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<b>Article:</b>	<b>Evaluating the Influence of Policy Certainty and Violence on Coverage of Policy Issues in Pakistani Media</b>
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### **Abstract**

This article examines the government and press relationship in the context of foreign policy related issues in Pakistan, where the nature of [policy]issues are subjected to frequent changes. The content analysis of three selected issues reflects the existence of soft relationship between media and government in the [violent]issue of Kashmir and Salala check post attack while the policy uncertainty in the issue to join the Saudi Arab led military coalition, instead of soft relations, triggered, comparatively more critical coverage in the selected newspapers- Dawn and The News.

**Keywords:** Issue of Kashmir, Violence, Policy Uncertainty, Salala Attack, Counter Terrorism Coalition

## Introduction

The media and government relationship has been studied by different scholars including Aday, 2010; Althaus, 2003; Bennett, 2003; Entman, 2003; Lawrence, 2000; Robinson, 2000; and many others. These scholars focused on the media-policy nexus to evaluate and identify factors that build relations between media and government, either favorable or critical. These research studies have, mainly, focused on the coverage of western governments' foreign affairs during the international and humanitarian crisis, where the media has mostly taken the government policy guidelines into consideration.

Focusing on the western democratic system, the available scholarship on political communication, mainly, evaluate the role of media during humanitarian crisis and the U.S and other western countries' intervention, particularly in Latin America, Middle East and Southeast Asia- Vietnam (Hallin, 1986; Robinson, 2000 & 2009; Wolfsfeld et al., 2013). However, the [western] media, owing to the freedom of press and, particularly, the opposition's voices against any foreign policy matter that may surface elite dissensus (Bennett, 1990) frame the foreign policy issue or event critically. For instance, the American media do not essentially favor the U.S governmental policy because of the freedom of press. Hence, sometimes the media become a voice for those opposing the government's policy as Banyan (2012) argued that the *New York Times* opposed U.S. foreign policy towards Pakistan.

In this study, contrary to the sustainable political system in western countries, the researchers attempt to evaluate the media-policy nexus in Pakistan, where fluctuated political system weaken the political elites' control over policy-making process, and the military that directly ruled the country for almost half of its existence (Hussain, 2020) holds strong position in policy formation (Siddiqua, 2006).

Apart from the different political systems i.e. the stabilized one in the West and fluctuated one in developing countries like Pakistan, which may determine the media coverage of foreign policy related issues or events, the researchers also look at the nature of involvement in conflict/ war in the broader context of foreign policy. Whereas, the nature of involvement is classified into two types i.e. indirect and direct. The later type prevails, most often, in Pakistan, wherein it has been in confrontation with its neighbor- India on the long-awaited dispute of Kashmir, and has been engaged in war on terror after the U.S attack on Afghanistan- the northwestern neighbor of Pakistan.

Due to direct involvement, it is obvious that the suffering of local people in Pakistan led the media to index the [violent-laden] crisis to the range of elite opinion and priorities (Bennett, 1990, 1993) while applying the nationalistic stance in its coverage on the issue of Kashmir and war on terror, as the same was examined by Iqbal, M.Z., & Hussain (2018) in Pakistani media.

However, when the foreign policy issue such as the Yemeni conflict, where Pakistan failed to adopt a certain policy line, the [Pakistani] media produced critical coverage (Hussain, 2020). Unlike Pakistan, the media in western countries including the U.S. cover, mostly, the conflict at distance as their respective governments intervened in conflicts/war that happened in countries other than their own like intervention in Somalia in 1992 (Livingston & Eachus, 1995) and the U.S. intervened in Iraq in 1991 (Cohen, 1994). Initially, the U.S. government-controlled media during the time of interventions; however, when some events during wartime including human casualties, and even the incidents of friendly fire went beyond the control of government, resultantly, the influence of government over media decreased (Livingston and Bennett, 2003), hence, critical coverage was witnessed in western media in such particular circumstances.

