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Framing Biases Of Sino-Pak Media: A Comparative Content Analysis Of Official Social Media Accounts

Abstract: *The present study was designed to know, how and in what ways CPEC is being portrayed by Sino-Pak media. For this, content analysis of the 293 CPEC-related posts was performed. The data was collected from Pakistani and Chinese newspapers' official Facebook pages (The News and People's Daily China). The data accumulated by keyword search was categorized and sub-categorized in line with the selected aspects and a coding sheet. Findings revealed, that although the Pakistani media was giving more coverage to CPEC the Chinese media was matchless with 100 % positive coverage in contrast to Pakistan's 47% (this percentage put a question mark on the status of "Press Freedom" in China). Overall, CPEC was portrayed positively in both newspapers with (52%) of positive coverage and (25%) negative. The most covered CPEC aspect was "Strategic" (38%) and media coverage of this aspect highlights the strategic significance of CPEC in regional politics.*

Key Words: Media Framing, Media Coverage, Content Analysis, CPEC, Newspapers' Social Media Accounts, Pakistani Newspapers, Chinese Newspapers

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Introduction

Over the previous two decades, China's influence in the global arena has increased manyfold. China's preference now is to build close strategic ties with other key players in the region and Pakistan too, as a key ally in the region, can play a crucial role regarding this, and that significance makes Pakistan a major concern for China (Shambaugh, 2013). Hameed (2018) viewed the CPEC as a comprehensive plan for economic and

strategic development that consists of many transportation channels that will link more than 2,500 km and will connect China and Pakistan and its advanced variant will connect India, Afghanistan, and Iran. According to Khalil (2018), CPEC is a full-fledged plan to resolve all major issues being faced by Pakistan as it will strengthen Pakistan's economy and improve the quality of life for its citizens. Making various economic zones in various parts of Pakistan to attract

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international investors is part of the plan which consequently will be boosting Pakistan's economy.

Countries like Russia, KSA, and Iran have shown their willingness to join the project and potentially it can provide Pakistan's economy an opportunity to build itself stronger. Moreover, it can reshape the strategic position of Pakistan with other key players in the region. CPEC will make Pakistan's Gwadar port a crossroad for economic activities in the whole area and that will give a boost to the currently weak economy of Pakistan (Hussain, 2017). CPEC project is not only an economic development plan, it also has a crucial strategic significance. Pakistan's arch-rival India considers CPEC aka "One Belt One Road" OBOR, as a significant project that fulfils key strategic and developmental and requirements of Pakistan but the major plans of the project are yet to be revealed (Hussain, 2017). "Cooperation in shadow" is the term used to refer the relations. On his arrival to the Kingdom of Saudia Arabia and Egypt, President Xi Jinping of China offered a \$ 55 billion package for the development at infrastructure and industrial level, in the Middle Eastern region, both China and Saudia have a consensus on a strategic partnership plan. He further assured that they are not together for any kind of conspiracy in the region. All following plans are part of engagement which strengthens trade connection and will finally bolster demand for China's industrial products.

The use of media in political engineering and shaping public perception is nothing new. This study will be seeing media framing of Pakistani and Chinese media on the CPEC project as it is potentially a game changer for the regional stakeholders. Some players see it as the harbinger of financial prosperity and for others, it has a crucial strategic significance; but, what more important is, how people see it, and what is the public perception of this project.

Balance of Power

The project CPEC can potentially strengthen

the bond between both countries for a naval-based strategic alliance to have joint exercises in the Indian Ocean. This strategic coalition will not only strengthen their relevant abilities in the water but will also show a mutual defensive standing against US-Indian dominance in the region (Butt, 2015). In the future, the Gwadar port has the potential to turn into a key naval base (Salman, 2015). The void is created in the wake of the US back footing, in the term of military and economic cooperation. Since its emergence, Pakistan majorly depended on the financial support being given by the USA and this help had a major role when Pakistan got high growth rates in the decade of 1960. And that was the basic reason behind the boost in the industrial sector (Zaidi, 2011).

