

INDEXING AND AMERICAN PRESIDENCY: PAKISTANI MUSLIM SOCIETY ON THE FRONT-PAGES OF MAINSTREAM U.S. NEWSPAPERS

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ABSTRACT

Mr. Joe Biden quoting a saying from Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H.), vows to lift the Muslim ban from day one in the Oval office. This study shows how the U.S. mainstream liberal and the conservative printed press gave Pakistan and Pakistani society coverage in the first year of Biden's Vice Presidency under President Obama when the U.S. military interests were high in the South Asian region. Employing thematic analysis with indexing theory, the study analyzes three leading U.S. dailies from January 2009 to January 2010. The study finds media frames, issues, and sources that confirm the practical implementation of indexing theory in American news reporting on crucial foreign policy issues. About Pakistan Muslim society, the U.S. media conclude that terrorism is in the "DNA" of Pakistani people, and militants will take over Pakistan and its nuclear bomb. This study adds to the indexing theory, propaganda, political, international, and strategic communication literature.

Key Words: Islamic extremism, Sharia law, Pakistani nuclear bomb, al Qaeda, Vice President Joe Biden, American print media, War on Terror, Indexing, Liberal, Conservative.

INTRODUCTION

In the United States media, is not the part of government—Congress, Executives, Judiciary— but it exerts equal power with other branches of the government, hence media in the U.S. work as a "fourth branch of government" (see, Beattie, 2019, p. 165; Jia & Lu, 2021). International Institute of Asian Studies I.I.A.S. published a newsletter Pakistan Special in Autumn 2008, and in the director's note, Sparrebom (2008, Autumn, p. 2)—the director of the center—writes:

... Pakistan has got a very complex and troubled society ... Pakistan is a vulnerable nation, seen by many as failed state. But Pakistan is also a front-line state ... and crucial to U.S. interest in South Asia. The country makes headlines with ... the battle with fundamentalists and Al-Qaeda, ethnic violence, and human right issues yet behind the headlines there is little understanding of this land and its people. This is reflected too in the lack of scholarship and academic interest in Pakistan.

Dean of modern American Journalism—Walter Lippmann—in his 1922 classic *Public Opinion*, explains the phenomenon of pictures in the head and describes the story of an island inhabited by English, French, and Germans who were living peacefully and joyfully in blissful ignorance until they came to know that their countries were at war with Germany (Lippmann, 1922). Violence-related themes—like national security threat, terrorism, ideological values, fear, danger, Jihad, etc.—are the ones that the U.S. mainstream media generally associate with Pakistan and Pakistani society and create pictures in the heads by painting a world threatened by Muslims.

Lippmann says that ordinary people's ignorance helps frame the issue by propagandizing an agenda, and people become easy prey to the propaganda under the government's agenda (Lippmann,

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1922). Giving a key to avoid being deceived by the press, Lippmann says that people have to get more knowledge about foreign affairs, then they can know the facts behind the facts (Lippmann, 1922). With this background of people, it is easy for the media to catch their attention on themes like national security threat, ideological values, fear, danger. This is the reason that "bigotry" has become "central" to "American political life" (see, Pintak, Bowe, & Albright, 2019), and American youth likes to keep social distance from Arab and Pakistani Muslims (Winnick, 2019).

Addressing a seminar in 2005, General Musharraf, former President of Pakistan, said, "Terrorism must not, must not be linked with religions. There is no terrorism in Islam" (Musharraf, P., 2005). But President Obama announcing the AFPAK strategy on March 27, 2009, said, "al Qaeda and its allies are a cancer that risks killing Pakistan within ... Pakistani government must be strong and we have to isolate al Qaeda from Pakistani people" (see, Obama, 2009, p. 367). During the period of this study, the holistic coverage of Pakistani society is webbed around terror within phenomena that is linked with Islam to put pressure on Pakistan to cooperate in 'War on Terror' (WOT) and to forcefully win the support of common American citizens for WOT whose unconscious cannot forget the terror attacks of 9/11 by the terrorists who labeled themselves as Muslims.

