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Portrayal of PAK-US Relations in Elite Press of Pakistan and USA before and after 2018 General Election in Pakistan

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Abstract

The mass media play pivotal role in portraying the images of various countries. Portrayal of Pak-US relations in the U.S media has always been a topic of interest for researchers. The proposed study focused on the portrayal of Pak-US relations in elite newspapers of U.S and Pakistan i.e. The New York Times, The Washington Post, The News International and Dawn two years each before and after 2018 General election in Pakistan. The objective of the study was to explore the nature of portrayal (favourable, neutral or unfavourable) given to the Pak-US relations by the mentioned print media with reference to Pak-US foreign policies, importance and contribution of Pakistan in "war on terror", Pak-US economic and strategic relations and domestic affairs of Pakistan . This study based on research question "What was the extent of coverage given to Pak-US relations by elite press of Pakistan and America before and after 2018 general election in Pakistan?." and "Was there any difference in amount of coverage given to the selected categories between selected press during selected time?" Out of 323 articles in context of Pak-US relations during selected time period, The New York Times published 49 (15.2 %), The News International published 114 (35.3), The Washington Post 55 (17.2%) and Dawn published 105 (32.5) articles. It is concluded that the 2018 General elections in Pakistan influenced the Pak-US relations. The US press changed its stance toward the portrayal of the Pak-US relations after this event.

Keywords: *Pak-US Relation; Print Media; Terrorism.*

Introduction

Pak-US relations have always been a mix flavor of love, hate, trust gap and inconsistency. Despite that, both the countries cannot ignore the importance of each other because of commonality in their objectives. On account of the "war on terror" Pakistan remained a front state non-NATO ally of America in combating extremism and terrorism in the South Asian region after the 9/11 attacks .

Pakistan has to suffer a huge loss despite joining hands with the US government in the war against terror. The US media have always been portraying a negative picture of Pakistan, blaming it for playing a double game with the US. On the other hand after the alliance with the US government Pakistan faced frequent terrorist attacks that influenced its (Ayuob & Ahmed, 2013).

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The Abbottabad operation of May 01, 2011 also influenced Pak-US relations. Despite various controversies, the result of this operation proved helpful in the presidential election of the USA but it changed the public perception of America in Pakistan. Manzoor (2012) describes that after Laden's assassination Pak-US relations deteriorated when a changed policy was seen in the presidency in Pakistan. The President of Pakistan visited Russia ten days after this operation for strengthening ties on strategic grounds. That was alarming situation for America because of its old rivalry with Russia. It started efforts to soothe the temperature.

Pak-US relations are important as the USA has declared Pakistan a non-NATO ally in the "war on terror" due to its geographic location. The US has always been supporting Pakistan financially and strategically. After the 9/11 incident the scenario of the world changed entirely but the South Asian region has influenced the most. "Terrorism" emerged as a terminology that invaded this region badly. Pakistan has to face a significant financial loss in the "war on terror" Siraj (2006) states that "Due to the events of 9/11, media coverage of Pakistan in the United States is a hot topic." Contrary perceptions of Pakistan may exist in the minds of Americans. Such paradoxes may also exist in American media".

In the present research the researcher intends to find out that how and in what context *The New York Times*, *The News International*, *The Washington Post and Dawn* treated Pak-US relations two years each before and after 2018 General election in Pakistan. After September 11, 2001, United States launched a war in Muslim countries in the name of "war on terror" to eliminate terrorism. Pakistan joined hands with America in this American. Passing through so many phases America conducted an operation in Abbottabad and announced the killing of bin Laden in a compound. This news was splashed all over the world. American leading newspapers covered this news with high frequency. The proposed research examines that is there any difference in the portrayal of Pak-US relations in the mentioned newspapers before and after selected point of time.

Significance of the Study

This research is helpful in providing the academic literature regarding comparative studies on Pak-US relations. Pakistan-USA relations are of great significance in the era of Imran Khan as the Prime Minister of Pakistan. The relationship between the two countries has a significant impact on regional and global politics, as well as on the economy, security, and stability of the region. Under the leadership of Imran Khan, efforts are being made to improve and strengthen the bilateral relationship between the two countries.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this research study are as under:

- To find out how much coverage have been given to Pak-US relations by the elite press of Pakistan and USA before and after 2018 general election in Pakistan
- To evaluate the stance of coverage to Pak-US relations by press of both countries during selected time

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- To know that whether portrayal of this relationship is similar or different in the two different time period i.e. before and after 2018 general election in Pakistan, in selected newspapers

Research Questions

Following are the Research questions of this research:

RQ_1: What was the extent of coverage given to Pak-US relations by elite press of Pakistan and America before and after 2018 general election in Pakistan?

