

## **MEDIA COVERAGE AND PAK-US RELATIONS: ANALYSIS OF TV NEWS FRAMING DURING PTI'S REGIME**

**Sobia Abid\***

Assistant Professor, Department of Film and Broadcasting, School of Media & Communication Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore  
[sobiaabid51@gmail.com](mailto:sobiaabid51@gmail.com)

**Nadia Naseem**

Centre for Media and Communication Studies, University of Gujrat

**Muhammad Zahid Bilal**

Assistant Professor, Department of Media & Communication Studies, University of Okara

### **ABSTRACT**

*Foreign relations of Pakistan (Pak) with the United State of America (US) have a very long history of Ups and Downs and remain central to the politics of Pakistan. Pak-US relations also remain part of political and public discourse during elections and during the tenures of different political parties in the Government. Political parties in power or in the opposition are discussed with reference to their approach to foreign policy towards the US. The current study aims at examining how Pak-USA Relations were seen through the lens of media coverage, during PTI Government, taking into account the issues of Military Cooperation; Afghanistan Situation; Regional Disputes; War on Terror; and CPEC. The study is based on the news coverage of Pak-US relations in primetime TV news bulletins of two eminent Pakistani news channels GEO and ARY. The Descriptive Content Analysis method is used as a tool of analysis. Data was collected by watching the news bulletin of GEO and ARY news from August 18<sup>th</sup> 2018 to January 18<sup>th</sup> 2018. Agenda Setting and Framing approaches have been employed to analyze the news bulletins. All hypotheses are proven statistically by using the "t" test. The finding of this study is that both news channels Geo and ARY give positive coverage related to Pak-USA relations. These news channels have almost the same frames used regarding Pakistan and USA relationships in their 9 pm news bulletin headlines. In these frames, GEO and ARY news channels show that the relationships between Pakistan and the USA were very good during PTI's regime. Both countries were working bilaterally during this selecting time period.*

**Keywords:** Framing, PAK-USA Relations, News Channels, PTI, GEO, ARY

### **POLITICAL INFORMATION AND MEDIA**

Media and democracy go side by side and have an impact on social, political, economic, and foreign affairs (Mahsud et al., 2013). Media is the most dynamic source of information. It plays a main role in increasing cognizance and providing information to the masses (Iqbal, et al., 2014). The main motive of mass media is to update, teach, and cheer up the people. The mass media service is to find out information about many things and, it helps in the formation of opinions about different issues. Media informs and updates people that what is going on in their surroundings and around the globe (Naz, et al., 2014).

Pakistani media is providing information to the public through television, radio, and newspapers but television has become the central source due to its prevalence and its acceptance among the public. Yaser, et al., (2011) found that people take interest in watching television because television content gives much satisfaction as compared to radio and newspapers. Hence, TV is an important originator of information in Pakistani society. TV news channels are providing political information to the people around the clock and it has been seen that people are relying on news channels to get political information (Mahsud et al., 2013).

---

\* Corresponding Author

### **Media and Foreign Policy**

Sultan (2013) found in his study “Portrayal of Pak-US Relations in the elite press of Pakistan and the United States from June 2012 to December 2012”, analyzing the content of Daily Dawn from Pakistan and Washington Post from the USA, that newspapers both the countries have followed the foreign policy of their respective countries. The newspapers used those frames and angles that fit into their country’s policy.

Ali (2009) analyzed the outcomes of US Foreign Aid to Pakistan from 1947 to 2006 and came up with the findings that the funds have not been used to help in bringing democracy, human rights, freedom, and equal opportunities. He is of the view that the US has always been supportive of Pakistan for achieving its own geo-strategic objectives.

Lahtit (2002) discussed the policies of the United States toward the Indian and Pakistani nuclear weapons programs. The main objectives of this research were to discover the strategies of the United States towards the nuclear weapons programs of Pakistan and India, as both countries nuclear programs have been interdependent and can be better understood in their relationships with each other. While discussing the reasons and motives behind nuclear purification, it has been argued that both countries defend their nuclear program under the banner of security threat. The study analyzed how much the policies of the US have been successful in preventing proliferation. There have been discussed many reasons, but the key factor in failure was that it has been secondary to the US and the primary focus was on its own objective to block Russia.

