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## Friends or Foes: An Editorial Discourse on Pak-US Relations

**Abstract:** *Historically, the relations between Pakistan and United States have hardly converged. Pakistan closely cooperated with US on the issues related to stabilization of peace, counter terrorism and on the issues concerning the presence of Osama bin Laden and Haqqani Network in Pakistan. Haqqani Network has been a source of diplomatic tension between United States and Pakistan relations. Therefore, the current study intends to examine that how the editorials of two English newspapers of Pakistani i.e., Dawn and The News covered Pak-US relations during the coverage of Haqqani Network by using the method of critical discourse analysis. The findings of the study revealed that the portrayal of Pak-US relations in both the newspapers is sympathetic towards Pakistan and at times contradictory. Moreover, both the newspapers have covered maximum themes and discourses which emphasized on negotiations between the three parties, trust deficit, and US confused strategy.*

**Key Words:** Haqqani Network, Pak-US relations, Critical Discourse Analysis, Pakistan, United States

### Introduction

Pak-US relations are like swing of pendulum, since they are based upon the quid pro quo policy which includes short term objectives and less long term strategies (Jones, 2007). US officials and their think tanks responsible for making strategies are of the opinion that Pakistan is showing less seriousness to fight against terrorism, to get rid of terrorist and particularly failed to protect their own homeland from terrorism (Waldman, 2010). According to (Haley, 2018) Pakistan is an ally of war against terrorism and also responsible for providing intelligence support, logistics and mutual corporation. US also provides coalition support and military aid to Pakistan to fight against terrorists. Despite of support and corporation

there is always mistrust between the two countries because US always blame Pakistan for playing a double game. Moreover, US is also concerned about the alleged connections of Pakistan military and security agencies with Haqqani Network and Taliban. Being an unequal ally the widen trust deficit has affected relations between both the countries. (Abbas et al., 2018).

This contest/rumors of having alleged connections of Haqqani Network with Pakistan security agencies added a new flavor when media started its debate on who is Haqqani network? This question appears to be the real contention between both the countries because both have different versions about their presence and activities (Ahmed, I., 2018). According to the report by Voice of America, Haqqani network is

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a militant group who continue to fight against the US forces and Afghans, also this group is considered as one of the most lethal militant group functional in Afghanistan. Jalaluddin Haqqani, a former anti-Soviet commander in Afghanistan, was the founder of this network and later he handed over command to his son Sirajuddin Haqqani, who is now acting as a deputy leader. According to US officials Haqqani Network is reportedly based in Miram Shah, which is located in Federally Administrated Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan. Afghan leaders and US officials long accused Pakistan security agency ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence) of giving sanctuaries to this terrorist group (VOA, 2017). Whereas, Pakistan said during US attack on Afghanistan, majority of Taliban moved across Pakistan's border and were regrouped. This regrouping included Haqqani Network, and they started operating from Miram Shah one of the towns based in North Waziristan. In this regard, both Pakistan and United States conducted several operations for clearing these groups and the most intensified military operation was launched by Pakistan in 2014 which forced militants to run over the border or to go underground (Dawn, 2018).

Based on differences that who is Haqqani Network? Relations between both the countries faced trust deficit. Moreover, US always wanted Pakistan to do more against the Haqqani Network specifically on Pakistan's soil, but Pakistan consistently claim that after the military operations Haqqanis' have moved to Afghanistan. Like worlds media, print media of Pakistan also covered Haqqani Network and the editorials specifically highlighted Pak-US relations. Therefore, the present study examined Pak-US relations during the coverage of Haqqani Network. The objective of the paper is to analyze the portrayal of Pak-US relations in the editorials of Dawn and the News during the coverage of Haqqani Networks. The current study employed the method of critical discourse analysis and examined styles, themes and discourses used in the editorials of both the English newspapers of Pakistan. The current analysis on Pak-US relations is still relevant and significant because the situation between both the countries is almost the same. Both countries are still partners in war

against terrorism. This thorough investigation of discourses, styles and themes would be valuable in understanding the role of editor and it will extend the current literature on critical discourse analysis of Pak-US relations in the context of Haqqani network.

