

PRINT MEDIA AGENDA FOR THE GOVERNMENT STANCE ON COMPOSITE DIALOGUE WITH INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Media is playing an important role in portraying Pak-India relations. In the process of supporting or rejecting the issue, the media can set its agenda for this purpose. The study is basically a content analysis of Pakistani Urdu newspapers. It has examined the coverage of “Composite Dialogue between Pakistan and India” in the two Urdu Dailies – The Jang and The Nawa i Waqt from 1st. October 2018 to 30th September 2019 makes the period of one year. The analysis of 2495 stories from two Urdu newspapers suggests that the overall stance of the government of Pakistan on the war on terror is supported by the Pakistani press. Thus, it supports the main hypothesis that the approach of the Pakistani press is more favorable than unfavorable towards the Pakistani government's stance on Composite Dialogue with.

Keywords: Print Media Agenda, Composite Dialogue, India, Pakistan

INTRODUCTION

It is now established through research that the media play an important role in disseminating and shaping the political reality. It provides information on different political issues as well as attach the required amount of information to understanding the viewpoint of the political authorities. In the process of supporting or rejecting the issue, media can set its agenda for this purpose (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Carroll and McCombs (2003) believe that newspapers communicate cues about relative salience of the object they are portraying. This object can be the government, the authority or any common issue. Leading story on front page, inside pages, size of headlines, and the length of the story provide basis for applying news agenda. The significant of the event is usually determined by placement and size of the stories.

Rizvi (2011) narrates that Pak-India relations are documented with ups and downs. They had hot and cold diplomacy in their relations which is the reason for strained relations. Since the partition of subcontinent, both the neighbors are committed to establish good relations that fall under their interests. Kashmir issue is the first dispute among the two started in 1947. Despite the initiation of dispute, there remained smooth working relations till 1965 war. After the war, the mode of relations changed, and both the countries became hostile towards. Mehta (2012) explains that the historical evaluation shows that Pakistan and India were seriously dependent on each other, initially. India had a remarkable share in Pakistan's global imports and exports and its trade balance was impossible without trade with Pakistan. This trade balance was more in favor of India that resulted in political collision and politically, both were begun to be perceived as “archrivals” in South Asia. This slow increasing political indifference affected bilateral economic relations among the two. Miller (2011) summarizes the conflicts and explains that 1965 war was the second war fought between the two. The hostile relations continued, and a third war occurred in 1971. These two wars ended with two

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important agreements called Tashkent Declaration (1966) and Simla Agreement (1972). India began its nuclear testing in 1974 whereas Pakistan became a nuclear power in 1998. The armed conflict “Kargil War” was fought in 1999. There was an increase in conflicts in the region that included railway massacre in Jammu (2001), Kashmiri assembly attacks (2001) and Indian parliament attack (2001). Till 2003 the neighbors reached at the height of stained relations that resulted in the loss of lives and resources. Saleemi (2010) says that when Pakistan became a nuclear power the situation became more severe. The Samjhota express massacre in 2007 added fuel to the fire and both began blaming each other for being the cause of hostility. In 2008 attacks were committed by the terrorists’ groups that began in Mumbai. Analyzing the scenario, Pakistan continued to establish friendly atmosphere in South Asia. Roomi (2008) summarizes the historical background by saying that both the countries are in a constant state of war. Their disputes are visible at global level in diplomatic and political spheres.

To solve disputes, a dialogue process, the composite dialogue, was initiated in 2004 that is now viewed as a slow-paced development process. Bokhari (2005) argues that there were multiple factors that are forcing both the countries to go for peacebuilding. These factors are highlighted because there are problems seen in them i.e., nuclear, economic, domestic and post 9/11 factors. According to Haq (2007), negotiation was expected to occur in following fields: Peace and Security including CBMs (Confidence Building measures), Jammu and Kashmir, Siachen, Water Issue, Sir Creek, Terrorism and Drug Trafficking, Economy and Commercial Collaboration, and Promotion of Friendly Exchanges in various fields. Flamenbaum and Neville (2011) find that Composite Dialogue continued for five years till Mumbai attacks in 2008. In these five years both the governments facilitated discussions and they had soft gestures for each other. Haider (2010) argues that the common men in India were keen to establish peace as did the government in Pakistan and India. The movement had the slogan of “A Road Map towards Peace” that was initiated by intellectuals, opinion leaders, activists of human rights, NGOs, journalists and the common man. It was labeled as “Aman ki Asha” that began in 2010. Choudhry and Akhtar (2010) argue that without composite dialogue, peacebuilding is impossible. Despite the progress in peace process Kashmir is still the burning issue of conflict between the two. No significant solution has been found. Both the countries still claim for this region. The dialogue process was held mainly for solving Kashmir issue. It is discussed at official level and now in the dialogue process conferences. According to Dudgeon (2011), Afghanistan was also included as an issue of conflict in their bilateral relationship. Pakistan had shown its interest in India’s presence in Afghanistan with reference to terrorism. India argued to have historical association with Afghanistan, so it has the right to involve in its development. Iqbal (2011) argues that from 2004 to 2008 the trade relation among the two went up significantly but the relations began to decline after 2008 due to terrorism and attacks.