Institute of Strategic Studies (2017) released an issue brief on “Pakistan-US Relations under Donald Trump.” These brief relationships between Pakistan and USA have been described since 1947 and discussed that the relationship between Pakistan and the USA has emerged as a ‘transaction’ which is based on the national interest of both countries. In spite of many issues, both countries have now depended on a relationship under the analytical dialogue. This unconventional partnership is not based on security interests but also based on other fields like education, trade, energy, and scientific cooperation. In this study researcher also tells some reasons why Trump cannot ignore Pakistan in the region. And why Trump gives importance to Pakistan in his foreign policy? First, without involving Pakistan the stabilization of the region is going to be difficult for the Trump government. Second, the CPEC project is equally important for Pakistan and USA. This trade route is consistent with the United States’ strategy of interconnecting South Asia and Central Asia. Third, the US wishes to have strong trade ties in a region. So, if Afghanistan and Pakistan region remain unstable, it will not suit the USA.

Hanif (August 30, 2018) explains the trajectory of Pakistan-US relations and is of the view that the future trajectory of Pak-US relations will remain quite bumpy. Pakistan has been an important partner of the US at a vital stage in modern history. Pakistan is always supporting the USA such as during the cold war and after 9/11, 2001 in the terrorist war in Afghanistan. Pakistan fully supports the USA in the terrorist war in Afghanistan and due to Pakistan’s support, the US was able to destroy Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. Pakistan also suffered heavy losses due to the war on terror in Afghanistan. But the US government is started blaming Pakistan for the friend Pakistan provided safe heavens to the Afghan Taliban. Pakistan feels many times that the US uses it as an ally to its advantage and doesn’t care about protecting Pakistan’s interests. Many times Pakistan needed the United States but the US never supported Pakistan.

During the 1965 and 1971 wars with India and after the return of the former Soviet Union from Afghanistan in 1989. President Trump’s policies toward Pakistan are tougher and very clear toward India. In 2007, Rex Tillerson and James Mattis visited Pakistan and repeated the “do more” demand. In 2008, President Trump blamed Pakistan in his tweet that Pakistan of giving them nothing but lies and deceit. On 5 January 2018, the United States of America postponed almost \$2 billion in safety funds to the Pakistani government. The Trump government has also stopped Pakistan military officers from training in the US. This practice had existed for decades. The above discussion shows that the US policies are pursuing its geopolitical goals in the region where it is prioritizing the latest allies such as India and Afghanistan.

Malik (2018) hoped that Pakistan and USA’s two-sided relationships would be better in the future. He tells there is much volatility in Pakistan and the United States but the Pak-US two-sided ties are termed as a roller coaster relationship. At this time, there is a lot of confidence in both states. In his official visit to Pakistan, Secretary of the United State Mike Pompeo said that he was hopeful

about the chance to “reset” the strained relations between both states USA and Pakistan under the new government of Prime Minister Imran Khan. Mike Pompeo also told the journalist, despite “a lot of challenges” in the US and Pakistan association but he was confident of finding “common grounds” with the new government. On one side, Pompeo talks about reorganizing the relationship with Pakistan’s new government but on the other side, Trump’s policies and behavior towards Pakistan have become active in hurtful to the USA relations with its old friend. Trump’s government has never been extremely interested in improving Pakistan and USA relations. So, the Pak-US relationship is currently not resettable.

A renowned diplomat, Akram (2019) has termed the Pak-US relations the closest and most disturbing relationships and have a great impact on the history of Pakistan. These relationships in 2017 were very critical when US president Donald John Trump suspended high-level contacts, and military funds and asked for Pakistan’s collaboration on the Afghanistan issue. In the next 18 months, Pak-US relations rebuild when the US requested Islamabad to play its role in talks between the US government and Afghan Taliban. Pakistan has accepted the US request. Due to Pakistan’s help, several meetings regarding US-Taliban negotiations were held in Doha. In these meetings, the US demanded the removal of US troops from Afghanistan and to stop Afghanistan’s land from being used as a base for global terrorism in the future. However, the Taliban has denied the USA’s demands.