Mr. Obama calls 'War on Terror' (WOT), a war of necessity (Gonyea, 2009) but it is also true that Mr. Obama cannot win this war without winning the hearts and minds of Pakistanis, although he pledged in AFPAK strategy to win the hearts and minds of Pakistani people (Obama, 2009, p. 367). America has lost this war in the hearts of Muslims of the world, especially Pakistanis. This is why we see a significant shift in American foreign policy when President Nominee Biden recites hadith in his election campaign and promises to include Muslims in his cabinet and lift the ban on Muslims from day one (Khalid, 2020); such an announcement is quite unusual.

From Bush senior to President Trump, we see a consistency in American foreign, national, and media policy to wage war against Islam and its followers inside and outside America. In his first year of Presidency, President Biden seems a friend of Muslims, but the question arises that in the first year of his Vice Presidency under the Presidency of Mr. Barack Obama, how media was reporting about Pakistani society when the U.S. had high stakes both in Pakistan and Afghanistan in the name of WOT and Pakistan was U.S.' major non-NATO ally. Following the Indexing theory, the purpose of this retrospective study is to see whether U.S. media is reporting right or wrong about Pakistani society under the first year of Biden's Vice Presidency? And under what themes mainstream U.S. press portrays Pakistani Muslims society on their front pages.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Indexing: Press-State relations in the United States

Media indexing has variations in issues, frames, and sources however, "... the issue in which indexing might be expected to operate most consistently are military decisions, foreign affairs, ... to the advancement of state power (see, Bennett, 1990, 2019; Semati., Cassidy, & Khanjani, 2021; Din, & Hussain, 2021). Terror-related violence is a key frame of American media, but it turns into politics when it synthesizes with war and foreign policy. And where there is politics, there is news. Stephens (2013, p. 367) quotes Donna Schlagheck who says that terror-related violence creates "psychological impact for the purpose of achieving political objective." Stephens (2013, pp. 368-369) further says that although media do not cause terrorism but make it worse because poor reporting under certain agendas and influences does not help people to understand an issue; and there always remain a symbolic relationship between media and "Golden triangle"—White House, the U.S. State Department, and the Pentagon—and as far as the terrorist strikes in America are concerned media tell administration's side of the story. Confirming the indexing hypothesis, research scholars and media studies are of the view that the press in America takes input from various sources most importantly the administration, scholars, and academia (see, e.g., Althaus, Edy, Entman, & Phalen, 1996; Baum & Groeling, 2009, p. 4; Livingston, 2016). Saleem (2007) writes that [Edward] "Said (1987) observed that the tone of the Western media was against Islam, and the Western media portray Islam as a violent and destructive religion for individuals and civilization."

Islam, Pakistan and the West

Moeller (2007) studies the top 13 U.S. newspapers in 2007 and illustrates how the "American press generally adopted the administration's monolithic framing of terrorism as well as 'the demonizing of an entire population: in this case Pakistani Muslim men and boys.'" Stephens (2013, p. 369),

confirming the findings of Moeller (2007), writes that The New York Times emphasizes a lot on terrorism-related stories; in contrast, Pakistani newspapers are more independent than other newspapers in their pattern of coverage. Gerges (2003) argued that:

Islam from the time it appeared was a problem for Christian Europe. Looking at Islam with a mixture of fear and bewilderment, Christians could not accept Muhammad as a genuine prophet or the authenticity of the revelation given to him. The most widely held belief among Christians.

The occidental scholars consider Islam, its political philosophy, and its followers as a potential threat to the West. Arshi Saleemi Hashmi notes:

Daniel Pipes, Samuel Huntington, Bernard Lewis and Jessica Stern see only Islam and not other religions as inevitably violent. Daniel Pipes for instance, claims that radical Islam is an ideology incompatible with secular society. Muslims want to force the secular world to submit to their principles. They are thus "a radical network of terrorists," terrorists in this world who can't stand the thought of peace," "terrorism with a global reach (see, Hashmi, 2009).