Media is playing an important role in portraying Pak-India relations. International Media Support (2009) reports that there is a vibrant media scene in Pakistan. The Pakistani media have been enjoying independence after its liberalization in 2002. Khan and Shakir (2011) explore the mode of framing while covering Pak-India conflicts. It has been found that either war or peace frames are used. The analysis of editorial content from Dawn and The Nation published in 2009 indicate that at that time terrorism was most reported as it was a major issue of conflict for both. Both the newspapers utilized war framing to cover Pak-India relationship.

Entman (1993) postulates mass media as a significant player in image-formulation. It can create good or bad image of the government stance through its agenda set for this issue. He finds that U.S Media supports national interest in portraying foreign countries related the issue and its content are influenced by the U.S administration. Economic interest is a dominant factor in framing different issues. U.S media framed foreign countries negatively for the achievement of the national interests. He claims that media approach was biased, strengthening and promoting stereotypes in framing Muslims countries. Prescribed by the government, the U.S media gave favorable coverage to those countries where it had economic, political, and military interests. U.S media supported U.S policies of foreign affairs and hence, framed foreign counties accordingly to the interest of government.

Kim (2000) investigated the interdependent relationship between media and government. He conducted the comparative study of New York Times and Washington Post news coverage of Kwangju & Tiananmen. He found that the content of both dailies had been influenced by U.S

government to promote its foreign policy according to the will of the U.S administration. Harmon and Muenchen (2009) analyzed one-year broadcast news records after 9/11 attacks from 11th September to 11th October 2002. They found that framing words and phrases are seen harmonizing Bush government's thrust for waging war against Afghanistan. Fox News promoted pro-war terminology more than ABC, CNN, CBS, CNBC, NBC, and other public broadcasting. They found that the top-ten words were war, president, people, state, united, resolution, weapon, destruction, Bush and Saddam. The content of the press shows that Iraqi links to al-Qaeda and Weapons of Mass Destruction were topics often repeated in the US press. Both CNN and Fox News had higher proportion of pro-war and lower proportion of anti-war terminology as compared to other broadcasts.

According to Soroka (2001), agenda setting of the media impacts the policy making as well as influence the media. Vangshardt and Poulsen (2009) investigated the impact of the agenda of regional newspapers during 2008 US presidential elections. They found that the newspapers shaped the general perception of the people regarding the important issues of the US. Firstly, they found that the U.S political actors had an edge due to the diversity of the mass media which was easily accessible across the US. Secondly, their analysis put forward that election campaigns in US are heavily dependent upon news media for promotion. Thirdly, they stated that the news media is the primary source of information and shaping the public opinion. According to Friedenber and Trent (2000), media has had a significant effect on electoral process that brought public and presidential actors close together during elections campaigns. It has been identified through research that changes in media coverage causes subsequent changes in the awareness of different issues (Mahmood et al., 2013). The coverage of South Korean elections 2000 indicated that the internet as a mass medium has influenced the formation of public opinion to a great extent for political campaigning (Lee et al., 2005).

Counter political reaction can be experienced by media if it does not support the government stance on any national issue. The reason behind this reaction is that they too are affected by media approach as ordinary citizens. Political actors actually consume news, and, in their eye, the covered issue is highly important and policy adopted by the government is absolutely right (Eilders, 1997). Media agenda is highly functional and workable in the U.S elections since 1964 and its impact were seen in the recent elections of John Kerry and George W. Bush (Bostick, 2005)

Larcinese et al., (2005) analyzed the US newspapers from 1996-2005 to assess the development of political behaviors among voters. They found a relationship between the agenda of these newspapers and political affiliation of the public. They established that the newspapers with pro-democratic stance covered unemployment less despite of the fact that the country's unemployment ratio was much higher, and the public perceived this issue as least important accordingly. Kahn and Kenney (2002) analyze newspaper coverage of 37 U.S senatorial campaigns across three election years. Coding the tone used in articles provides the evidence that the reporting and the use of words supported government stance on senatorial campaigns with positive coverage.