In response to the support provided by Pakistan to facilitate Doha Talks, there was a hope that Pak-US relations will get strengthened. But the US has not given any great exception to Pakistan. To, restore friendly and balanced relations with the US, Pakistan needs to establish itself as capable of generating independent economic resources and overcoming internal issues (Akram, 2019).

In the backdrop of all these factors, during the PTI regime, the Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Shah Mahmud Qureshi always articulated that Pakistan’s relations with the US were not cordial in the past but due to our ‘successful foreign policy’ relations between both countries were improving and about to take a new turn (Pakistan Today, June 14, 2019).

### **Media Framing and Agenda Setting**

Framing and agenda-setting theoretical approaches have been employed in this research. Agenda setting posits that media content prioritizes the issues in a way that media consumers think about those issues with the same intensity. On other hand, framing theory argues in what ways media frame the issues and tell the viewers how to think about those issues (Rogers & Dearing, 1988, p.555). The first systematic study to find out the implications of this theory was submitted by McCombs and Shaw in 1972 (Werner et.al, 1997). Hence, the present study argues that the news of Pak-US relations in TV news bulletins may be presented, considering the relevant issues, in a way that viewers may have their view to take them as an important factor to understand Pak-US relations.

In the course of the framing of news stories for the media outlets, the reporters upgrade and redesign our pictures of the world. This way of media is called the agenda-setting function of media (McCombs, 2002 as cited in Roshan & Parvez, 2016). Media sets the agenda and presents the things or issues according to their own interest, in such a way people attracts to it and they start thinking about it as “The most real impact of mass media is that they may not fruitful in telling us what to think, but they are unusually fruitful in telling us what to think about” (Shaw and McCombs,1977 as cited in Jan, et. all).

Framing approaches take a different turn and explore the second level of agenda setting, focusing more on how to think about the issues presented in media. Thus, it is an expanded form of Agenda Setting. Here the focus remains on the different angles and attributes of the issue discussed in media instead of a particular topic. This theory highlights the power of media to influence how events or issues are interpreted. Framing theory is a way of giving a story to a viewer, which encourages a favorite explanation of alleged realism in prominence of certain aspects and matters while disliking others and establishing links between them (D’Angelo, 2019). Framing approach was originally referred to the Goffman (1974) and further Tuchman (1978, p. 192) extended it, defining the frame as the process in which ‘unrecognized events’ become ‘noticeable events’ (Goffman,1974 & Tuchman, 1978, p. 192 as cited in Alshathry, 2015).

Frame setting and frame building are also important aspects of the framing theory which Scheufele (1999) has described in detail. According to him, frame building refers to the subtleties of how information is structured indicating specific frames in communication, and frame setting referred

to the audience's reaction to the particular frame they consumed (Scheufele, 1999 as Cited in Yousaf, 2015).

Hence keeping in view all the factors of media, foreign policy, political issues, and its framing, the following objectives have been set to achieve through the process of content analysis of primetime TV news bulletins of Geo and ARY TV.

- To describe the news coverage of Pak-US relations during PTI's regime on different TV channels.
- To explore the difference in the news coverage of Pak-USA relations on the TV screens of Geo and ARY.
- To identify the news frames employed by the Geo and ARY Television in their primetime news bulletins, regarding Pak-US relations issues.

As both TV news channels are working in a very competitive environment. Thus, on political issues and political parties, it seems that Geo and ARY have different views which makes difference in the coverage and treatment of news, in their news bulletins (Hassan, 2018). Therefore, the hypothesis formulated:

- H1: There is a significant difference among the frames on GEO and ARY news channels related to Pak-USA relations news.
- H0: There is no significant difference among the frames on GEO and ARY news channels related to Pak-USA relations news.

