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Pakistan- US Relations in Elite Press (2012-2013)

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Abstract: *Pakistan-USA relations have witnessed many ups and downs throughout the history of their interaction. The elite press on both sides played an important role in shaping and re-shaping attitudes, policies, and public opinion over various bilateral and regional issues. Post 9/11 situation expanded the part of the press on both sides due to war on terror cooperation and subsequent developments. Regime changes in America or Pakistan are often perceived as a harbinger of new policy shifts with anticipations of a new era of bilateral relations. The last year of the PPP government in Pakistan witnessed re-election of Barack Obama for the second term, but Pakistan's upcoming elections were more speculative in terms of office holder and the party. The scholar are divided about the role of the elite press in policymaking and influencing the policy-making process through their content and issue projection. But the press on both sides published their approaches through editorials over a number of issues that could be major component of the upcoming government's policy-making process. War on terror, political discourse, religion, and politics remained choices for editorials for Daily Dawn and Washington Post during that period of time.*

Key Words: Elite press, PPP government, War on Terror, Foreign policy, Pak-US, Editorials

Introduction

Media has become the fastest medium for the spread of information in the previous decades of the 21st century. The emergence of electronic media via satellite and mushrooming of social and digital media platforms accelerated the flow of information. It is an undeniable fact that media shapes minds and perspectives and even influence policy-making towards other states. The media speculations in the editorials and the opinions of the journalists inflict formidable influence over the mindsets of the policymakers. The current information mediums have made the broadcast of the news rapid and easy, which ultimately sheds an impact over the minds of people and the policy formation instruments.

Pakistan-USA relations have always been of vital importance since the initial years of Pakistan. The course of history shows frequent ups and downs in the relationship, which changed during various governments on both sides. The Republicans and Democrats formulated their policies toward Pakistan with changing circumstances and the changes in Pakistan's power structure. The civil and military regimes of Pakistan were perceived differently in the US, and the same perceptions influenced policy-making toward Pakistan in the US. The 9/11 attacks on World Trade Centre changed the whole course of international politics. It also changed the troubled relationship between the US and Pakistan. The US blamed Al Qaida and declared war against terrorism to avenge the heinous attack on the citizens. Afghanistan became a prime target due to its

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facilitation and sheltering of Al Qaida leader Osama Bin Laden, and its members.

Pakistan became a pivotal state during the war against its neighboring state, Afghanistan. General Pervez Musharraf decided to support the US war effort as an ally of the US. The war against terrorism continued even after the power shift from Musharraf to Pakistan People's Party government. President Asif Ali Zardari retained Pakistan's support in the war effort against terrorism. But the relationship between both was a bit hampered due to demands of 'do more' and consistent blame game from the hawks from the US.

The years 2012 and 2013 witnessed the democratic transition of the government in Pakistan. The last days of the PPP government before the elections witnessed speculations about foreign and domestic policy after elections. In 2012, Raja Pervez Ashraf became Prime Minister on 22 June 2012 and left the country up till the elections. During these seven months, Pakistan-US relations were intensive due to Sala Check Post-incident, which led NATO supply blockade and its re-opening issue. Pakistan demanded an apology from the US while the latter remained silent over the issue. Later on, the US officials visited Pakistan to normalize the relations. Some other issues, such as US aid to Pakistan, blasphemous movie release in the US, and drone attacks over Pakistani territories, overshadowed the relationship and created room for speculations and rumors.

The inter-election period witnessed another round of speculations and opinions about the next winner of the elections. The press and opinion writers predicted various courses of action in the future if any party won the elections. The previous course of events and upcoming situations were analyzed under different variables. Obviously, the elite press dominated the minds of readers and the policymakers in particular. PML (N) attained majority votes in the elections and became a majority party in the parliament. Till that period, press content was important to understand how they were thinking about the future policy preferences from both sides.

Media plays an important role in shaping opinions among the public and policymakers

about foreign policy towards other stakeholder states. The elite press, undoubtedly, has always been key players in the formulation of foreign policy and influencing the policymakers through their arrangement of the news, content policy, editorials, and columns.

Research Questions

The study will examine the portrayal of the relations between Pakistan and The USA in the context of the following research questions.

1. Did elite press projected positivity from Pakistan towards the United States during that phase?
2. Did the US pressed project a hopeful stance during the last phase of the PPP government and during the election period?
3. How far was optimism given a chance to implement counter-terrorism strategies from both sides?

Literature Review

The elite press and its role in shaping opinions about foreign policy have been a matter of discussion since the 1950's. The considerable pioneer work was presented in this regard by Bernard Cecil Cohen in 1963 titled "Press and Foreign Policy". Cohen presented elaborative and emphatic role of the press in the formulation of foreign policies of the states (Cohen 1963). Dr. Mughees Uddin takes the case of the press and editorials in the formulation of foreign policy in the US and opines that media has a subtle role in policymaking at the official level. According to him, in developed nations, the media is more independent and free to make its assessments. The opinion have less role in policy framework, and they do not exercise effective influence over processes of foreign policymaking (Uddin 2010, vol. 11:2).