## Literature Review

Over the years, Pakistan's relationship with United States is of withdrawal and engagement. Military and civil elites of Pakistan have sought to maintain long-lasting and stable relations with United States (Cohen & Wells, 2004). History also demonstrated that the geostrategic location of Pakistan in South Asia has brought both countries together into alliance (Malik & Zaman 2013). Fair (2012) has defined the state of bilateral relationship and working cooperation between both the countries which primarily includes ten long years of war against terrorism. This course of relationship between both countries remained arduous because future course of action between both the countries was followed by the most dominant factor of trust deficit. Also 9/11 tragedy has altogether changed the nature of relation and level of engagement between both countries (Ahmed & Kharal, 2015).

After the tragic happening of 9/11 Pakistan's media gave full coverage to all the events which specifically covered Pak-US relations. A significant change was observed in print media discourse in terms of employing visual practices and different linguistics structures to disseminate specific ideology of target readers. Dijk (2006) proposed that discourses used by print media serve as a prism that reflects the selected version of reality which keeps the target audience updated with global changes related to political scenario. Based on Dijk's preposition on print media discourses (Sajid & Khan 2020) conducted semiotic discourse analysis on Pak-US relations. They examined Dawn newspaper of Pakistan and concluded that a change was observed in print media discourses i.e., Pakistan is a sovereign state who refused a '**DO More**' mantra for US. The discourses showed that Pakistan can stand at its own thus rejected US for becoming a playful thing.

Naseer and Khan (2020) investigated portrayal of Pak-US relations by analyzing editorials of two US dailies The New York Times and Washington Post. Results reveal that both dailies portrayed Pakistan negatively particularly on the issues related to terrorism. Ayoub & Ahmed (2013) conducted a study on the portrayal of Pak-US relations and analyzed two newspapers i.e., Dawn and The Nation in the context of Drone attacks in Waziristan. Results showed hypocrisy in diplomatic policy of United States, both the newspapers negatively covered Pak-US relations. In another study researchers analyzed 128 articles from two US news magazines "Newsweek" and "Time" to study depiction of Pakistan and it was observed that both news magazines gave unfavorable coverage of Pakistan (Ali et al., 2013).

Ahmed (2016) stated that policy makers and media practitioners have keen interest in investigating Pak-US relations despite of up and downs, since they have great importance with in social defense, economy and financial aid, instructive and social context of Pakistan. Hussain (2016) said that currently US is ultimate authority, therefore studies on Pak-US relations is of great importance (particularly in the areas of Pakistan and South and west Asia a key area of international politics). Therefore, the present study examined Pak-US relations with reference to Haqqani Network. Haqqani Network has raised several questions on civil-military leadership in terms of having vague policy towards US and this event altogether changed political discourse of Pakistan i.e., not to do more. The study examined the discourses used by the editorial writer of Dawn and The News. Studying editorials is of great importance because they are form of persuasive text which attracts the reader and researchers by expressing their ideological views on controversial happenings (Lee & Lin, 2006). Therefore, method of critical discourse analysis is used to examine style, themes and discourses covered by both the newspapers with reference to Pak-US relations.