### **Methods and Material**

This study describes the coverage of Pak-US relations on two competitive TV news channels of Pakistan i.e Geo and ARY. In this connection, Primetime news bulletins, aired from 9:00 pm to 10:00 pm, of both channels have been analyzed. Data has been analyzed, taking the sampling frame form from August to 18 January 2019. Descriptive and analytical statistics have been used to analyze the data, and the "t" test was used to compare the difference.

### **Political Issues related to Pak-US Relations**

Data for the analysis was collected by employing 'content analysis' as a method of research. News headline related to Pak-US relations in the news bulletins was set as a unit of analysis. Coding sheet was designed to place the unit of analysis into the respective categories developed with reference to Pak-US relations. These categories were: Military cooperation towards Pak-USA; Afghanistan situation; Regional disputes; the War on terror; and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Three frames were classified to check the direction of the frame i.e. positive, negative and neutral frames. These three frames were operationalized as: Positive frame shows positive behavior of Pakistan and USA; Negative frame shows negative behavior of Pakistan and USA; Neutral frame shows balanced behavior of Pakistan and USA.

### **Military Cooperation**

Funding, support, development, training, visits to military commands, and mutual activities fall into this category.

### **Afghanistan Situation**

Peace dialogues, Doha talks, American troops in Afghanistan, Taliban, war on terror, terrorist attacks, air strikes, and troops withdrawn from Afghanistan have been operationalized as Afghanistan situation.

### **Regional Issues**

The present study, it refers to Pakistan's regional relations with India, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and China also matter in Pak-US relations. CPEC, Jamal Khashoggi murder case, and Dr. Aafia Siddiqui were considered regional issues.

### **War on Terror**

Drone attacks, terrorist attacks, air strikes, bomb blasts, Taliban attacks, and military operations were taken into account to operationalize the war on terror.

### **CPEC**

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has been operationalized keeping in view the silk route, developmental projects in Pakistan with the support of China, Pak-China relations, Pak-China officials exchange visits, and official statements of China's ambassador and US ambassador to Pakistan.

**DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

To compare the news of Pak-USA relations news being presented on GEO and ARY news channels Co-efficient of Variation was determined.

**Table No. 1 Number of Positive News Regarding Pak-US Relations on GEO and ARY**

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
ARY Positive News	154	16.36	26.809	2.160
GEO Positive News	154	14.81	25.952	2.091

According to the Table, 1 overall average time of positive News on GEO was 14.81 minutes with a standard deviation of 25.952 minutes in 154 days and the overall average time of positive News on ARY was 16.36 minutes with a standard deviation of 26.809 minutes in 154 days. So according to the mean value, ARY's positive News broadcasting time was more than GEO News from 18 August to 18 January.

**Table No. 2 Difference of Positive News Regarding Pak-US Relations on GEO and ARY**

t-test for Equality of Means							
	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	.518	306	.605	1.558	3.007	-4.358	7.475
Equal variances not assumed	.518	305.677	.605	1.558	3.007	-4.358	7.475

According to Table 2 as significance or p-value is 0.605 which is greater than  $\alpha = 0.05$  so  $H_0$  is accepted at a 5% level of significance. Therefore, there is no significant difference between the frames of Positive News on GEO and ARY news channels related to Pak-USA relations news.

**Table No. 3 Number of Negative News Regarding Pak-US Relations on GEO and ARY**

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
GEO Negative News	154	11.30	23.534	1.896
ARY Negative News	154	4.29	15.503	1.249

According to Table 3, the overall average time of negative News on GEO was 11.30 minutes with a standard deviation of 23.534 minutes in 154 days and the overall average time of negative News on ARY was 4.29 minutes with a standard deviation of 15.503 minutes in 154 days. So according to the mean value GEO's negative News broadcasting time was more than ARY News from 18 August to 18 January.

**Table No. 4 Difference of Negative News Regarding Pak-US Relations on GEO and ARY**

t-test for Equality of Means							
	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	3.088	306	.002	7.013	2.271	2.544	11.482
Equal variances not assumed	3.088	264.742	.002	7.013	2.271	2.542	11.484

According to Table 4 as significance or p-value is 0.02 which is less than  $\alpha = 0.05$ . Hence, there is a significant difference between the frames of Negative News on GEO and ARY news channels related to Pak-USA relations news.

