



## Do International News Agencies Set the Agenda of Pakistani English Newspapers? A Critical Analysis of Three English Dailies of Pakistan



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**Abstract:** *The aim of this study is to measure the reliance of the Pakistani English press on international news agencies. Quantitative content analysis was done to see the level of reliance. A ten-year period has been selected for analysis starting from 9/11. International pages of three English newspapers were selected. The results indicated that there is very small contribution of the newspapers in the case of international news content, they mostly rely on foreign content and publish the same. Pakistani newspapers hardly try to appoint their correspondents and resultantly they have to copy the same content available by international news agencies e.g., AP, AFP & Reuter. The study considered the theory of media imperialism and the results endorse the age-old central verses peripheral relationship with developed countries and the developing nations which still persist.*

**Key Words:** Developed Countries, Developing Nations, Foreign Content, Media Imperialism, Peripheral

### Introduction

South Asian nations cover a good part of the globe; that is why happenings and events occurring across the Muslim world catch attention from media across the globe. In an

overtly uni-polar world, centering the US, the global media follows a different trend in their portrayal of news stories. The free flow of information and the advancements in

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communication technologies are the dominant doctrines of today's life. The global press contributes toward internationalization and constructs influential global news agenda. Global media provide information that enables the national media to think globally. Many people in developing countries think that the foreign press defines globalization as westernization by setting western ideologies as to be taken as norms by the national news providers (Boyd-Barrett, 2000). Though there are hundreds of globally influential media outlets, yet the most powerful and visible outlets are located in the United States. The most prominent among them are Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, and Christian Monitor etc. These newspapers services are also used by the national print media of Pakistan.

The global press holds a monopoly over news production; the major news content is provided by the transnational news-press. This content is most of the times published without any changes in the text in the national press of developing countries (Arya, 2011). Different researchers called and named this type of news material as "secondhand news" (Xie & Cooper-Chen, 2008), "journalistic plagiarism" (Lewis et al., 2008), "copied material" (Arya, 2011), "recycled news" (Frijters & Velamuri, 2009), "news borrowing" (Xie & Cooper-Chen, 2008) and "ready-made news" (Bredemeier-Garson, 2008).

"Churnalism" a term introduced by Davis (2008), presents kind journalism in which news stories are taken from news agencies and published in newspapers of recipient nations without further research or contribution. In short, the kind of journalism that presents news stories taken from foreign media to its own newspapers without altering it. Hence the

newspapers' staff does not contribute anything to the development of news (Johnston, 2011).

This reliance on the foreign press is overwhelming as Paterson (2005) noted that online news is the "*de facto duopoly* of Associated Press and Reuters". Arya (2011) concluded that "*Times of India* and *Hindustan Times* having a near-total dependence on international news agencies". Lewis (2008) found that "UK media are highly dependent on national and international news agencies for news contents". Shaheen (2014) concluded in the study on the news published on international pages of three newspapers are near complete replication of the original stories taken from the news feed of international news wires, with a very minimal original contribution by the most highly acclaimed newspapers of Pakistan. Johnston & Forde says that "this phenomenon of borrowed news leading to an even greater reliance on news agency copy than perhaps at any other time in news media history". "Breaking news in online newspapers is synonymous with wire service copy" (Johnston & Forde, 2009). Transnational news wires set the agenda through the selection of stories and the amount of visual they present to the recipient of both press and electronic media (Paterson, 2007).

Such kind of excessive copied and syndicated news influence and affect the national media as noted by Johnston; it is argued that the influence comes at two levels, first with regard to the choice of news stories and their different slant by the global press and second with regard to the selection of stories by their clients, i.e., media groups in terms of "follow up, reproduce with limited follow up or replicate word to word without the

contribution of their own journalists” (2011). Besova quoted Lippmann that the only connection with the outer world is the media, we don’t experience reality, and we rely on media for the construction of reality (2006). It is the media that provide us with the information about the war on terror and other events which happen in the outer world (Besova, 2006). Paterson noted that discourses on international events are determined by two transnational agencies, i.e., Reuters and AP (2007). The CEO associated press Thomas Curley called these news agencies as ‘unseen players of world landscape’ (Johnston & Forde, 2011).