Ali and Khalid (2008) inspect the media coverage of twelve Muslim countries by Time Magazine and Newsweek from 1991 to 2001. U.S has the prescribed agenda in which specific identity is given to certain Muslim countries i.e allies, enemies and neutral counties. This is based on the nature of relationship U.S has with these Muslim countries. This agenda is supported by the print media. They portray these countries with the labels given by the government. Content analysis of articles shows that the ratio of negative coverage of these Muslim countries is higher than the ratio of positive coverage. Vreese (2005) believes that the news framing with positive and negative portrayal of any event can shape public support for governmental policies. Media is the bridge that uses supportive framing mechanism using headlines, photojournalism, captions, sources, statistics, and written paragraphs to influence the audience.

Weaver and Elliott (1985) find that the local newspapers played the role of a transmitter rather than the filter of agenda set by the authority. Philosophiae (2007) argues that news flow in Singapore is supportive to the government stance taken on the national issues. The government agenda is reinforced by media coverage related to any issue including press, television and radio. The role of political leaders in setting the media agenda is strongly established in the on 'War on Iraq' in three American newspapers. It is found that heavy reliance of media on official sources for

surveillance resulted in the support of the agenda set by the government. This set agenda influenced public opinion strongly with the help of media (Tajima et. al., 2003).

Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007) believe that 9/11 attacks and Afghan War shows framing process. U.S Media frames have portrayed the attack and its aftereffects in such a way that it is having support for war in Afghanistan. McCombs et. al. (1997) argue that Bush Administration does not only control American people with “what to think about” but manipulates them in terms of “how to think about some objects” with media support.

Riaz (2008) analyzed content of two Pakistani leading newspapers--- the Dawn and the Jang. Major issues covered were terrorism, Pak-India relations, energy and food crisis, problems of judiciary and the issue of Lal Masjid. It was found that media agenda setting worked well except the two issues of energy and food crises. These two issues were on the top of the public agenda, but the coverage given to these two issues was low in the media. It concludes that personal problem of public is independent of media agenda. But the remaining issues are having strong relationship with media portrayal. Whereas Jones and Baumgartner (2004) argue that government requires agenda-setting for the media to satisfy its public. In this way public perceptions are mold in favor of the government efforts it makes for the public.

Main Hypothesis: Pakistani press supports the government stance on Composite Dialogue.

Sub Hypothesis-1: Hard news stories are more favorable towards the government stance on Composite Dialogue as compared to soft news stories.

Sub Hypothesis-2: Stories contributed by private sources are more favorable towards government stance as compared to stories contributed by the government sources.

Sub Hypothesis-3: The frequency of stories that support the government stance on Composite Dialogue is more than the stories that oppose.

Sub Hypothesis-4: The mean length of stories that oppose the government stance on Composite Dialogue war on is greater than the mean length of the stories that support the government stance on Composite Dialogue

Sub Hypothesis-5: The slant of the daily Nawa-i-waqat is more favorable towards the government stance on Composite Dialogue as compared to the daily Nation.

METHODOLOGY

The study is basically a content analysis of the Pakistani Urdu newspapers. It has examined the coverage of “Composite Dialogue between Pakistan and the India” in the two Urdu Dailies – The Jang and The Nawa i Waqt from 1st October 2018 to 30 1st September 2019 that makes the period of one year. The newspapers are selected based on their vast circulation and reputation as the leading and influential newspapers of the country. Population of the study is all news stories on Composite Dialogue between Pakistan and India published in both the newspapers during the specific period.

The content in these stories formed the unit of analysis. The units of analysis were determined according to the formula introduced by Twohey in 1941. According to this formula, these contents were first classified as ‘relevant or irrelevant.’ Relevancy was determined on basis of coverage given to the events of acts and issues of terrorism. The relevant contents were then classified in the following fashion: Hard news and soft news stories; Government and Private sources; foreign, Pakistani; supporting and opposing stories.