RQ_2: Was there any difference in amount of coverage given to the selected categories between selected newspapers during selected time?

Literature Review

Literature review is actually an activity in which a researcher goes through a huge amount of content related to his or her research. This practice helps the researcher to set a direction to reach the destination.

As the proposed study focuses on the portrayal of Pak-US relations in US and Pakistani press, the literature review includes various researches that have been carried out on the portrayal of not only Pak-US relations but also other countries in US media. Various studies have been conducted so for on the portrayal of Pak-US relations that helps in concluding that US media most of the time seems to have less objective and more biased stance while portraying other countries and especially third world countries.

Siraj (2006) in his study *"Image of Pakistan in the US Media: Exploring News Framing"* observes that an obvious change is found regarding the coverage given to the relationship between United States and Pakistan in U.S media after the 9/11 incident. While concluding his study he notes, "In the post-9/11 period, Pakistan received more favorable and less unfavorable coverage than in the pre-9/11 period, more stories framed Pakistan as friend than as foe" (p. 4).

Pak-US relations have been changing time to time because of the American interest in Pakistan. During the American war with USSR Pakistan gained huge amount in form of American aid for the sack of joining hand with America against USSR. America funded the fighters against Russia and named them 'Jahadist'. Press media of USA seem to portray its relation with other countries differently in different time spam.

Mughees (1995) in a study titled "Image of Iran in the Western Media," Mughees (1995) contends that the main reason for Iran's poor image in the US media is its "Islamic Character," which is depicted as a threat to regional peace, security, and the interests of the US and Israel. Iran is frequently described as a "terrorist" or "fundamentalist" country. The concept of Islamic fundamentalism is commonly

associated with Iran and Iranian Muslims. He claims that the Western media not only criticizes Islam but also contributes to the spread of preconceptions about the Muslim world and Islamic principles.

Adeeb (2004) argued that the portrayal of Pakistan in the Washington Post has been ambiguous most of the time based on the stories comprising disinformation, misleading, and harsh wording. Pakistan's foreign policy with Afghanistan and its political canvas has always been portrayed cynically in *the Washington Post* (cited in Toor, 2008).

Noshina (1998) analyzed that US media while portraying Pakistan image prefer its foreign policy as compared to Pakistan domestic political issue. She further narrated that US media give preference to Pak-India and Pak-US relations in sense of the portrayal of these variables in US media. In lieu of the literature review the researcher has assumed that the US media have been portraying the US relations with other countries according to US priorities. It remained a friend of a country in a time and foe of same country in other time. The portrayal of America's relations with other countries by US press have been influencing by the administrative measures in USA.

Theoretical Framework

The researcher intends to determine the portrayal of the Pak-US relations in the American and Pakistani press in the perspective of framing theory.

Framing Theory

The concept of framing has been widely used by the researchers in the field of Mass Communication. All the news items including editorials and opinions are arranged according to specific frames in various mediums either print or electronic. So the term framing refers to the way an event is portrayed in a medium. For the present research the notion of framing helps the researcher in exploring the presentation of Pak-US relations in elite press of Pakistan and USA i.e. *The New York Times, The News International, The Washington Post and Dawn.* In this research work the researcher intends to explore what kind of treatment is given to Pak-US relations in mentioned newspapers during the specified time period.

Entman (1993) notes that the media persons working with print media use some tactics for the sake of making their news story familiar and easy to understand for readers. They use words and sentences with which their reader are already familiar. It helps them disseminate information promptly. Media explain the issues according to people's existing opinion so people give meaning to the issues according to the frames already exist in their minds.

The following are some of the framing techniques that will be analyzed in this research:

Metaphor: Giving an activity or event additional meaning by contrasting it with something else

Stories: Refers to legends or myths used to make an event memorable. •

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Traditions: Organizational patterns that use rituals and rites to communicate organizational values.

Slogans: Catchy words that present a subject in a familiar manner and make it memorable.

Contrast: Portraying a subject in a way that emphasizes what it is not.

Research Methodology

Any research challenge is solved by a researcher using a scientific and organized approach. To better comprehend the subject, each researcher must use a particular and appropriate research methodology. The area of communication and media studies employs both qualitative and quantitative techniques, such as analysis of content, inquiries, case studies, paperwork reviews, focus groups, surveys, etc. The content analysis technique study was used by the researcher.

Period of Research Study

The examples of consistency in Pak-US relations are very rare because of the lack of trust between both countries. After the Osama's assassination the US media portrayed harsh stance of American administration regarding Pak-US relations as mentioned in content of this study. An assumption prevails that Domestic political sphere in Pakistan influences by US interference so the same assumption prevailed in 2018 general election in Pakistan that this event influenced Pak-US relations. To measure the nature of Pak-US relations and influences of 2018 general election in Pakistan on these relations in American and Pakistani print media the researcher selected the period of two years each pre and post 2018 general election in Pakistan during July, 2016 to July, 2020.