Few media out-lets have their own network of correspondents, and this is the main reason news agencies made their contribution as providers of news content to the national media news agencies have the edge of deciding which issues to be selected and how they will be portrayed. They have the opportunity to build media agenda (Giffard & Leuven, 2008). Thusu and Boyd-Barrett found from the literature on news wires that there are different types of bias that can affect their coverage; the main is qualitative, which includes a political, social and foreign policy of the country in which the news wires operate, and the other is quantitative which means the selection of certain issues ignoring the others.

## Literature Review

The paper by Nossek (2004) was based on the basic assumptions of the theoretical perspective that how the international foreign media portray others versus ours. The journalists’ loyalty and disloyalty matter in covering the issues. The research argues that to

the issues to which journalists are loyal, they forget journalistic values and become ‘subordinate’ to their interests. The paper concludes that journalists also show disloyalty towards a few international issues.

Mitra (2015) studied the news routines and dependence of Indian newspapers on international news agencies, mainly AFP, AP & Reuters. He applied content analysis on foreign pages of ‘The Times of India’, the major English published from Hyderabad. The universe of the study was one month from 1<sup>st</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> Sep 2014, when India was going through major political and economic change. The main concern of the study was to see the newspaper’s selection criteria of news, the number of news covered by each news wire and which country was covered by which news agency. The study found that the news flow is unequal, mainly from developed to underdeveloped countries, which gives an advantage to the western states to control and set the news agenda for the remaining world. “The increasing commodification of news implies that the news created by the first world is sold to content starved markets in the developing world increasing their dependency, handicapping their economies, and influencing public opinions”.

As effectively examined earlier, Reuters, Associated Press (AP), and Agence France-Presse (AFP) are the major three offices of the world press. They manage the news stream in their household markets, as well as the world over. Almost all developing nations are reliant on them for the supply of world news. The frameworks in these international news offices are exceptionally productive in news assembling and additionally presentation of news, and this has given them an edge to

combine their business sector positions in and around the 3<sup>rd</sup> world (Harad, 2012).

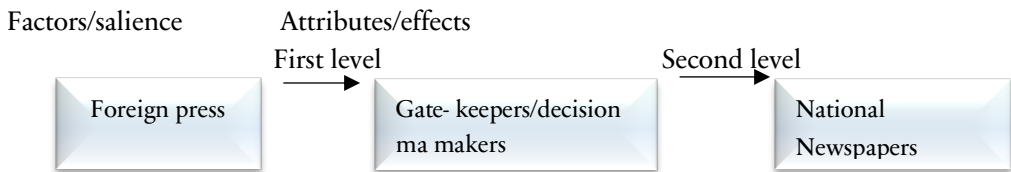
Earlier studies have shown that universal news is appropriated generally by Western news organizations. A study by Djosef & Huisman (2011) suggests that these discoveries that Reuters, AP, AFP and Bloomberg were and still are the real news organizations/providers utilized by major papers for content and pictures. The expanded pattern of utilization of transnational news offices is straightforwardly joined with the money related circumstance of newspaper organizations in the creating scene. The supply of global news from transnational news organizations liberates them of their need to contract outside reporters. Despite the fact that it has got to be simpler and less expensive for these papers to print outside news, it

additionally implies that the force of the Western news offices has gotten to be stronger and persuasive. Further, the news which is introduced appears to be from the west and about the west for the most part, with numerous parts of the world explicitly overlooked.