Coding Scheme

For the determination of slant (supporting, opposing and neutral), each paragraph was the coding unit and the whole story the contextual unit. Thus, story was the unit of statistical analysis. Comprehensive rules were developed for measuring each variable and its categories in this study. In order to test inter-coder reliability, a small separate study of 25 stories was conducted. The sample study yielded 90% agreement for topic, 88% for type of stories, 84% for byline, and 81% for source and 89% for slant. Cross tabulation, frequency, and difference of proportion was used to analyze the data and Chi-square and t-test were used to test the hypotheses and sub hypotheses.

Operationalization of the significant terms

Framing: Framing means that how a news story was presented and organized in the context of war on terror. The present study used three frames namely i. Support government stance ii. Oppose government stance, and iii. Neutral that is neither support nor oppose the government stance.

Slant: The use of language that supports or opposes the government regarding war on terror.

Hard news: Stories that are based on facts and statistics and are mostly published on the front and back pages of the two dailies selected for the study.

Soft news: Stories that tell background, draw conclusions, and offer opinions. It includes columns, features and editorials.

Government source: The story that is originated from the government source such as APP, press note, government official press releases and news conferences.

Private source: Sources other than government for example, national and international private news agencies.

The mean length of stories: It was measured from counting the number of words in the relevant stories.

FINDINGS

Finding-1: The number of the stories in both dailies that support the government stance on war on terror is greater than the number of stories that oppose the government stance. The slant of both the newspapers is favorable towards government, i.e., 1248 (50.0%) news stories as compared to unfavorable slant i.e. 567 (22.7%) and the difference is statistically significant (chi square =16.353; p =0.000).

Table No. 1. Name of newspaper, slant in the story, cross tabulation.

Newspaper	Jang	Count	Slant		Total	
			supportive	opposing		Neutral
		540	189	265	994	
		% Within Newspaper	54.3%	19.0%	26.7%	100.0%
		% Within slant	43.3%	33.3%	39.0%	39.8%
	Nawa-e-waqt	Count	708	378	415	1501
		% Within Newspaper	47.2%	25.2%	27.6%	100.0%
		% Within slant	56.7%	66.7%	61.0%	60.2%
Total		Count	1248	567	680	2495
		% Within Newspaper	50.0%	22.7%	27.3%	100.0%
		% Within slant	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Finding-2: Both the genres of news stories, i.e., hard news and soft news have more favorable than unfavorable slant towards government stance on war on terror. The number of favorable stories in hard news is 895 (71.7%) as compared to favorable stories in soft news i.e., 353 (28.3%). So hard news stories have more favorable slant than soft news stories and the difference is statistically significant (chi-square =16.331; p =0.000).

Table No. 2. Slant in the story, story types, cross tabulation

slant	supportive	Count	News		Total
			Hard	Soft	
		895	353	1248	
		% Within slant	71.7%	28.3%	100.0%
	Opposing	Count	443	124	567
		% Within slant	78.1%	21.9%	100.0%
	Neutral	Count	538	142	680
		% Within slant	79.1%	20.9%	100.0%
		% Within News			

Total	Count	1876	619	2495
	% Within slant	75.2%	24.8%	100.0%

Finding-3: Both the sources Government and Private supported the Government stance on the composite dialogue with India. However, the private source is more supporting towards government stance on composite dialogue with India as compared to private source. The number of favorable stories in private source is 77.40% as compared to favorable stories contributed by government source, i.e., 22.6% and difference is statistically significant (chi square =17.600; p=0.000).

Table No. 3. Slant in the story, story source, cross tabulation

		Source			
		Private	Government	Total	
slant	supportive	Count	966	282	1248
		% Within slant	77.4%	22.6%	100.0%
		% Within Byline	48.0%	58.3%	50.0%
	opposing	Count	483	84	567
		% Within slant	85.2%	14.8%	100.0%
		% Within Byline	24.0%	17.4%	22.7%
	Neutral	Count	562	118	680
		% Within slant	82.6%	17.4%	100.0%
		% Within Byline	27.9%	24.4%	27.3%
Total		Count	2011	484	2495
		% Within slant	80.6%	19.4%	100.0%
		% Within Byline	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Finding-4: The frequency of appearance of favorable stories towards government stance on Composite Dialogue with India is higher than the frequency of appearance of unfavorable stories towards government stance. The frequency of favorable stories is 50.0% as compared to unfavorable stories that is 22.7% and difference is statistically significant (chi square =320.302; p=0.000).