USA

Rawan (2018) claims that the USA is considering Chinese growth as a major risk that can alter the world order. The USA is in deep waters with the growing impact of China in the term economy and growing expansion of world trade. This growing expansion of China in the global market is making the US revisit its issue-based policy regarding China. Trump administration is not contented with emerging China. The most recent National Security Strategy depicts that the USA has serious reservations regarding China's Belt and Road initiative and CPEC. NSS is now planning to give more power to India and develop new strategic cooperation, and through India have a check on emerging China. And counter the growing impact of China in the Indian Ocean and overall in the entire region.

India

India's relations with both Pakistan and China are very sour. India even has indulged in war with both countries. There is almost an unending tension between India and Pakistan, specifically at LoC. Now, given the scenario, the USA and India are targeting CPEC as both countries are worried about Chinese influence in the region and India is looking forward an

economic and defensive development. To counter CPEC, both India and the USA, are trying to have a joint venture named Indo-Pacific-Economic-Corridor (IPEC) and giving another life to the New Silk Road Plan. These are just a few instances to give in this regard. Eriksson (2017) expressed that China's paradigm shift regarding global politics is visibly seen since the Presidency of Xi Jinping back in 2012. The central idea of this project (CPEC) when it was floated back in 2013 was that, apart from its revival, China needs to help out its neighboring countries, in terms of providing feasible opportunities and developing their infrastructure the way suits. The project includes the area of Kashmir (A controversial area between Pakistan and India) which is arousing the concern of India. India claims that CPEC is not simply something for development purposes as claimed by both countries (China and Pakistan), it is but a strategic and planned move being taken by China and endorsed by Pakistan to vast the area of influence in the region. So, India has decided to keep staying away from the project since May 2017.

Social Media

It is the kind of technology those are computer and internet-mediated and facilitates the process of content creation or information sharing, dissemination of ideas, and many other expressions through virtual networks (Kietzmann, 2011). Obar (2015) and Kaplan (2010) noted that social media are internet-oriented apps that give their users the freedom of active participation like Web 2.0. It was also comprehended that the bloodline of social media is the supply of content being provided by its users, through every internet-based interaction in the form of posts, texts, pictures, and videos. Agichtein (2008) explained that Social media is very different from traditional media what is consists of newspapers and magazines and TV and Radio broadcasting on a lot of grounds that include but are not limited to outreach, frequency of intervals, interactivity, swiftness, and performance. Boyd (2007) and Obar (2015) argue that social media platforms offer their users to make their

profiles which work as virtual identities for account holders. Social media also gives freedom to its users to connect with other people who are using the same sites or applications. Kietzmann (2011) mentioned that social media have changed the way people or groups of people usually interact with others and communities at large. The nature of communication interactivity between individuals, organization, and communities are altogether altered. The content of a newspaper is not only available to the readers of a specific newspaper; it is also widely shared via the process being done by social networking sites (Klinger et al, 2015).

Media Framing

Vreese (2005) noted that Frames consistently partake in principles that organize and assign meanings to make our social world. Early researchers proposed that when a chosen aspect of a story is made prominent, frames make people focus and consider only those aspects important, and this inclination of people toward specific aspects helps them to make judgments (good, bad, etc.) regarding that particular event or matter under consideration (Nelson et al, 1997) and (Scheufele, 2000). As per the idea of Baran (2012), the theory of frame analysis supports the concept that human utilizes their expectations to give meaning to their everyday life. Journalists, through news articles, have the power to assign meanings and self-styled interpretations to the issues being faced. Journalists are part of media organizations that are indulged in making meaning and are building reality of the society in an organized way (Van, 2010). Entman (1993) referred to framing as an act in which particular points of social reality are concentrated played up and sometimes played down in the way it is needed in the process of communication. And it happens in a way that seems to show as evaluating or interpreting a given phenomenon. Gamson (1989) calls a frame as having the same role as performed by a storyline. And consider it an idea that organizes.

Social Aspects of Media Framing

Iyengar (1991) suggested that news related to social issues can affect the attributions of responsibility in terms of causality and treatment. Erving (1974) says that the cultural context of any society is also a contributor to the establishment of frames.