**Table No. 5 Number of Neutral News Regarding Pak-US Relations on GEO and ARY**

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
GEO Neutral News	154	12.08	24.137	1.945
ARY Neutral News	154	7.40	19.797	1.595

According to Table, 5 overall average time of neutral News on GEO was 12.08 minutes with a standard deviation of 24.137 minutes in 154 days and the overall average time of neutral News on ARY was 7.40 minutes with a standard deviation of 19.797 minutes in 154 days. So according to the mean value GEO's neutral News broadcasting time was more than ARY News from 18 August to 18 January.

**Table No. 6 Difference of Neutral News Regarding Pak-US Relations on GEO and ARY**

t-test for Equality of Means							
	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	1.859	306	.064	4.675	2.516	-.275	9.625
Equal variances not assumed	1.859	294.716	.064	4.675	2.516	-.275	9.626

According to Table 6, as significance or p-value is 0.064 which is greater than  $\alpha = 0.05$  Thus, there is no significant difference between the frames of Neutral News on GEO and ARY news channels related to Pak-USA relations news.

## FINDINGS AND RESULTS OF THE STUDY

There is no significant difference between the frames of Positive News (p-value is 0.316) and Negative News (p-value is 0.100). on GEO and ARY news channels related to "Military Cooperation towards Pak-USA.

There is no significant difference between the frames of Positive News (p-value is 0.879), Negative News (p-value is 0.312), and Neutral News (p-value is 0.125) on GEO and ARY news channels related to "Afghanistan Issue". There is no significant difference between the frames of Positive News (p-value is 0.200), Negative News (p-value is 0.101), and Neutral News (p-value is 0.125) on GEO and ARY news channels related to "Regional Dispute". There is no significant difference between the frames of Positive News (p-value is 0.703), Negative News (p-value is 0.126), and Neutral News (p-value is 0.316) on GEO and ARY news channels related to "War on Terror". There is no significant difference between the frames of Positive News (p-value is 0.703), Negative News (p-value is 0.316) and Neutral News (p-value is 0.100) on GEO and ARY news channels related to "CPEC"

## CONCLUSION

Covering Pakistan and US relations has always been a priority of Pakistani media. Pakistani audiences take much interest in news about Pakistan and United States relations, knowing whether the direction of the relations is positive or negative toward the ruling party. Getting aware of the direction may help them to understand the policies of both countries. The present study clarifies that Pakistani news channels GEO and ARY have given more importance to Pak-US relations during PTI's regime in its 9:00 pm news bulletin. GEO news has given more coverage to Pak-US relations news as compared to the ARY news channel.

Findings of the research show that both news channels GEO and ARY have given more positive coverage than negative coverage to Pakistan and US relations. Both news channels GEO and ARY also gave equal coverage on some issues like the military cooperation situation but they gave more coverage to Afghanistan situation. The present study claims that GEO and ARY news channels

used the same frames regarding Pak-US relations. There was no significant difference among the frames on GEO and ARY news channels related to Pak-US relations news during PTI's regime.