### Agenda Building

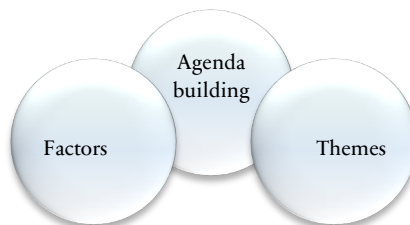
Foreign press highlights the salience and importance of particular news or event; since the press has power and tremendous outreach, the news is highlighted as a “significant event”. Keeping in view the international significance of the event, the gatekeepers (editors of local newspapers) immediately take notice of the news and accommodate it in their own newspaper, without considering that the news has some sense or similarity for the local readers.

The following figures further explain the importance of agenda building in the present study.



**Figure 1:** Agenda Building Model: The news routines portrayal at each of the two levels of Agenda Building,

The model shows the two different levels of agenda building. At the first level, the factors which influence the editors’ choices and make the news content becomes important for them. At the second level, the portrayal of news content is the reflection of the first level of agenda building.



**Figure 2**

The two levels of agenda building are applied in this study. At the first level, the input is the salience/factors that influence/effect the choices of the gatekeepers and at the second level, the output is the themes and factors derived from the news stories of the newspapers that are selected for analysis. Themes are the effect on the second level of agenda building. Themes are, in fact, attributes that cause effects. Attributes are measured through themes and direction of the content.

## Methodology

This study selected a time frame of ten years from post 9/11/2001 to 2011, i.e., (the death of Osama Bin Laden in the hands of the US forces). The underhand issue was also important to be researched in Pakistan that the death occurred in Pakistani territory, and the foreign press during the time period remained very active regarding the news supplies to Pakistan. It was selected for being the focus of massive media coverage worldwide as the first reaction was the deceleration of the War against Terror by the US. The context allows a simultaneous exploration of both global dynamics of news reporting and local coverage.

## Research Questions

**RQ 1:** What sources of information (frequency of global sources) are used by the three leading Pakistani national English newspapers, i.e., Dawn, The News, & The Nation?

**RQ 2:** Which of the three Pakistani national newspapers, Dawn, The News, & The Nation, has greater reliance over global news agencies in covering global issues, i.e., the global press considered more reliable?

**RQ 3:** Which category was given more coverage among all the selected categories in the English national press of Pakistan?

**Table 1.** Categories are Defined by Foreign Press Through Pakistani National Press (News Stories)

Afghanistan War	Positive portrayal	Neutral portrayal	Negative portrayal
Taliban	<i>Britain suggests a pro-Taliban role for Taliban members</i> (14 Nov 2001, The News, AFP)	<i>The US using chemical weapons, say Taliban</i> (31, Oct 2001, The Nation, AFP)	<i>US warplanes continue bombing Al Qaeda bases</i> (16 Jan 2002 The Nation, AFP)
	<i>US attack on Afghanistan would be futile</i> (12 Sep 2001, The Nation, AFP)		<i>19 dead after Taliban ambush Afghan police</i> (11 Jan 2006, The News, agencies)
ISAF forces in Afghanistan; NATO Arms Supplies	<i>Strikes on Afghanistan may trigger regional conflicts</i> (19 Sep 2001, The Nation, AFP)	<i>NATO launches rapid response force</i> (15 Oct 2003 The News, AFP)	<i>Us may ask NATO to take military charge of Iraq</i> (9 July 2003, The News, AFP)