Fukuyama (2007, pp. viii-x) says that "... apocalyptic view of the threat from the Muslim world is wrong in my view. American media frame Pakistan as a terrorist country in which the Islamic ideology is driving the people of Pakistan crazy (see, Gillani & Zhou, 2015a, 2015b).

The Power of the American Presidency

It is the power of the American presidency that it can make or break reality with the supremacy of American media and militarism. Mr. Bush has said already, "what we say goes," (KryssTal, n.d.) and waged a noble war on moral ground against terrorist forces to save the world to become the torchbearer of "City upon a hill" under "white man's burden." It is a clear sign of unilateralism and President Obama continued this in Pakistan against Pakistani society. In a congruent manner, the U.S. press under the indexing model made frames in accordance the will of the administration. Brzezinski (2007) describes the mythical and spinning phrase of WOT as:

The "war on terror" has created a culture of fear in America ... 9/11 has had a pernicious impact on America's psyche and on the U.S. standing in the world ... The phrase itself is meaningless ... Terrorism is not an enemy but a technique of warfare ... Constant reference to a "war on terror" did accomplish one major objective: It stimulated the emergence of a culture of fear. Fear obscures reason, intensifies emotions and makes it easier for demagogic politicians to mobilize the public on behalf of the policies they want to pursue.

Addressing to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, service members, and military families, President Obama (2010) says that "'This is not a war of choice. This is a war of necessity. Those who attacked America on 9/11 are plotting to do so again" (p. 32).

DATA, METHODOLOGY, AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Data

This study analyzes front-page stories of three mainstream U.S. dailies published during the first year of Joe Biden's first term Vice Presidency—January 2009 to January 2010. The front-page stories of the two leading U.S. dailies—*The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*—were retrieved from the ProQuest National Newspapers database by putting the search word "Pakistan" in the search bar and choosing front-page stories only with a time limit from January 2009 to January 2010. *The Wall Street Journal's* front-page stories were accessed from the LexisNexis database by putting "Pakistan" in the search box with a time limit from January 2009 to January 2010. The three mainstream American newspapers published 119 stories on their front pages from January 2009 to January 2010. *The New York Times* published 73 stories, *The Washington Post* published 33 stories, and *The Wall Street Journal* published 13 news reports.

Methodology

This study applies Thematic Analysis for identifying and analyzing patterns to uncover the coverage pattern of Pakistan on the front pages of American mainstream dailies. To identify "recurring patterns of meaning," thematic analysis can be used to build arguments and themes across a data set (see, Braun & Clarke, 2006). The data corpus is studied to create a comprehensive thematic description of the most critical and prevalent themes and patterns.

The study is inductive. Themes are discovered both at the explicit and latent level to describe, interpret, and examine underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualizations in the data corpus of front-page stories using the theoretical framework. The data was coded in the light of research questions and theoretical framework—Indexing theory.

Theoretical Framework

The study analyses data with the lens of indexing theory. Bennett (1990) explains U.S. Government-Press relations on crucial foreign and national policy issues under indexing theory. Elites, especially the financial elites, make U.S. national and international policies and develop public opinion using media (Bennett, 1990).

THEMATIC FINDINGS

Pakistan is hard to understand: "Islamic Extremism" is a "wild animal" and a "Global Threat."

Tavernise (2009) writes in *The New York Times* that Pakistan, with a population of 170 million, is too hard to "figure out" because it has too many contrasts and lairs, but out of so many contrasts and differences, the leading press says that one thing is common in the blur and confusing picture of Pakistan, i.e., "Islam." The leading newspapers see Islam as a powerful tool to glue the nation, and it has been used for the political purpose of different leaders. American public and academia who are already suspicious and terrified with political Islam as a result of 9/11, Tavernise (2009) terrify them more by quoting an American based Pakistani Professor of Islamic history who said that Pakistanis don't have a sense of their whole; they could not define that which version of Islam they want to follow either, Turkish, Saudi, Sufi or Sunni/Deobandi which does not allow to talk to women, where laughter or even full smile is not permitted. According to the leading newspaper, the Sunni Islamist parties are part of the Pakistani parliament (Tavernise, 2009).