Sample of the study

The sample for this study includes only the news, editorials and Columns/opinions that are published in Four newspapers of Pakistan and USA related to Pak-US relations during the period of two years each pre and post 2018 general election in Pakistan.

Data Collection

Data collection is very hectic and responsible exercise because all the data analysis based on collected data. Data examination is the study procedure that needs the researcher to apply statistical methodologies to the acquired data in a methodical manner. The data for the planned study was gathered using web software called LexisNexis.

Data Analysis

The results have been taken by the researcher by using SPSS statistical software while tabulating qualitative data.

Results and Discussion

The main focus of this study is to explore the coverage of Pak-US relations by Pakistani and American press that to what extent both of the press have given the coverage to these relations moreover is there any difference of coverage to selected categories by the selected newspapers for this study.

Table.1 Frequencies of articles

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
New York Time	49	15.2	15.2	15.2
The News International	114	35.3	35.3	50.5
Washington Post	55	17.0	17.0	67.5
Dawn	105	32.5	32.5	100.0
Total	323	100.0	100.0	

The frequency table shows the distribution of articles on Pak-US relations published in mentioned newspapers of Pakistan and USA. Out of 323 articles in context of Pak-US relations during selected time period, The New York Times published 49 (15.2 %), The News International published 114 (35.3), The Washington Post 55 (17.2%) and Dawn published 105 (32.5) articles

Table.2 Frequency of Topics

Categories	Terrorism	Domestic Affairs	Human rights	Economic relations	Strategic relations	Total
New York Time	6	20	20	3	0	49
The News International	13	32	10	35	24	114

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Washington Post	4	20	9	19	3	55
Dawn	13	40	11	28	13	105
Total	36	112	50	85	40	323

Results show the topic coverage by four newspapers. Terrorism: This category has a frequency of 36. The percentage is 11.1%, indicating that these 36 stories account for 11.1% of the total. Domestic Affairs: This category has a frequency of 112, accounting for 34.7% of the total stories. The coverage of Human Rights category has a frequency of 50, making up 15.5% of the responses. Economic Relations: This category has a frequency of 85. Strategic Relations: This category has a frequency of 40, accounting for 12.4% of the number of stories. The overall summary of the data indicates that there were 323 total stories published in newspapers. In conclusion, the table presents the distribution of responses across distinct categories.

Discussion

Based on the results, Overall, The findings of this research add to our understanding of US-Pakistan ties. and the role of the media. Future studies can examine the underlying processes that result in these variations and the advancement of bilateral ties between the two nations. A significant corpus of literature has been written about the political, economic, and security aspects of the relationship between Pakistan and America throughout the years. The economic aspects of Pakistan's relationship with the United States are a further crucial topic. Researchers have investigated the two nations' trade and economic cooperation and have looked at how economic sanctions, debt relief, and other economic efforts have affected the relationship. According to the findings, the two nations' collaboration in the fight against terrorism and extremism has been examined, as well as the tensions and differences that have developed in this area. Researchers have looked into how the media has influenced the two nations' ties. In order to better understand and handle the difficulties facing both nations, continuous study in this field will be crucial. The connection between the two countries will continue to be of utmost importance for regional and global security and stability. A significant amount of scholarly research has been done on the relationship between Pakistan and the United States.

Conclusion

The coverage of Pak-US relations before and after general election 2018 in leading newspapers of America (The New York Times & The Washington Post) and Pakistan Dawn and the news) was unfavourable overall as the number of unfavorable articles were much higher than favourable and neutral articles. The US-Pakistan

relationship is a complex and multifaceted one. It has been shaped by a number of factors, including the Cold War, the War on Terror, and economic interests. The future of the relationship is uncertain, but it is clear that the two countries have a number of shared interests. The role of Pakistani and American newspapers in shaping public opinion about the relationship is significant. These newspapers have published a number of articles about the relationship, both positive and negative.

The role of newspapers, such as Dawn, The News International, The New York Times, and The Washington Post, is critical in keeping the public informed about economic ties, the war on terror, and the strategic interests of both countries. Their reporting can foster greater understanding and cooperation between the US and Pakistan or highlight areas where further diplomatic efforts are needed to strengthen the relationship.

Recommendations:

Although there are differences between Pakistan's and the US's strategic worries, they are not insurmountable. Print media can help the two nations communicate with one another and establish common ground on important geopolitical problems. Promote interactions between individuals. Interactions between Americans and Pakistanis on a personal level can promote trust and understanding.

This research topic has a broad canvas so for a deeper insight the researchers in future may have better results while focussing on limited categories rather than numerous categories.

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