## REFERENCES

- Akram, M. (May 12, 2019). *Future of Pak-US relations*. Retrieved June Tuesday, 2019, from dawn.com: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1481779>
- Ali, M. (2009). US Foreign Aid to Pakistan and Democracy: An Overview. *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences (PJSS)*, 29(2).
- Ali, Z., Jan, M., & Saleem, N. (2013). Portrayal of Pakistan by US leading news magazines. *Science International Lahore*, 25(4), 965–970.
- Alshathry, T. (2015). A comparative framing analysis of ISIL in the online coverage of CNN and Al-Jazeera.
- Cambridge Dictionary. (n.d). Category. Retrieved November Sunday, 2018, from dictionary.cambridge.org: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/category>
- D'Angelo, P. (2019). Framing theory and journalism. *Vos, Tim P.; Hanusch, Folker. The international encyclopedia of journalism studies*, 1-10.
- Hassan, A. (2018). Language, media, and ideology: Critical discourse analysis of Pakistani news bulletin headlines and its impact on viewers. *Sage Open*, 8(3), 2158244018792612.
- Hanif, M. (2018, August Thursday). Likely future trajectory of Pakistan-US relations. Retrieved March Friday, 2019, from dailytimes.com.pk: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/290019/likely-future-trajectory-of-pakistan-us-relations>
- Institute of Strategic Studies. (2017, January Wednesday). Issue Brief on “Pakistan-US Relations under Donald Trump”. Retrieved December Friday, 2018, from issi.org.pk: <http://www.issi.org.pk/issue-brief-on-pakistan-us-relations-under-donald-trump/>
- Iqbal, M. J., Ali, F. M., Khurshed, M. B., & Saleem, S. (2014). Analysis of role of media in disaster reporting in Pakistan. *European Scientific Journal, ESJ*, 10(10).
- Jan, M. (2013). Print media on coverage of political parties in pakistan: treatment of opinion pages of the 'Dawn' and 'news'. *Gomal University Journal of Research*, 29(1), 118-128.
- Lahti, M. (2002). The policies of the United States towards the Indian and the Pakistani nuclear weapons programs.
- Lexico. (n.d). methodology. Retrieved February Saturday, 2019, from lexico.com: <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/methodology>
- Mahsud, N. M., Chaudhry, A. I., Amin, S., & Khan, S. M. (2013). Television channels' current affairs programs and students' gratification: A case of University of Sargodha. *Berkeley Journal of Social Sciences*, 3(1), 1-18.
- Malik, M. R. (2018, September Thursday). Pak-US ties: A reset or upset? Retrieved March Sunday, 2019, from nation.com.pk: <https://nation.com.pk/13-Sep-2018/pak-us-ties-a-reset-or-upset>
- Naz, N., Nawaz, Y., Ali, M., Hussain, N., Mushtaq, S. K., & Nawaz, R. (2014). Role of Talk Shows Raising Political Awareness among Youth (Study Conducted in District Toba Tek Singh). *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 3(1), 223
- Pakistan Today. (2019, June Friday). Pak-US relations. Retrieved April Sunday, 2019, from pakistantoday.com.pk: <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2019/06/14/pak-us-relations-15/>
- Perloff, R. M. (2013). *The dynamics of political communication: Media and politics in a digital age*. Routledge.
- Rafique, N. (2017). Pakistan-US Relations Under Donald Trump. Issue Brief released by Institute of Strategic Studies; Islamabad retrieved from <http://issi.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Final-Issue-brief-dated-04-1-2017.pdf>
- Reese, S. D. (2007). The framing project: A bridging model for media research revisited. *Journal of communication*, 57(1), 148-154.
- Roshan, R., & Parvez, M. A. *Media Agenda: Analysis Of The News Coverage On Pakistan Television*.
- Sultan, M. S. (2013). Portrayal of Pak-US relations in Elite Press of Pakistan and United States during Raja Pervaiz Ashraf Regime (June 2012-December 2012). *Journal of Mass Communication Journalism*, 3(2), 149.

- USCLibraries. (2019, January Tuesday). Organizing Your Social Sciences Research Paper: Theoretical Framework. Retrieved April Monday, 2019, from libguides.usc.edu: <https://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/theoreticalframework>
- Wikipedia. (n.d). Framing (social science). Retrieved August Monday, 2018, from wikipedia.org: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Framing\\_\(social\\_sciences\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Framing_(social_sciences))
- Yaser, N., Mahsud, N., & Chaudhry, I. A. (2011). Effects of exposure to electronic media political content on voters' voting behavior. *Berkeley Journal of Social Science*, 1(4), 1-22.
- Yousaf, S. (2015). Representation of Pakistan: A Framing Analysis of the Coverage in the US and Chinese News Media Surrounding Operation Zarb-e-Azb. *International Journal of Communication*, 9, 23.
- Yourdictionary. (n.d). frame. Retrieved September Monday, 2018, from yourdictionary.com: <https://www.yourdictionary.com/frame>