## Research Questions

The study incorporated following research questions

**RQ1:** *How Dawn and The News covered Pak-US relations in their editorials during the coverage of Haqqani Network?*

**RQ2:** *How Dawn and The News covered themes in their editorials about Pak-US relations during the coverage of Haqqani Network?*

**RQ3:** *How Dawn and The News constructed discourses in their editorials about Pak-US relations during the coverage of Haqqani Network?*

## Methodology

The present study intends to analyze Pak-US relations during the coverage of Haqqani Network in the editorials of two English newspapers of Pakistan i.e., Dawn and The News. Newspapers are chosen based on reliability, availability, and also due to their powerful impact on readers understanding and the purpose of topic, and then accordingly to make the skyline of mind wider (Dominick 1993). Topic selection of Haqqani Network is based on the bilateral relation between Pakistan and US, and the mutual cooperation on issues related to terrorism. The present study analyzed 23 editorials from April 2011-December 2011. According to (Hall, 1996, p. 26) editorials have a lot of significance because they construct and shape the ideology in reader's mind whereby ideology is described as the cognitive framework of symbolic representation of images, language, concepts and categories. Moreover, qualitative research design is best suited for the current study, therefore researcher employed critical discourse analysis to examine editorials of selected newspapers. Dijk's (1998) framework of critical discourse is preferred to examine editorials of selected newspapers at micro and macro level. Following Van Dijk's approach, the present study analyzed language of the editorials in terms of vocabulary specifically indicating imposition, semantic relations between words and phrases, and some other explanatory ingredients (e.g. styles, themes and discourses) that give coherence within the content.

## Results and Discussion

**RQ1:** *How Dawn and The News covered Pak-US relations in their editorials during the coverage of Haqqani Network?*

Editor of Dawn followed ultra-military stance which is clear from choice of words like “*hydra-headed monster*” which cannot be vanished till the time its tentacles remained unfound ever after the significant cleansing through operations (Crime and Terrorism, Dawn, October15, 2011). Dawn editor used interrogative style of writing by stating that “*a beleaguered Pakistan will not be blunt if it asks its ‘ally’ America: is this the final fruit that Pakistan will have to reap after all sacrifices of a decade long faithful following of America’s war on terror*” (Excluding Pakistan, Dawn, February27, 2011). While stating about the US report editor used “*inbuilt cynicism*” to explain the frailties of civilian government (US report, Dawn, April08, 2011).

Some other heavy loaded words used by Dawn editor while narrating about uncomfortable truth relates to the “*Frankenstein’s monster*” which explains “*a terrible*”, “*endless nightmare*” (Militants godfather, Dawn, January25, 2011). Dawn editor counts risk for Pakistan particularly after US embassy attack in Kabul. It has launched a new hateful discourse i.e., ‘*HAQQANI-ISI nexuses*. In response to this hateful discourse civilian government called for all parties conference to find out counter strategy against this hateful discourse and quoted “*a conference such as this runs the risk of degenerating into a platform for all manner of hawkish, inflammatory statements whose primary purpose would to play to ---to create---a gallery of affronted Pakistanis*” (Civilian response, Dawn, September 27, 2011). While writing about military response ‘*the hawks*’ described those in our politics who are always ready to exploit any situation in favor of anti-American emotions (Army’s response, Dawn, September25, 2011).

Dawn became more aggressive and sarcastically used words like “*extended cooperation*”, “*footprints*” and “*covert programmes*”. These words on one side explain cooperation between two and on the other side it explains American footprints on Pakistani soil which further describes different operations by Americans in order to have more drone attacks in Pakistan (Possible comprise, Dawn, April15, 2011). Editor categorically mention the role of

Pakistan military establishment in protecting the militants from a long time, which again is a big blunder by them. Therefore, editor discussed the solution in the statement “*denying sanctuary to militants there is therefore a necessary, though not sufficient, condition for moving forward in the fight against militancy*” i.e., to launch a full fledged, crippling attack on these militants (North Waziristan operation, Dawn, June01, 2011).

The News editorials used ‘*double edged sword*’ a policy which calls for action against Haqqani Network from Pakistan by US government (Growing Gulf, The News, September23, 2011). Since US government has doubts on Pakistan with its secret relations with Haqqani networks, therefore in response then COAS categorically said that Pakistan military will not launch any operation neither the army is accountable for unsteady Pak-US relations (The News, US Confusion October 15, 2011). Also the “*coordination along the Pak-Afghan border and the denial of safe havens to militants are necessary for ensuring the security of all three nations*” (Military Positions, Dawn, December 03, 2011).