Krishnaith has an opposite opinion to Mughees and focuses on the role of media in the formulation of foreign policy. He emphasizes that the US media not only has a dominating role in building public opinion as a propaganda tool but also it influences the decision-making process over national and international issues. For him, foreign policy is

among the important issue influenced by the media.(Jothik Krishnaith 1993).

Deeba Shahwar is of the view that mass media in the US has a pivotal role in shaping public opinion, which, one way or the other, influence the policy maker's approach vis-à-vis foreign or domestic issues.(Shahwar 2014). Sharaf N Rehman analyzed the role and influence of the media as an agent of propaganda machine during US Presidential Elections. The research provided two ways to influence over the public and even over the state to re-consider policies. The most recent role of media in propaganda is elaborated by Anderson as a lethal weapon whose ideology is transmitted and accepted by innumerable subordinate groups.(Rehman Jan/Feb 1992). In view of Edward Said, Us media play a pivotal role in information of public opinion and their influence on the US interests, which ultimately lead to policymaking.(Said Vol 25/2 1998).

The study by Khan and Irteza explores criticism and its dimensions towards Pakistan during the war on terror. It refers that Pakistan's position and role as an ally of the US and its sacrifices were not enough to mold public opinion. At the same time, the criticism had some impact over the policymakers too (MA. Khan 2010).

Another study by Ali and Qadir made an assessment of the attitude of the US media towards six Muslim countries. The content analysis of the two prominent US magazines categorized the Muslim states into pro and anti US zones. The study reveals that most of the US magazines showed a positive attitude towards the allied Muslim countries, including Pakistan_(K 2012). Zahid explores Pakistan-US relations in the elite press from both states during the PPP government. His conclusion reveals that Pakistan's elite press provided more coverage of Pak-US relations than the US elite press, which remained silent over certain issues. The major US newspapers remained intensive over foreign policy and mostly either criticized or remained silent over many issues_(Yousaf 2012). The recent scholarly works perceive the role of media in foreign policy as a key factor of policy components. A study by Simon Foley discussed the role of media in propaganda

which re-shapes mindsets of not only the public but also influence to policymakers at large. In the 21st century, media would major stakeholders of policy and public opinion (Foley 2021) n.

Margaret Cissel interpreted the role of media in framing opinions as a two way process which influence governing bodies and the public simultaneously. According to study, media covers two news events in different ways with strong or weak use of language, particularly in terms of tone and themes of the news stories. This leads to changes in perception in the minds of people and the policy makers and obviously personal biases are difficult to shed off and influence decision making_(Cissel 2012, Vol.3 No.1). Chanan Naveh relates media with the policy-making process through strands of political economy, communication policy, communication regime and impacts of its news value over minds of the public and policymakers. The study considered media as an integral part of governance which is spreading its footprints after the advent of new technologies for communication_(Naveh 2002, Vol.1, No.2).

Theoretical Framework

The content analysis uses Framing theory to understand the dynamics of content about any event, incident, or time period that how it was portrayed in any type of media, whether it is electronic, print, and digital media. Many prominent scholars have used this concept in their studies and referred to it as the best way to understand the approach and mindset that influenced media during a particular time period. Even Noam Chomsky once used the term "Framing" about content preferences of elite press of the US and their content and reporting policy over issues_(Chomsky 2022). The concept of Framing supports the elaboration of the relationship, attitude, and policies of two states, their elite press, or any type of media. The current study also comes under this purview as it endeavors to examine Pakistan and the US in the content policy of their elite English press. It will endeavor to explore the content type, nature, genre, and predictions about the future course of foreign policy between two states in

the last phase of the PPP government and during the change of the government in the context of the 2013 general elections. The major focus will be editorial content and the areas that they explained during this period, particularly the foreign policy paradigms between both states (Yousaf 2012). Another doctoral research presented the role of media as an influencer in foreign policy-making with the help of framing theory. The study took media as an agent whose presentation influences policymakers through themes and content treatment. That treatment leads to decision making and keeps some of its elements during the process of policymaking (Toury 2006).

Methodology

the study will employ the content analysis method, which is primarily utilized as a tool for various qualitative and quantitative researches. The method leads to a documentary analysis of content of various types and categories such as texts, pictures, motion films, verbal, visual, and written documents of communication field (Research 1988) d. The study will endeavor to analyze editorials of two elite press newspapers The Washington Post and Daily Dawn, in the context of Pakistan US relations from June 2012 to June 2013. The time period is important due to elections and expectations from both sides for a policy shift with the next elected government.