Table No. 4. Frequency of the story, story nature, cross tabulation.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	support	1248	50.0	50.0	50.0
	oppose	567	22.7	22.7	72.7
	Neutral	680	27.3	27.3	100.0
	Total	2495	100.0	100.0	

Finding-5: The mean length of supportive stories is greater than opposing stories. It is 615.94.16 as compared to mean length of supporting stories that is 579.52. The difference is statistically significant (t-test =104.245; p=.000)

Table No. 5. The mean length of stories—supporting vs. opposing

Slant in the story	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Supportive	615.94	1247	673.532
Opposing	579.52	567	669.772
Neutral	578.92	679	797.432
Total	597.57	2493	708.560

Finding-6: The Nawa-e-Waqt slant towards government stance on Composite Dialogue with India is more favorable as compared to the Jang. The number of favorable stories is 708 (56.7%) as compared to the Jang where the number of favorable stories is 540(43.3%) and the difference is statistically significant (chi square =16.353; p=0.000).

Table No. 6. Slant in the story, newspapers, cross tabulation.

		Newspaper		Total	
		Jang	Nawa-e-waqt		
slant	supportive	Count	540	708	1248
		% Within slant	43.3%	56.7%	100.0%

opposing	Count	189	378	567
	% Within slant	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%
Neutral	Count	265	415	680
	% Within slant	39.0%	61.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	994	1501	2495
	% Within slant	39.8%	60.2%	100.0%

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The analysis of 2495 stories from two Urdu newspapers suggests that overall stance of government of Pakistan on war on terror is supported by the Pakistani press. Thus, it supports the main hypothesis that the approach of the Pakistani press is more favorable than unfavorable towards government stance on Composite Dialogue. The reason behind this support of government is the long-lasting chequered history of strained relations between these two neighbor states. Both the countries are on the threshold of nuclear war and faced each other in three wars. The people of these two countries have suffered a lot and now a shift is seen in the from both sides who want to promote peace and prosperity in the region and that is possible only by building friendly relations between these two countries. A new form of diplomacy known as media diplomacy is evolved in contrast with traditional diplomacy. The main objective of media diplomacy is to arrive on consensus on number of issues between these two countries by giving voice to non state actors and civil society organizations and people of the region. So, Pakistani press supported government in its peace dialogue with India. The good relations between these two countries and amicable solution of issues between these two countries will bring peace and prosperity in the region and improve the economic condition of the people.

Government support was found in both hard and soft news stories. In hard news stories favorable slant is dominant as compared to the favorable slant in soft news stories and the difference is statistically significant. Hence the sub hypothesis-1 was statistically proved that hard news stories are more favorable towards government stance on war on terror as compared to soft news stories.

Both government and private sources supported government stance on war on terror. The most favorable response to government stance on war on terror is contributed by stories from private source as compared to stories by private source and the difference is statistically significant. Thus, it supports the sub hypothesis-2 that stories contributed by government source are more favorable towards government stance as compared to stories contributed by private source. The reason behind is that Pakistani press is shifted its course from military approach to peace approach. They know that military is not the solution of the problem and durable peace in the region is possible only through table talks between these two countries.

The frequency of appearance of favorable news stories towards government stance on war on terror is higher than the frequency of unfavorable news stories towards government stance. The frequency of favorable stories is 42.4% as compared to unfavorable stories i.e., 17.0%. Thus, it supports the sub hypothesis-3 regarding the frequency of appearance of favorable and unfavorable stories.

Overall support to government stance on war on terror is favorable in the news stories. As far as length of the story is concerned, the mean story length of unfavorable stories is greater than favorable stories and the difference is statistically significant. Thus, it supports the sub hypothesis-4 that the mean length of favorable stories is greater than the mean length of unfavorable stories. The length is measured in words and the number of words contributed to favorable news stories is more than the words appeared in unfavorable news stories.

Both the newspapers supported government policy on composite dialogue with India. As compared to the Jang, the daily Nawa i Waqt provided more support to the government policy on composite dialogue. Thus, it supports the sub hypothesis-5 that the slant of the Naw i Waqat is more favorable towards government stance on composite dialogue as compared to the Jang. This difference is statistically significant. The reason behind this phenomenon is that the Nawa i Waqt major focus is

on the economic prosperity and peace in the country and that suffered due to strained relations between Pakistan and India. So, Nawa i Waqt supported Government stance on composite dialogue more favorably than the Jang.

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