Editor during the coverage of Haqqani Network stated that “*A unilateral military move by the US will only accentuate US-NATO security problems and cause yet another crisis in relations with Pakistan*” (Offensive Mode, The News, October18, 2011). The statement clearly indicates that Afghan leaders raised questions on Pakistan’s government, as they failed to fulfill the promise for reconciliation. The relations with Afghans were not only affected but The News editor also mentioned the fading relations of Pakistan with US and quoted “*America has delivered, not just a warning, but a substantial slap on the wrist that is going to eat into the already corroded relationship between Pakistan and the US*” (Clinton’s Message, The News, October22, 2011). Editor critically used ‘*double game*’ in the editorial which explains that America is exploiting Pakistan because they have planned objectives as well as regional interests (Growing Gulf, The News, September23, 2011).

**RQ2:** How Dawn and The News covered themes in their editorials about Pak-US

relations during the coverage of Haqqani Network?

Both the newspapers covered Pak-US relations by using diverse themes specifically about Haqqani Network. Some themes were related to blame game of Pakistan military and civil leadership with US and some were related to bilateral/strategic relations with Afghanistan. In this context Dawn covered theme of “*US accusation*” which explains irrational claim of Mike Mullen about the involvement of Pakistan’s security agency in an attack on US embassy in Kabul, importantly the man making the claim is now retired. With this foolish claim, editor further mentioned that MS Clinton is of the opinion that US should continue its aid to Pakistan which is further referred to Mike Mullen statement that US is clear about is

benefits that is to continue its aid to Pakistan and on the other hand US will carry out attacks on the name of terrorism (*US allegations*, Dawn September 24 2011).

The statement “*The road ahead in terms of relationships between the two countries may be a rocky one over the months ahead.*” (*Rocks on the road*, The News, September 21, 2011) mentioned in one of the editorial by The News clearly justify two themes i.e. “*Disbelief on Pakistan*” (Equal Partners? The News, September 18, 2011) and another similar theme as “*Obstacles in Relationships*”, both themes clearly defines that editor wants to explain US distrust on civil-military leadership because US thinks Pakistan security agencies have secret ties with Haqqani Network.

**Table 2.** Themes about Haqqani Network

Themes	Dawn total no of Editorials	The News total no of Editorials
Fiddly Relations with United States	4	3
Vague US Strategy for Pakistan	3	2
Negotiations between big three	3	2
Now or Never	2	1
Understands the intricacy	1	2
Total Number of Editorials	13	10

Another prominent theme covered by Dawn editor relates to “*Contention of American officials*” which explains doubts of President Obama on whether or not Pakistan security agencies were secretly assisting Haqqani Network and it also explains the ill intentions and misconduct of US commander which states that Pakistan has a planned strategy to kill American soldiers in Afghanistan (Mismanagement of ties, Dawn, October 2, 2011). Editor statement “*Leon Panetta and Hillary Clinton states that much still needs to be done to restore trust and confidence between the two states*” (*US-Pakistan Ties*, Dawn, August 18, 2011) in the editorial by Dawn covers the theme “*Renewed US-Pakistan dealing*” relates to the restoration of trust and confidence between Pakistan and US.

Frustration from the horse mouth of Admiral Mike Mullen covered by Editor of The News mentioned rocky Pak-US relations which

narrates the theme of “*Fiddly Relations with United States*”. The theme expresses that the statement by Mike Mullen is unjustified, moreover US officials denied send their forces to North Waziristan. The same theme also covered another statement which expresses the bilateral relations between the two and i.e., “*Pakistan did not bother to pen a formal bilateral agreement with the US on the terms of the war*” (The News, *Back from the Brink*, October 2, 2011). “*Conversation about Harmony and Warfare*” explains the positive gesture of Clinton, this specific gesture lead towards the doors opened for negotiations between the two, but not at the cost of eradicating the Haqqani Network which would eventually end up in ceasefire with Afghanistan (The News, *Talking Peace and War*, October 15, 2011). Dawn editor narrated similar theme “*Negotiation between the big-three*”. This theme explains the need of negotiations among the three i.e., Pakistan, US and Afghanistan, but