The units of analysis will be words, sentences, paragraphs, editorials which are relevant to Pakistan-US relations in any dimension. The analysis will be categorized in four major themes on both sides. It would help to sort out data collection and data analysis in a better way. The categories are;

- a. The US stand and approach towards political discourse and political change in Pakistan
- b. Pakistan's stance and approach towards the US in the context of political change and upcoming elections and post-elections government.
- c. Pakistan-US relations in context of the war on terror.

- d. Religion and politics in Pakistan-US relations.

The contents will be measured into three major categories with the following yardstick

- a. Any editorial which is positive either on current scenario or positively predicted Pakistan-US relations will be considered "favorable".
- b. Any editorial which is negative in tone or stance either on current scenario or negatively predicted Pakistan-US relations will be considered "unfavorable".
- c. Any editorial which is neutral in presentation of facts either on the current scenario or remains neutral in predictions about Pakistan-US relations will be considered "neutral".

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The US and Pakistani newspapers published 148 editorials in total from June 2012 to June 2013 that was just after the electoral victory of Pakistan Muslim League (N) in the general elections of 2013. Out of 148, the period from June to December 2012 witnessed 82 editorial impressions from both sides while 60 editorials referred Pakistan-US relations in one way or the other during January 2013 to June 2013. Out of 148 editorials, 51 were published by The Washington Post stating Pakistan affairs and the US-Pakistan relations in any context. Daily Dawn in Pakistan published 97 editorial contents about Pakistan-US relations in any context during this period. In percentage, Daily Dawn provided more coverage to Pakistan-US relations in last phase of PPP government and in speculative approach before the elections 2013 as 61.32% of the total editorial content was aimed at Pak-US relations. On the other side, The Washington Post spared 33.25% of its total editorial content on Pakistan and its relationship with the US.

During the first phase (July 2012 to December 2012), The Washington Post focused more on the US policy and stance towards Pakistan along with war on terror and religious issues by publishing 29 editorials. Out of these 13 editorials focused on Pakistan's stance over the US policy, 9 focused

on the war on terror and its impacts on both sides, while 7 editorials mentioned religious issues, religious freedom, and the image of Pakistan.

The next phase witnessed more about the US policy towards Pakistan in pretext of elections and possibilities in the war effort against terrorism by publishing 22 editorials.

The expected changes in government remained a major issue in the coming 5 months of 2013. 8 editorials mentioned the US stance over expected government, 6 explored future course over the war on terror with the next government while 5 discussed the Pakistan's policy towards the US and only 3 highlighted religious issues.

Table 1. Editorials of Washington Post from June 2013-May 2013

Month	Category A US Towards Pakistan	Category B Pakistan towards US	Category C War on Terror	Category D Religion as Factor
June 2012		2	1	1
July	0	1	2	0
August	0	2	1	0
September	0	1	2	1
October	0	3	1	2
November	0	2	1	2
December	0	2	1	1
January 2013	1	0	1	0
February	1	1	1	1
March	2	1	2	1
April	3	2	1	1
May	1	1	1	0
	8	18	15	10

The percentage of space and content is also important to understand the content policy and importance attached to various issues. The category A, US policy towards Pakistan, was less discussed from June to December 2012 while the first half of 2013 received a bit speculative content with regard to the next government in Pakistan. Only 15.62% of the editorials spared space for category A issue. Pakistan's policy matters towards the US consumed 35.29% of space while the war on terror stood next to it by getting 29.41% of the editorial content. The religion as a factor in Pak-US relations got only 19.60% of editorial content.

In terms of treatment and attitude, category A remained a bit more negative with 45% urged to do more while only 30% were positive and 25% remained a bit neutral in their stance. The US policy towards Pakistan was also overshadowed by making 30.76% positive and 46.15% negative and only 23.07% editorials were neutral in this realm. The war

on terror was perceived more in positive terms as the US press expected more dedicated efforts from the next government in Pakistan in this regard. The analysis shows that 56.10% of the content showed positive while only 23% of content was portrayed it in negative terms. 21.90% content depicted a neutral stance over the war on terror and Pakistan US relations. The religion as a factor in Pak-US relations remained a win-win issue during this period. Almost 29% content projected it as positive while close it 28.29% showed it negative in context of local religious radicalization and its association with sprinter terrorist groups. But the largely, 42.58% space remained neutral in this regard with the perception that it had no or less influence over bilateral relations between both states.

Over the period of 11 months, Daily Dawn published 97 editorials related to either of the factors in the context of Pakistan US relation.