Afghanistan War	Positive portrayal	Neutral portrayal	Negative portrayal
Aid and Humanitarian efforts by the US in Afghanistan	<i>EU pledges to help rebuild Afghanistan</i> (9 Jan 2002, The Nation, AFP) <i>Aiding poor will cut Bin Laden's pool of terror recruits</i> (31 Oct 2001, The News, AFP)	<i>Aid helps up for Afghanistan</i> (31 Oct 2001, The Nation, AFP)	<i>Aid held up for Afghanistan</i> (31, Oct 2001, The Nation)
Afghan Government	<i>Operation against terror must go to absolute end: Karzai</i> (30 January 2002, the Nation, AFP)	<i>Karzai appoints Dostum as deputy defence minister</i> (26 Dec 2001, The Nation, AFP)	<i>Heading the Afghans: a dangerous mission</i> (6 Oct 2004, Dawn, Reuters)
Al-Qaeda	<i>Britain urges US to respect Taliban, Al-Qaeda prisoners</i> (16 Jan 2002, the Nation, AFP)	<i>Al-Qaeda at a glance</i> (5 Sep 2002, The News, AFP)	<i>Al Qaeda has become a global insurgency</i> (10, Nov 2004, The Nation, AFP) <i>Threat from Iran and Al Qaeda growing: US</i> (28 Feb 2007, Dawn, Reuters)

**Table 2.** Categories are Defined by Foreign Press Through Pakistani National Press

Iraq War	Negative Category	Neutral category	Positive Category
Chemical Weapons & WMD	<i>Iraq makes key concession as west divides over war</i> (19 Feb 2003, The Nation, AFP) <i>Iraq to help inspectors iron out problems</i> (26 Feb 2003, The Nation, AFP)	<i>Little new in Iraq weapon report</i> (25 Dec 2002, The News, AFP)	<i>War could be started in a few days: AL chief</i> (26 Feb 2003, The Nation, AFP)
Image building of Saddam Hussein	<i>Saddam denies link with Al Qaeda</i> (5 Feb 2003, The Nation, AFP) <i>Saddam's character traits flash up in court</i> (30 Nov 2005, Dawn, Reuters)	<i>Saddam appears in court</i> (24 Aug 2005, Dawn, Reuters) <i>Saddam's palace vacated.</i> (2 Nov 2005, Dawn, AFP)	<i>Kill Saddam if capture too dangerous: US officials</i> (30 July 2003, The Nation, AFP) <i>Saddam's death sentences a milestone: US</i> (27 Dec 2006, Dawn, Reuters)
US and UN peacekeeper's role in Iraq	<i>Time for US leaders to negotiate a compromise on Iraq</i> (11 April 2007, Dawn, The Washington Post News Service) <i>UN key players closer to the accord.</i> (9 Oct 2002, The Nation, AFP)	<i>How Iraq referendum will work</i> (12 Oct 2005, Dawn, Reuters)	<i>Iraq to help inspectors iron out problems</i> (26 Feb 2003, The Nation, AFP)

Humanitarian efforts by the US	<i>Countries should share Iraq refugees burden</i> (Oct 2004, the Nation, AFP)	<i>US officials expect two million refugees</i> (26 Feb 2003, the Nation, AFP)	<i>Poor Iraqis crushed in war's aftermath</i> (11 April 2007, Dawn, AFP)
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## Analysis

**RQ 1:** What sources of information newspapers, i.e., Dawn, The News, &The (frequency of global sources) are used by the three leading Pakistani national English newspapers?

**Table 3.** Frequency of News on Foreign Pages during Sep, 2001- Sep, 2011 by Dawn

News Sources	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Total	
Frequency	76	116	115	71	51	59	50	49	40	35	20	681	
S. No	%												
1	AFP	43	35	38	49	47	47	38	37	30	34	55	41
2	AP	0	0	4	0	0	2	6	10	18	29	25	5
3	CM	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
4	GNS	7	10	12	11	12	8	10	10	10	0	5	9
5	IPS	4	4	3	4	10	0	0	0	0	0	5	3
6	LAT	5	5	5	6	0	8	12	8	10	0	5	6
7	Correspondent	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	6	0	1
8	No source	4	13	5	6	10	6	6	6	8	11	0	7
9	ONS	1	0	1	0	2	0	6	4	0	0	0	1
10	Reuters	29	24	20	23	19	29	22	24	20	20	5	24
11	WP	0	4	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