Scholars and academic studies are of the view that Western and American governments and people are afraid of the political power of Islam hence creating more sensation and fear—that absorb the power of rational thinking of an ordinary person—the jingoistic *The New York Times* in its front-page story—Struggling To See A Country of Shards—using the inverted pyramid style of headline, analogizes "Islamic Extremism" with a "wild animal" that will "gobble up the Western civilization" and that will reverse all scientific achievements of humankind of the past five hundred years, and there will be no "fun," "dancing," and entertainment (Tavernise, 2009). About Islam's political usage, the story also analogizes Islam with a "genie" and says that once this "genie" is out of the bottle, there is no tool to control it (Tavernise, 2009).

Sunni Militancy, Taliban and Pakistanis: Terrorism is in the "DNA" of Pakistanis

The leading press is presenting the point of the "Golden Triangle"—The White House, The Pentagon, The U.S. Department of State—because its efforts in Pakistan are not meeting with success. Relying upon the administration's selected resources that deemed fit under the indexing model, the press is presenting such views because it is the firm belief of the Obama administration and the foreign policy elites that the Pakistani public is not against the Sunni militancy or Taliban instead, they support them and consider them as "pious Muslims" (Rosenberg, 2009). Probably, this is the reason that *The New York Times* asks a big question:

... Pakistan ... wrestling with growing pains and insecurity, is at a turning point. It is in danger of being strangled by Islamic extremism, and the big question is: What will it take for its people and its government to shake off the confusion and stand up to the militants? (Tavernise, 2009).

This question is asked in the context of opinion that prevails in the foreign policy elites and administration and *The New York Times* reflects their views about Pakistanis as they have "ethnic," "family," and "religious" ties with the "insurgents" (Gall & Schmitt, 2009) and the struggle against the militants will be a struggle against their faith and their brothers (see, Witte, 2009). Hence according to *The Washington Post*, the terror does not lie beyond the eastern border [India]; it lies in the people of Pakistan (Witte, 2009). To make the American people understand and believe the gravity of the situation, *The New York Times'* front-page story—In Pakistan, U.S. Courts Leader of Opposition—on May 2, 2009, taking the expert of the opinion of the root of terror published the statement of Teresita C. Schaffer—a Pakistan expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington—says that, "For the United States, there's no ambiguity about where the danger lies; it's in the people

who are attacking the state" (Cooper & Mazzetti, 2009). Pack journalism and conformity of the press makes things closer to reality as the French scholar Alex de Tocqueville said:

The power of the American press is still immense ... When many organs of the press do come to take the same line, their influence in the long run is almost irresistible, and public opinion, continually struck in the same spot, ends by giving way under the blows (see, Sparrow, 2001, p. 2).

The terror within phenomena with the help of pack journalism and conformity is further intensified by *The Washington Post's* front-page story—For Pakistanis, a Fight Against Their Own; Confronting Taliban Tests Bonds of Faith and National Heritage—published on June 12, 2009, which says that "Pakistan is engulfed in a conflict that pits Pakistanis against Pakistanis, Muslims against Muslims. It is a confrontation the army long resisted ... the struggle seems to go against their very DNA" (see, Witte, 2009). Propaganda is always rooted in biased opinions and ideas. But the need to propagandize the DNA analogy is irresistible because the front-page story of *The Washington Post* published on June 1, 2009, publishes the declassified report of General David H. Petraeus to President Obama, which says that:

... Anti-U.S. sentiment has already been increasing in Pakistan ... Nearly two-thirds of Pakistanis oppose counterterrorism cooperation with the United States ... and "35 percent say they do not support U.S. strikes into Pakistan, even if they are coordinated with the G.O.P. [government of Pakistan] and the Pakistan Military ahead of time (see, DeYoung, 2009).