Table 2. Daily Dawn Editorials from June 2012-May 2013

Month	Category A US Towards Pakistan	Category B Pakistan towards US	Category C War on Terror	Category D Religion as Factor
June 2012	2	1	3	1
July	4	0	3	0
August	3	0	2	1
September	2	1	4	2
October	3	1	2	4
November	2	0	2	3
December	5	1	3	2
January 2013	3	2	2	1
February	4	1	3	2
March	3	0	3	1
April	4	1	2	1
May	2	1	2	1
	38	9	31	19

Daily Dawn published 38 editorials on US stance towards Pakistan, 9 over Pakistan towards the US, 31 editorials on the war on terror, and only 19 editorials with context of religion as a factor. The percentage shows that it published 39.17% over the US policy towards Pakistan, 9.27% on Pakistan policy towards the US, 31.95% on the war on terror, while 19.58% content was published on the religion as a factor.

The editorial treatment and sense remained a bit more negative in category A as only 23.80% were positive with dominating 47.61% content was in negative portrayal. Neutral stance got middle place with 28.57% which took Pak-US relations as statement of facts. Category B was over shadowed by negative content due to demands of do more which covered 48% of the total editorials. Even then 35% positive content and 9% neutral content made its place among the editorials. In category C, 21.05% was positive, 47.36% was negative and 31.58 was neutral content. Religion as a factor between Pak-US relations got 62% negative content, 15.40% positive and 23% neutral content.

The data reveals that Daily Dawn showed more concerns about over the policy issues and their subsequent impacts over the war on terror efforts. The editorials published in the newspaper showed more dissatisfaction over US policies than The Washington Post. The neutral and positive content shows a bit

speculative stance over political shifts in Pakistan with expectations to improve things further. The Washington Post remained more concerned over policy matters and the war on terror in its content themes. The text showed more inclination towards efforts to curtail menace of terrorism, religious extremism and terrorist outfits. It showed more positive expectations with the announcement of elections and expected the government to improve things further.

Findings

The study reveals that:

- a. Terrorism and the war on terror remained over dominating issue in The US and Pakistan's elite press.
- b. Most of the foreign policy issues were projected in terms of policy measures to curb and curtail terrorism and to gather maximum support against anti-terrorism efforts.
- c. Pakistan's elite press published more negative content due to dissatisfaction over the US policies and demand for "do more". Perhaps the burden of history also influenced content makers during this period.
- d. For Pakistan's elite press, Pak-US relations were a major issue. While the US press showed less interest or less emphasized the issue.

- e. Political change in Pakistan propelled anticipation and predictions from both sides as they were speculating policy changes or some paradigmatic shift in relations with the upcoming government.

Discussion

The study reveals that the last phase of the PPP government, Raja Pervez Ashraf government, witnessed much coverage over the foreign policy issues from the elite press of both countries. The mid of 2012 witnessed political shifts on both sides as the US elections provided a mandate to President Barack Obama as his second term in the office. In Pakistan, Raja Pervez Ashraf assumed office as Prime Minister after disqualification of Syed Yusuf Raza Gillani on order of the Supreme Court of Pakistan. Both sides were anticipating major policy shifts over the war on terror and other foreign policy issues. That made these months important for all stakeholders while the next 5 months also became important due to elections and expected government change in Pakistan. In foreign policy, it is always expected that the next office-bearer would bring paradigmatic changes to improve the situation and remove policy lags of the past regime. Moreover, the war on terror was the most emphasized issue since the US invasion of Afghanistan which made Pakistan as the trusted ally of the US war effort. The US press was expecting new policy dimensions from Pakistan with the visible course of action from the next elected government, PML (N).

The study period June 2012 to May 2013 witnessed a series of important events which influenced foreign policy from both sides. The data reveals that The Washington Post

and Daily Dawn projected a great deal of dissatisfied behavior in larger percentage. They also took influence of the public opinion and public sentiments from both sides over a series of incidents during that period of time. Pakistan's policy towards the US was criticized by Daily Dawn due to issues like terrorism, drone attacks from the US over FATA areas, the illegal invasion of Pakistan's territorial boundaries, and blasphemous movie which was produced in the US.

In the US elite press, The Washington Post also censured the government over its policy towards Pakistan over issues such as foreign aid, NATO supply blockade after Silala checkpost attack, rise in extremism, terrorist outfits in North West of Pakistan and attack on Malala Yousafzai by the extremists in Sawat. It was expecting stern policy measures to force Pakistan to do more in the anti-terror campaign. The elections in Pakistan were perceived another opportunity for policy shift and some better measures to curb terrorism. The US press remained speculative and dubious in its approach that whether the next government would expedite the campaign against terrorism or not? The study found dissatisfaction on both sides over policy measures or the existing foreign policies of both states. Both of the newspapers criticized their respective government over policy matters. For Pakistan drone attacks and violation of territorial limits was question of sovereignty which dominated the content treatment of editorials. For the US press, Pakistan was not doing enough in the war effort despite getting benefits in terms of military and civilian assistance. But the freedom of the press and ease to criticize their respective governments showed the role and status of the press in both countries.

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