). However, this fact obscures the reality that there is a significant group of Chamorro people who are critical of the US and of Guam's political status (Viernes 2009). These Chamorro people retain an identity that is separate from a US-based one, choosing to identify themselves around their indigeneity and connection with the other Mariana islands (Bosqui et al. 2018; Perez 2005). The way the mainstream US press depicted Guam presented an image of the island, and of Guamanians as a whole, as an extension of the United States, without acknowledging the political limbo Guam is in (Spitzer 2019). This outcome is not surprising. Nor is it peculiar to Guam. A study found that in the aftermath of the poisoning of the Marshall Islands as a result of US nuclear testing, the coverage of the island by the US media elided the political relationship between the island and the United States and focused, instead, on the news of the moment (Robie 2010).

Nonetheless, the de-contextualized character of the reporting on Guam – and of the Marshall Islands – departs from the routines and procedural protocols of dominant news production practices, which traditionally exploit 'news pegs' to illuminate the history, background and situational contexts of people, places, events that would otherwise not have been newsworthy. Doing so in the case of Guam would have exoticized the island, brought to light its marginality and undermined the official media narrative that an attack on the island was an attack on mainland America. Herman and Chomsky's point that the elite media 'propagandize on behalf of the powerful societal interests that control and finance them' (1988: xi) is relevant here.

Our findings are consistent with Dalisay's (2009, 2012) findings on the unproblematic depiction of Guam's relationship to the United States. Our results, showing significant disparities between the frame frequencies, also show in greater detail how the default frame seems to be the generic one. Furthermore, when the depiction of Guam became mediated through a contextual distortion, the US press shifted towards a different hegemonic frame, one that centred coverage around the military (Kellner 1992; Knightly 2002), resorting to what others have called media patriotism (Wong 2006). The conflict with North Korea changed the way Guam was depicted, and when the event lost importance in terms of frequency of articles the press reverted to the generic frame. The results of the correlation support this interpretation, showing a decrease in the generic frame and an increase of the conflict frame with an increase in salience. This can also be seen in the frequency of articles before and after the spike, which remained constant, suggesting that the generic frame is simply the way Guam is discussed, a hegemonic frame that benefits the US political establishment in the political relationship with Guam and that subordinates Guam's needs to the needs of the United States. We believe this presents empirical data of the underlying impulse for the depiction of Guam in the US news media. When Guam is presented in non-distorted contexts, the US press default to a hegemonic frame that benefits the US in the political relationship with Guam. In other words, the political relationship between the United States and Guam is presented as natural and common sense (Gramsci 1971; Mattelart and Mattelart 1992) even when it is not.

What all coverage masked, nonetheless, was the political status of Guam and the fact that it was this specific political status with the United States that served as a justification for North Korea's threat, even when both approaches obviate Guam's political status, that is, the North Korea crisis mediated the depiction of Guam in the two issue-specific frames, whereas the generic frame

was also mediated by the power relations between the United States and Guam, which transcends a specific issue.

It is important to stress the importance of the military as a conceptual tool in the depiction of Guam in the US media. It is not surprising that military discourse was present during the peak of the tension between the United States and North Korea given that Guam was threatened with an attack by a country that seeks nuclear power. However, even the generic frame, which was not mediated by the North Korea crisis, presented topics that were dominated by military discourse, such as obituaries of veterans that served in the island or events that occurred in Guam during the Second World War. This, along with the fact that military bases occupy a large part of the island (Bosqui et al. 2018) as well as the US military domination and the geographic position in the geopolitical tensions in the Pacific (Lutz 2009, 2019), shows the level of presence of the military in the way Guam is depicted in the US media. Even more importantly, our results show a virtual invisibilization of Guamanians during the period of heightened tensions.

In the push and pull between hegemonic articulations and alterity, the mainstream media presented Guam as constitutive of the United States in ways that occluded its marginality, thereby simultaneously constituting and constraining it. This fact disrupts and complicates habitual theorization of alterity in identity studies and theories of media representation. As Skovgaard-Smith et al. point out, 'when alterity is highlighted, it is primarily with reference to the notion of affirming a superior self in contrast to an inferior Other' (2019: 2). Nonetheless, as our study has shown, media portrayals do not always instantiate such predictable binaries. Although previous studies have shown that the mainstream media infantilize racial and ethnic minorities and denude them of agential powers (e.g. Fabregat and Kperogi 2019; Dixon 2008a; Fujioka 1999), our study found no such evidence. Instead, we found that the patriotic fervour that the possibility of a war actuated in the media situationally diluted the subalternity of the people of Guam and saw their embeddedness within hegemonic discourses and normalizing media narratives. In other words, while it is impossible to construct 'identity free of alterity' (Czarniawska 2008: 8), it is possible to elide alterity in the service of hegemony. Most importantly, this instantiates not only hegemonic articulation in media discourse but also what Herman and Chomsky (1988) characterized as propaganda-fuelled media subservience to the discourses of the political-military-economic complex.

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