The U.S. could not win the hearts and minds of Pakistanis, so to justify the war to the American public, the loyal press under "unilateralism" and "Distinctive American Internationalism" used the analogy of DNA for the whole Pakistani society—a country of more than 170 million people and an atomic power as well. The propaganda reaches its climax when the very story of *The Washington Post*—published on June 12, 2009—does not even spare the kids of the poorest class of Pakistan who fight mock battles with each other with their toy guns in the "sewage-filled streets" and say, "'You are America. You are Russia. You are India. I am Pakistan,' ... Pakistan always won" (DeYoung, 2009).

Pakistani Truce with the Taliban: "Threats Are Heard in New York"

According to the leading press, the Sunni militancy that gave cover to al Qaeda spread in Swat in the wake of the truce that the Taliban did with the government of Pakistan. It was also supported by the people there who were unhappy with the government. The truce was a very sensational act of the government against the wish of the U.S. government; hence it got high coverage in the leading U.S. newspapers and heightened the effect of the truce to make the whole world believe that al Qaeda is being nurtured and supported there by the people of Pakistan. *The New York Times'* front-page story—Pakistan Says Strike Worsen Qaeda Threat—published on February 25, 2009, says that Arab militants who travel from "the Qaeda bases in Waziristan across the tribal belt to Swat are in high esteem by Pakistani Taliban fighters ... The Arabs motivate the local guys, who seem them as people who have forsaken all their money for Jihad" (Schmitt & Perlez, 2009). The same story further says that "Usama al-Kini ... was very popular and sociable with the ordinary people" (Schmitt & Perlez, 2009). All these militants and terrorists were using poorly guarded porous Pak-Afghan border and were attacking American troops hence *The New York Times'* front-page story—Porous Border With Pakistan Could Hinder New U.S. Troops—published on May 5, 2009, quoting a "tactician" ends the articles with the following words:

There was a respect for the scale of Al Qaeda ambitions. 'They have a global agenda, they have a big design ... 'capturing Afghanistan is not Al Qaeda mission'. 'It's Taliban mission. We will be content in capturing in capturing Afghanistan and throwing the Americans out.' Pakistani Taliban will fight as long as it takes to defeat the Americans ... 'We will have a body count, and we will see who has broken whose back' (see, Perlez & Shah, 2009b).

According to *The New York Times*, this tactician is a heavily built man who works for the Haqqani group under Mullah Mansoor. He is moving 80 Taliban fighters in Afghanistan to fight against the American troops who just arrived last month. This is the first-hand information that *The New York Times* is presenting by using a Qaeda or Haqqani Testimonial.

This firsthand account of a Taliban fighter, as a testimonial. Regarding al Qaeda and the Taliban on one side is enough to fire the jingoistic, nationalistic feelings of common Americans, and on the other, it is arousing the emotions like valor and honor of the national flag. Above all, the phrases like "body count", "who will break whose back" create bone-chilling fear to the public that

has already been terrified by the press and by the actual events of the tragic incidents of 9/11. Hence, this type of coverage not only justifies Obama's decision for the war but it also convinces the Americans that souring the American economy is not an issue; the real threat is al Qaeda. Mr. Holbrooke's statement published by *The New York Times*' front-page story—Pakistan Makes a Taliban Truce, Creating a Heaven, published on February 17, 2009—said that "... turmoil in Swat served as reminder that the United States, Pakistan and India faced an 'enemy' which poses direct threat to our leadership, our capitals, and our people" (Perlez, 2009).

The U.S. press, following indexing model and revolving around top personalities makes the situation more horrible when it publishes another front-page story—From Pakistan Valley, Taliban Threats Are Heard in New York—on the same date which says that the Taliban are kidnapping those people whose close relatives work in the U.S. as "... there are 6,000 to 7,000 people from Swat Valley in the United States, about half of whom live in the New York metropolitan region" (Semple, 2009).