Media Framing in Formulating Public Opinion

Sampe (2009) explained that framing as a theory is used to refer to the idea of how the media chooses to package and present information to the public. The theory propagates that the media aims at highlighting certain events and it then decides to place them in a particular context which either encourages or discourages specific interpretations and that is how the media has the potential to influence people to make them see reality in a light of their choosing. It is used to signify that aspect of communication that leads to people preferring and consenting to one meaning over the other. Vreese et al (2005) noted that framing kindles the process of decision-making in such a manner that it highlights particular characteristics while it eliminates the others. *For example, newspapers are responsible for framing their news within the domain of a particular viewpoint. In return, this can be helpful in changing the perception of an issue, by the readers.*

Role of Media in Shaping Up Policies

Media not only spreads new information but also plays a crucial role in shaping the policies of states. News-based channels are also valuable in terms of making public perception as they have the capability of interpreting the meaning for their users (Pavelka et al, 2014). The bridge between people and policymakers is none other than the media, which is why they tend to be well informed about the content of the media regarding people's opinions, whereas, people are also very dependent on media as it is a vital means of their information regarding doings of policymakers. According to Soroka (2003), Media's role is unavoidable these days as the

effects it can have on people range from local to the global level and from personal level to national level. Media's importance is double-fold now as it can alter the priorities of a person at the individual level and society overall, regarding policies on foreign affairs and ties among the people of various countries.

Media framing and critical discourse analysis

Ahmed (2018) explained that President Trump's controversial tweet against Pakistan started a war of words between the officials of the countries and the media from both sides. The media framing from both sides of the newspapers was analyzed and for this purpose, Dawn and The News were selected from Pakistan and the New York Times (NYT) and Washington Post (WP) were shortlisted for research purposes. The chosen articles were assessed on the basis of vocabulary used, in what manner clash was presented, what the sources were, the nature of relevant issues and how and in what ways the media put emphasis on certain aspects. Findings revealed that Pakistani media used bitter words as compared to that of Americans which used comparatively lenient words. Pakistani media just reported the military or other state representatives' stance, whereas US media reported the stances from both countries and reported the event more objectively than that of Pakistani media.

This study is designed to assess Chinese and Pakistani Media framing of the project CPEC, to evaluate in what manner it is being projected in news reports. Furthermore, it is also targeted to detect what specific aspects of the project are being focused on by the official Facebook accounts of the selected newspaper.

Selected Newspapers' Facebook Pages

There are even many news media organizations that have winded up their traditional media set-up to be shifted to social media. Now almost every considerable media organization has its own social media platform.

The News

The News is the largest English daily in Pakistan. The News was published as a daily from Lahore, Islamabad, Karachi and many other big cities simultaneously. Its international editions are also published in many international cities.

Country: Pakistan

Owner: Jang Group

Founded: February 11, 1991

Headquarters: Karachi

Circulation: 140,000

Following on the Official Facebook Page: 0.4 million.

People's Daily China

People's Daily China is one of the most-read newspapers in China. This newspaper considered as Central Committee of the Communist Party's official newspaper. With a circulation of 3 million, it is one of the biggest newspapers in the world. Other than the Chinese language, it has many editions in other languages as well, English, Japanese, French and Spanish are few to mention. It is also referred to as the mouthpiece of the Communist Party of China.

Country: China

Owner: Central Committee (Communist Party of China)

Founded: June 1948

Language: Chinese and many other international

Headquarters: Beijing

Circulation: 3 million

Following on the Official Facebook Page: 77 million

Research Questions

How frequently CPEC issue is being discussed on newspapers' Facebook pages?

Which of the countries' media is giving more coverage to the project CPEC?

What specific aspects of CPEC Pakistani media underline?

What specific aspects of CPEC Chinese media focus?

How and in what ways newspapers' Facebook pages are treating (Positive/Negative) CPEC issues in a given period?

Methodology

The purpose of the research was to assess the media framing of Chinese and Pakistani media on the CPEC project, so, as per the essence of the study, it was assumed that the content analysis methodology would be appropriate for data collection from newspapers' official social media (Facebook) pages. The establishment of a well-established coding sheet is crucial before collecting data for the research relevant to content analysis. For this, the below-mentioned categories and sub-categories are established, based on the related aspects, frequency, and tilt.

(a) Economy (b) Development (c) Social(d)Political (e) Strategic (f) Other

After making categories and sub-categories, the official Facebook pages of the following newspapers were visited.