at the same time it is to be kept in mind that negotiations would be possible based on taking necessary actions by civil-military leadership of Pakistan to eliminate Haqqani Network and secondly not to send the American forces to Afghanistan (*Afghan Reconciliation*, Dawn, October 27, 2011).

The News editor covered an interesting theme “*Now or Never*” which explains the never ending saga i.e., the intensification of rhetoric among the two countries highlighting the word ‘enemies’ struggle for their fight against war on terror, yet another sign of hostility which triggered from Abbottabad raid. So, this event has raised the political temperature among the two (The News, *Growing Gulf*, September 23, 2011). Another sundry theme covered by The News editor is “*Understands the intricacy*”. The theme explains problems faced by Afghans because of Americans hostility and anger which they failed to realize. The growing anger in American Senate was due to the lack of understanding by Americans i.e., before starting the war they failed to foresee the location of Afghanistan which is multidimensional and intricate, hence it represents a wider view of American politics (*What Next?* The News, September 24, 2011). Lastly, the theme covered by The News is “*Vague US Strategy for Pakistan*” which narrates inconsistent policy of US on Haqqani Network and for Pakistan as whole. The US strategy explain terms of commitment, firstly to avoid operational irritants and secondly doubtful attitude towards civil-military leadership (*US Confusion*, The News, October 18, 2011).

**RQ3:** *How Dawn and The News constructed discourses in their editorials about Pak-US relations during the coverage of Haqqani Network?*

### **Dawn Editorial Discourses**

Dawn no doubt constructed discourses which were argumentative, yet they significantly highlight the strategic ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan. So, discourses by Dawn are *sacred duty*, *Chaos and Anarchy*, *Forth light*, *Officialdom*, *Reiterated*, *Rhetoric for Rhetoric*.

Dawn also used discourses with reference to negotiations between Pakistan, US and Afghanistan and such discourses are *Salutary effect*, *Hurl accusation*, *Rupture*, *Pragmatic understanding*, *Plummeting*, *very unfortunate and disturbing*, *Hysteria*, *Unified Voice*, *Tenuous*, *Implode*, *Curbed*.

### **The News Editorial Discourses**

Editorials of The News made such discourses which impacted diplomatic side of US and Pakistan. The discourses are *bookends of terrorism*, *Fare in a buckle-knuckle bout*, *Collision course*, *Diplomatic chill*, *quibbling over*, *Rotor Blades*, *Operating from its soil*. Some of the discourses were related to secret relations of Pakistan with Haqqani Network, thus playing the blame game with America for example *The feel of a watershed moment*, *Unilateral strike*, *Substantial and candid*, *to heft them up*, *Skating on thin ice*

### **Conclusion**

It is concluded that there has been situational based relationship between Pakistan and US. It has been observed that both the countries supported each other on many occasions depending upon their mutual interests. Editors of both newspapers also mention that relations between both countries have faced a setback due to unexpected events specifically 9/11 attack. Coverage of Pak-US relations in both newspapers remained the same i.e. at times sympathetic and contradictory. Both newspapers explain that weak civil-military leadership is one of the most important factors which has affected Pak-US relations because Pakistan lacked in developing a counter strategy to deal with US confused strategy. Editorials of both newspapers also covered themes like reconciliation with Afghanistan, and lack of trust as one of the most dominating themes which resulted in rocky Pak-US relations. Lastly, editors of both the newspapers recommended that it is suitable for both the countries to reformulate their relationship by emphasizing on convergence and cooperation, and to work in partnership with each other for ensuring noteworthy successes.

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