Former President of Pakistan, General Musharraf, said that "... Basically, at the core of all terrorist activity is politics and not religion, but it has become religious" (Musharraf, P., 2005).

"The Talibanization of Pakistani Mind": People want Taliban's Sharia Law System

Recognized definitions of terrorism say that in the base of every terrorism, political motives work, and the same happened in Swat. Taliban got the sympathy of the people because they wanted Sharia law but the ulterior agenda of these brutal militants, who called themselves Muslims, was to grab the land to get power for other ulterior motives. When the real face of the militants was unfolded to the people, they stood against them as the leading press itself reported (see, Jr. & Shah, 2009; Perlez & Shah, 2009a). *The Wall Street Journal's* front-page story—Flood of Refugees Engulfs Pakistan—reports peoples' views about the insurgents as, "The thieves, the drug dealers, the rapists, the criminals -- that's who joined the Taliban in Swat" (Trofimov, 2009). The Washington Post's front-page story published on May 7, 2009, publishes the statement of Karim – 55, Bus driver – as, "We all said to each other, what sort of people have come here? And what kind of sharia is this? Cutting off people's heads has nothing to do with Islam" (see, Constable & Khan, 2009).

The leading press tried to convey to American people that the American cause—in the WOT is against the anti-human, non-state actor al Qaeda and their aides, i.e., Punjabi and Pashtun Taliban—is very noble. The coverage reminds Thomas Pine's *Common Sense*, who united the civilians by saying that the cause of America is noble and great. Similarly, the leading press proves that fighting against Islamic extremism is moral too, and America, being the world's torchbearer, is bound to fight this war as it is White Man's Burden. Thus, On August 9, 2009, *The New York Times* wrote that Arab militants live in Pakistan but rarely move out, and local people give them cover (see, Khan & Tavernise, 2009). *The Washington Post's* front-page story of May 10, 2009, says that:

There is a growing movement in mosques and seminaries throughout Pakistan today to abolish the modern justice system and make sharia the supreme law of the land. Radical Islamic clerics in major cities give emotional weekly sermons, urging their followers to turn from decadent Western ways and spread vigorous moral purity (see, Constable, 2009b).

According to the leading newspaper, with each passing day, more profound silence is prevailing, and nobody is standing against these radical mullas; even the social and intellectual class is also silent. The leading press describes this behavior of Pakistanis as "... creeping social and intellectual chill that several have called "the Talibanization of the mind" (Constable, 2009a).

Taliban will Take Over Pakistan: al Qaeda will Control Pakistani Nukes

Tavernise, Jr., & Schmitt (2009) quotes a senior police officer as, "if you want to destabilize Pakistan, you have to destabilize Punjab." It is also reported that the Taliban are attacking important and sensitive buildings like F.I.A., I.S.I. building, police training academies, and Army's headquarter in Rawalpindi (Tavernise et al., 2009). The front-page story of *The New York Times* published on February 25, 2009, published the statement of Bruce O. Riedel as, "In Pakistan, the jihadist Frankenstein monster that was created by the Pakistani Army and the Pakistani intelligence service is now increasingly turning on its creators" (Schmitt & Perlez, 2009).

To further terrify the American public by keeping their focus on al Qaeda and by winning their support for economy weary America, the leading press report that the specter of Qaeda has become so strong in Pakistan that it is recruiting German, French, Swedish, Turkish, Chechens, Uzbek, North African and Arab militants (Hussain, 2009). *The New York Times*' front-page story—

Shaky Pakistan Seen As Target of Qaeda Plots—quoting a Georgetown University’s terrorism expert Bruce Hoffman says that that al Qaeda is trying to Arab face-off that and Bruce O. Riedel says that Al Qaeda “... smell blood, and they are intoxicated by the idea of jihadist takeover in Pakistan” (Cooper & Mazzetti, 2009).