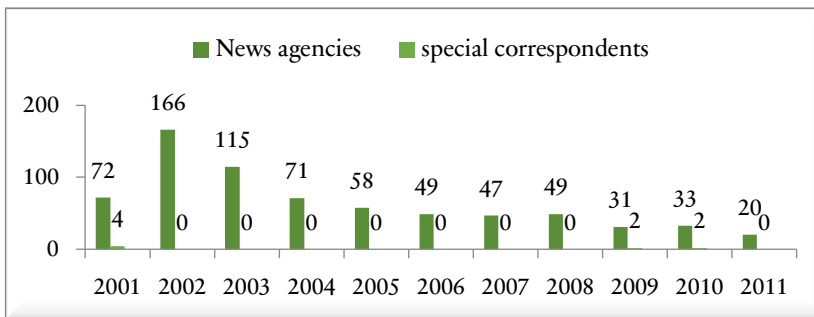
**Table 4.** Frequency of News on Foreign Pages during Sep, 2001- Sep, 2011 by The News

News Sources	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Frequency	41	94	92	74	49	43	41	36	28	26	18
AFP	78	69.1	68.4	70.2	63.2	62.7	58.5	56.7	67.8	53.8	61.1
AP	0	2.12	4.3	4.05	14.2	16.2	12.1	13.5	14.2	15.3	16.6
correspondent	0	0	0	0	2.04	2.3	12.1	10.8	3.57	7.6	5.55
No source	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3.8	0
Reuters	21.95	28.7	27.1	25.6	20.4	18.6	17.0	18.9	14.2	19.2	16.6
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

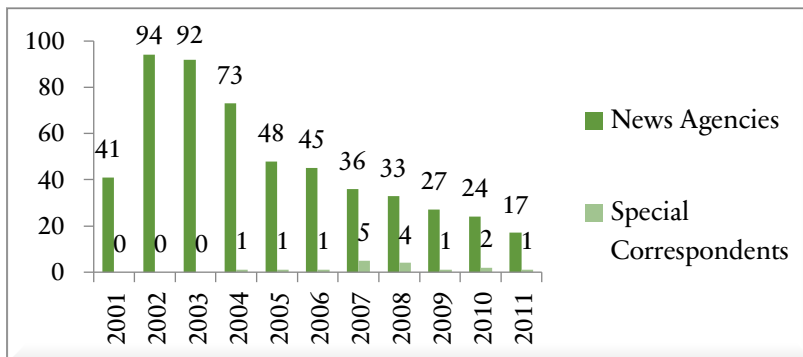
**Table 5.** Frequency of News on Foreign Pages during Sep, 2001- Sep, 2011 by The Nation

News agencies	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Frequency	67	84	76	72	51	41	39	35	27	23	16
S. No											
AFP	94.0	92.8	85	86.1	86.2	85.3	84.6	80	70.3	69.5	75
correspondent	2.9	4.7	7.89	9.7	5.8	9.7	10.2	17.1	14.8	13.0	12.5
No source	2.9	0	3.9	2.7	3.9	2.4	0	0	3.7	0	0
ONS	0	1.1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Reuters	0	0	0	1.3	3.9	0	2.5	2.8	11.1	13.0	6.25
Washington post	0	1.1	2.6	0	0	2.4	2.5	0	0	4.3	6.25
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

**RQ 2:** Which amongst the three Pakistani national newspapers; Dawn, The News, & The Nation has greater reliance over global news agencies in covering global issues i.e., the global press considered more reliable?