1. The News
2. People's Daily China

Every post was counted and categorized as per the above-mentioned aspects and then was further tagged concerning their "Positive", "Negative" and "Neutral" tilt.

The population of this research is comprised of all news posts by Chinese and Pakistani newspapers' on CPEC. The unit of analysis in the present study is all posts related to CPEC one Pakistani and one Chinese Newspapers. To be on the safer side, the whole population is taken, and fortunately, we can perform an analysis of every CPEC-related post of selected media outlets "The News and People's Daily China" from January 2015 to Sep 2019.

Findings and Discussions

The purpose of the study was to perform an analysis of the CPEC-related posts from Chinese and Pakistani newspapers, within the

selected period. The research was designed to achieve certain objectives about CPEC like media coverage, media weightage, media portrayal, highlighted aspects, and media

treatment. Research questions were developed to meet the objectives of the study. Through the research process and data collection, we have the following findings.

Demographics

Table 1

CPEC Coverage of "The News" (Posts)

Category	Total No of Positive Posts	Total No of Negative Posts	Total No of Neutral Posts	Total No of Posts
Development	17	00	09	26
Economy	33	08	02	43
Political	05	16	09	30
Social	02	00	00	02
Strategic	53	34	17	104
Other	16	16	29	61
Total	126	74	66	266

Table 1 shows CPEC coverage on the Pakistani newspaper "The News" Facebook page. It is shown that among 266 total posts on CPEC, in the chosen time span, 126 posts were positive regarding the project while 74 were negative

and the posts with Neutral tilt were 66. The Table also depicts that the maximum coverage was given to the "Strategic" aspect of the CPEC whereas the least discussed area was "Social" with just 2 posts on it.

Table 2

CPEC Coverage of "The News" (Words)

Category	No. of words used in Positive Posts	No. of Words Used in Negative Posts	No. of Words Used in Neutral Posts	No. of Words used in all Posts
Development	158	00	78	236
Economy	299	61	16	376
Political	40	127	70	237
Social	16	00	00	16
Strategic	463	280	138	881
Other	122	65	203	390
Total	1098	533	505	2136

Table 2 shows word-wise news coverage of the CPEC project on "The News" official social media account (Facebook). It was found that 2136 words were used in all posts of The News on the issue. A total of 1175 words were used in positive posts, 771 in negative and 505

words were utilized in Neutral posts. Moreover, it is also discussed that the maximum number of words (463) are used in the strategic aspect of the CPEC and only 16 words are used in the "Social" category of the table.

Table 3

CPEC Coverage of "The News" (Year-wise)

Years	Development	Economy	Political	Social	Strategic	Other	Total
2015	3	1	6	0	14	17	41
2016	6	6	16	2	36	13	79
2017	9	13	3	0	36	13	74

2018	5	18	4	0	16	17	60
2019	3	5	1	0	2	1	12
Total	26	43	30	2	104	61	266

The table also depicts the annual coverage of the project CEPC on "The News" social media account. The highest coverage of CPEC was

given in the year 2016 with 79 posts and only 12 posts were posted in the year 2019.

Table 4

CPEC Coverage of "People's Daily China" (Posts)

Category	Total No of Positive Posts	Total No of Negative Posts	Total No of Neutral Posts	Total No of Posts
Development	11	00	00	11
Economy	02	00	00	02
Political	02	00	00	02
Social	01	00	00	01
Strategic	07	00	00	07
Other	04	00	00	04
Total	27	00	00	27

Table 4 categorizes People's Daily China's Coverage of the CPEC issue. It is shown, that there is a total of 27 posts and all of them have a positive tilt. It is also observed that the

maximum covered aspect by the newspaper was "Development" with 11 posts on the issue whereas only 1 post was on the "Social" aspect of the CPEC.

Table 5

CPEC Coverage of "People's Daily China" (Words)

Category	No. of words used in Positive Posts	No. of Words used in Negative Posts	No. of Words used in Neutral Posts	No. of Words used in all Posts
Development	1982	00	00	1982
Economy	372	00	00	372
Political	408	00	00	408
Social	337	00	00	337
Strategic	1349	00	00	1349
Other	1382	00	00	1382
Total	5830	00	00	5830

In Table 5 it is shown that a total of 5830 words are used in all CPEC-related posts by People's Daily China and words are used for positive

posts. The category "Development" contains maximum words (1982) and "Social" aspects related posts only used 337 words.