The leading press continuing its terror stories about Qaeda is selling propaganda to the American public to get their unwavering support for WOT against Qaeda, Lashkar-I-Jhangvi, Jaish-I-Muhammad, Lashkar-I-Taiba, and Threek-I-Taliban Pakistan. Constable's (2009) report in *The Washington Post* said that these militants are jointly working in Punjab and N.W.F.P., which is totally under their control. F.C. is unable to guard the porous Afghan border because they are afraid of the power and brutality of the united militancy. Finally, the stage comes when it is reported that Qaeda will take over Pakistan and the nuclear weapons of Pakistan will be in the hands of Qaeda or even in the mid of the year, it is reported that Americans are suspicious that the atomic technology has been transferred to Osama Bin Laden (see, Sanger, 2009; Constable, 2009). This is extreme hyperbole and indexing of issues to extend the foreign policy agenda of the “Golden triangle”—White House, the U.S. State Department, and the Pentagon.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The situation is highly perilous and pressing for America’s standing in the world; hence, America’s jingoistic liberal and conservative press out of its biases against Islam has given it a form of the new devil, beast, Hun, Kaiser. The mainstream U.S. print media hold Pakistani Muslim society responsible for the danger the world faces from al Qaeda. The American press believes that Pakistani society supports militants with a global reach. And, if the U.S. discontinues WOT, the security of the world will be at stake. But there is a contrast in the reporting because the mainstream U.S. press also reports that Pakistani people are fighting against these militants; they consider them thugs and thieves, but such stories are sporadic. Nevertheless, under the concept of “City upon Hill,” “White Man’s Burden,” America is in Afghanistan to save the world from those who are a threat to the world, and victory is America’s “Manifest Destiny” as President Obama said in AFPAK strategy that America will win this war.

During the first year of the Vice Presidency of Mr. Joe Biden and the Presidency of Mr. Obama, Pakistani society was demonized by the American mainstream press to extend and justify the agenda of American militarism in South Asia to escalate American clandestine missions and drone war inside Pakistan. The mainstream American press openly admits that Pakistan has too many layers and shades, and it is not a country to understand easily. The themes that emerge from the data analysis reflect the thinking pattern of American journalists that Pakistani Muslims society being a follower of Sunni Islam poses a global threat to global peace and security. Mainstream U.S. media pass a bold statement that terrorism lies in the “DNA” of Pakistani people. From January 2009 to January 2010, the American press reported that al Qaeda would take over the Pakistani state and its nuclear arsenal, and “Islam extremism” is a “wild animal” that will destroy the whole world. This hyperbolic reporting supports and justifies the U.S.’s war in Afghanistan, for which she needs the help of the Pakistani democratic government against the consent of Pakistani people. In this context, Prime Minister Imran Khan said that war is not a solution to bring peace in Afghanistan. BBC News (2021) reports that Prime Minister Khan told Jonathan Swan—an Australian journalist—that he will not allow American forces to use Pakistani land to attack Afghanistan because Pakistan wants to become America’s partner in peace, not in war; his statement is trending in Pakistan. Ironically, Mr. Joe Biden wanted to shake hands with Muslims as a Presidential candidate, yet, after becoming President, he pressurized Pakistan to use its land for cross-border attacks in Afghanistan against so-called Islamic militant groups that the U.S. could not defeat. In reality, the “Golden triangle”—White House, the U.S. State Department, and the Pentagon—in America just wanted to continue the war for the sake of American superiority in the world by keeping her footprint in the South Asian region.

Ordinary American citizen does not understand what the U.S. was doing in the South Asian region. Since America is a democracy, it is pertinent to get public support for the American war in a distant land. Probably, this is the reason that under indexing theory, the three mainstream U.S. newspapers—liberal and conservative—are framing front-page headlines following the indexing theory of Bennett (1990, 2019) to support the agenda of “Golden triangle”—White House, the U.S. State Department, and the Pentagon.

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