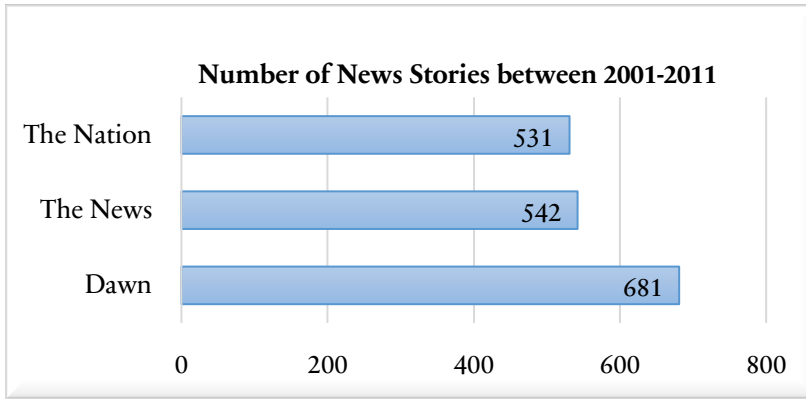


**Figure 3:** Number of news stories covered by special correspondents of newspapers The News 2001-2011

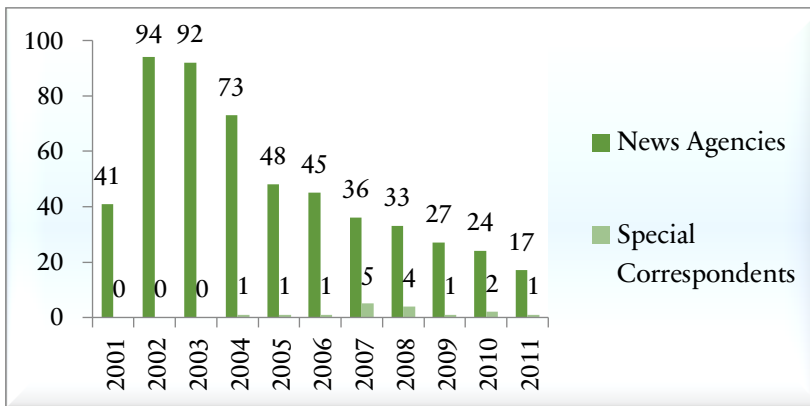


**Figure 4:** Number of News Stories Covered by Special Correspondents of Newspapers the Nation





**Figure 5:** Number of News Stories between 2011-2011



**Figure 6:** Number of News Stories Covered by Special Correspondents of Newspapers the Nation

**RQ 3:** Which Category was given more coverage among all the selected Categories in the National English Press of Pakistan?

**Table 6.** Sub-Categories of Afghanistan Category

	Frequency	%
Other than Afghanistan	1088	62.00
Taliban, US and Afghanistan, War on Terror, Osama, Mulla Omar	361	20.60
ISAF, NATO, Allies	88	5.00
Aid, Citizens, Refugees	56	3.20
Afghan Government	98	5.60
Al-Qaeda	64	3.60
Total	1755	100.00

**Table 7.** Sub-Categories of Iraq Category

	Frequency	Percent
Other than Iraq	1005	57.30
WMD, US Invasion, Inspectors	472	26.90
Saddam	139	7.90
US and UN	95	5.40
Humanitarian efforts	44	2.50
Total	1755	100.00

**Table 8.** Frequency of News Stories for Iran Category

	Frequency	Percent
Other than Iran	1428	81.40
Nuclear Enrichment, Sanctions	248	14.10
World powers	34	1.90
IAEA	45	2.60
Total	1755	100.00

## Conclusion

With the concept of “media power”, the study answers the questions as to what sources of information were used by three leading English dailies of Pakistan, i.e., Dawn, The News, and The Nation. This study investigated the level of dependence of the Pakistani English press on the global press and the effects of this dependence. For these purposes, three core issues of Post 9/11 era, i.e., the Afghan war, the Iraq war and Iran’s nuclear program, have been taken. Based on quantitative data, the study offers the following conclusions. The research showed that the top English

Newspapers in Pakistan depend more than 90 percent upon foreign news source. There are certain reasons behind such dependency, which include; inadequate financial resources, lack of human resource, and lack of coverage outreach. Additionally, the minimal number of foreign correspondents results in the dependence of the national press on the global press. The findings suggested that during the taken period of time, the national press of Pakistan played a role of facilitators in promoting a western view of the world issues.

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