Table 6

CPEC Coverage of "People's Daily China" (Year-wise)

Years	Development	Economy	Political	Social	Strategic	Other	Total
2015	3	1	0	1	3	2	10
2016	1	0	1	0	3	0	5
2017	3	1	1	0	0	1	6
2018	2	0	0	0	1	1	4

2019	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Total	11	2	2	1	7	4	27

Table 6 shows year-wise coverage of CPEC by People’s Daily China on their official social media account and it is depicted that maximum coverage was given by the

newspaper in the year 2015 it declined its annual coverage on CPEC as in 2019 there are only two posts on the issue.

Illustrations

Figure 1

Coverage of both newspapers’ Facebook pages on CPEC (Aspects)

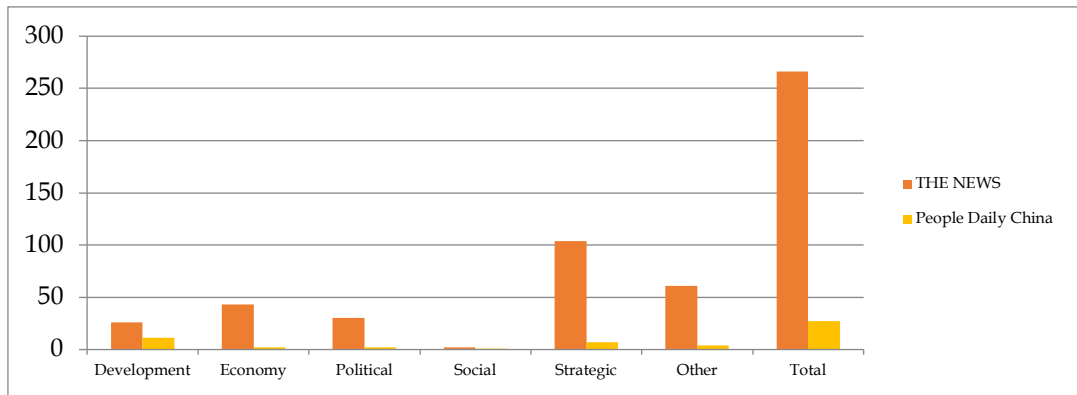


Fig 1 shows aspect-wise CPEC coverage by the selected newspapers and assessed that maximum coverage was given to the “Strategic” aspect of the CPEC and the least

covered aspect was “Social”. This table also shows that in comparison, The News has given more coverage to CPEC than People’s Daily China.

Figure 2

Coverage of both newspaper’s Facebook Posts on CPEC (Words)

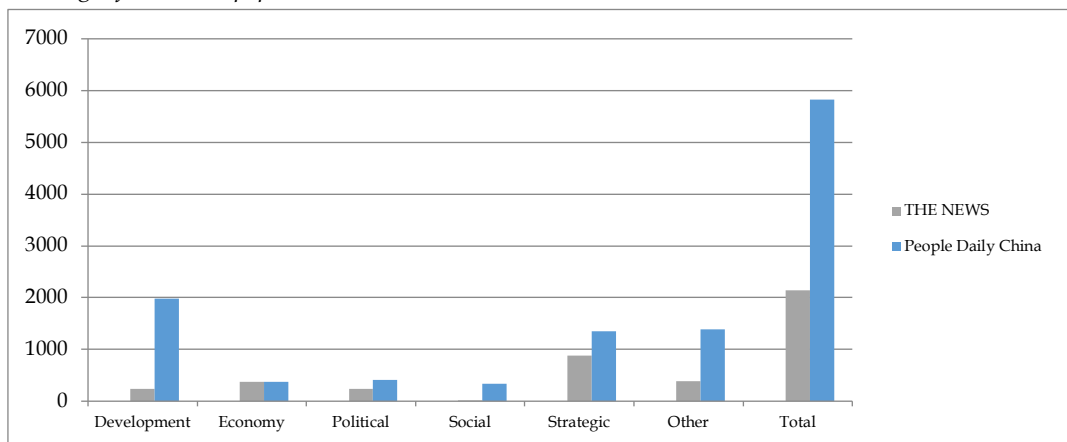


Fig 2 shows word-wise coverage of CPEC and interestingly found out that though in terms of CPEC-related posts, The News is unparalleled with 266 posts in comparison to People's Daily China's only 27 posts, in terms of number of

words in those posts People's Daily China is incomparable with 5830 words in these 27 posts, whereas the posts by The News only used 2136 words.

Figure 3

Coverage of both newspaper's Facebook posts on Positive Aspects of CPEC

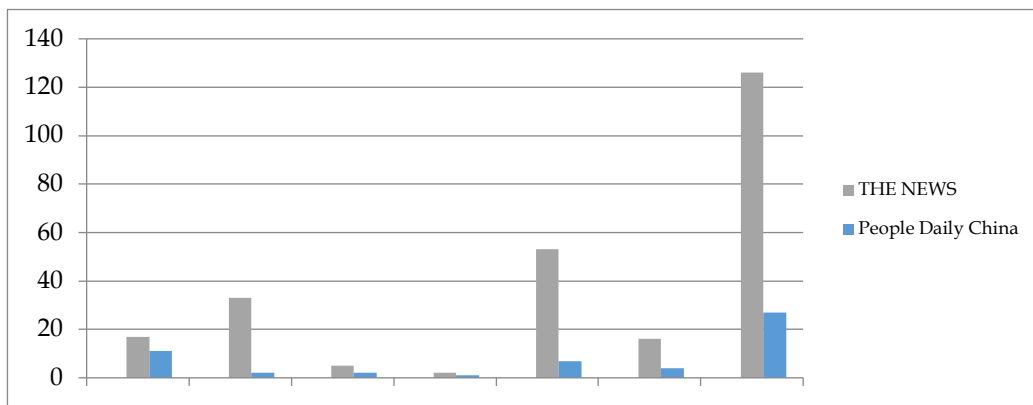


Fig 3 shows the comparison of total positive coverage by both newspapers. It shows that the maximum positive coverage of the CPEC

(126 posts) was given by The News whereas, in terms of numbers, there are 27 posts on CPEC by People's Daily China.

Table 7

Comparison of Pakistani and Chinese newspapers' Facebook pages on Positive, Negative and Neutral posts on CPEC

	The News	People's Daily China	Total	Percentage
Total No. of Posts	266	27	293	
No. of Positive Posts	126	27	153	52 %
No. of Negative Posts	74	00	74	25 %
No. of Neutral Posts	66	00	66	23 %

The table above shows the comparative analysis of both the newspapers on CPEC Coverage and depicts that a total of 293 posts have been posted by the selected newspapers, 266 by The News and 27 by People's Daily China. The lion's share is by positive posts with 52%, whereas the share of negative posts is just 25 % and the remaining share 23% is from neutral posts.

Conclusion

Overall speaking, this research has achieved the maximum of its objectives. Media Framing

of Chinese and Pakistani media on CPEC was analyzed. It determined how much coverage is being given to CPEC in Pakistani and Chinese media. It showed what aspects of CPEC are being highlighted and assessed that "strategic" aspects of CPEC were given the maximum coverage and its share in overall coverage was (38 %). This indicates, perhaps, that CPEC is being taken as more significant in terms of strategic influence than that of economic. The study compared the posts of two different newspapers' Facebook pages (The News, and People's Daily China) regarding CPEC. It found out that "The News"

gave more coverage to CPEC in a given period. Research also held a comparison between Pakistani and Chinese Newspapers' Facebook pages and found that in the number of posts, Pakistani media overshadowed the Chinese with 266 posts in comparison to 27 posts by Chinese media. But in terms of favourable coverage of the project (CPEC) Chinese media surpassed Pakistani media as every single post by People's Daily China holds a positive tilt, and not even a single post against it. It also

indicates that Chinese media is more restricted than that of Pakistanis.

In a nutshell, the overall CPEC coverage of both Pakistani and Chinese media was positively framed as out of a total of 293 posts from selected newspapers, 153 were positive (52 %). Whereas negative posts from all newspapers were 74 (25 %) while the rest of the posts (23 %) showed a neutral or a balanced approach.

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