In the context of media-policy interaction, the above discussion indicates that the western media exercise, comparatively, maximum freedom than developing countries like

Pakistan. But, this situation is to be evaluated in proper context i.e. the political environment, in which governments are taking decisions. For instance, the war at home situation, most probably, does not allow media organizations to take oppositional line rather they, most obviously, follow the government's policy line as suggested by different scholars including Bennett & Paletz, 1994; Carpenter, 1995; Reese & Lewis, 2009.

Carrying the above narrative, the researchers have selected three events, which had direct impact on Pakistan's foreign policy, to evaluate the nature of coverage in the broader context of media- government relationship. The main objective of this study is to examine whether and to what extent the nature of issue [violent or nonviolent] determine the nature of coverage of the foreign policy related events in Pakistani media. Before going into review of relevant literature, the researchers give a brief of the relationship between media and Pakistani's government, especially in the context of media development in last two decades.

### **Media- government relations after the advent of private TV Channels**

Shift in media industry in Pakistan was witnessed after many of private television channels and radio stations were established under the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority [PEMRA] ordinance. A notable evolution has been recorded since PEMRA granted licenses to [TV] and radio stations to operate in 2002 (Mezzera, M., & Sial, S., 2010). This development has ended the state-owned television broadcast- PTV's dominance in Pakistan (Waseem, 2006).

Initially, there was amiable relationship between media and government in the regime of the then president of Pakistan, Pervaiz Musharraf as his government adopted, comparatively, liberal policy about press (Siraj, S. A., 2009). However, later on media passed through a difficult time when government declared a state of emergency on November 3, 2007, subsequently, the government suspended the constitution, dissolved the supreme court and restricted the press (Ricchiardi, S., 2012).

The relationship between government and media in Pakistan, mostly, remained inimical, wherein the media [\*specially those media outlets that confront with government like the Jang group at present] has often been paid for freedom of press. It is presumed that the relationship between government and media becomes tense when the latter challenge the government. For instance, the current government is not different from her predecessors in handling, tackling or, even, controlling the media (The News, 2020). However, the current government, after a short span of its win in 2018, took decision of giving the state-run media editorial independence, which the International Press Institute (IPI) welcomed and looked at the decision as important step towards a better state of press freedom in Pakistan (Dawn, 2018).

Though media flourished, tremendously, after the PEMRA ordinance, 2002, and exercised freedom; however, the overall scenario has never been remained ideal for media in Pakistan. So many ordinances [laws] including "the Defamation Ordinance- 2002, the Contempt of Court Ordinance- 2003, the Press – Newspapers – News Agencies and Books Registration Ordinance- 2003, the Press Council Ordinance- 2002, and the Access to Information Ordinance of 2006" etc. were promulgated that were, mainly, meant to control media (International Media Support, 2009). Exercising these laws, government curbed the freedom of press and suppressed the critical voices, wherein it has been using the government advertisements as a controlling tool since the former government of Ayub Khan to the current one, this policy remained unchanged (The News, 2020).

Keeping in view the antagonistic relationship between media and government, which prevails most of the time, it is worth to investigate that how the media cover issues that have their impact, either adverse or positive, on Pakistan's foreign policy.

### **Literature Review: Theoretical perspective**

The available scholarship on media-policy relationship is ranging from the elite-driven models including media spheres model (Hallin, 1986), manufacturing consent model (Herman ES and Chomsky N., 1988) and indexing model (Bennett WL, 1990) to oppositional models such as cascading activation model (Entman, 2003) and event-driven model (Lawrence, 2000). Owing to diversified theoretical perspective of the media and policy or government relationship, researchers including Bennett & Paltez 1994; Cohen, 1994; Robinson 2001-2017 and Entman, 2003 vowed different arguments regarding the role of media in [foreign] policy-making.

Mostly, the available scholarship rounds around the humanitarian crisis and conflict at distance, wherein it is argued that daily media coverage of the hungry children in Somalia, forced the [U.S.] government to intervene in Somalia on humanitarian reasons (Cohen, 1994; Mandelbaum, 1994). Similarly, Cohen (1994) argued that the U.S. policy makers were forced by critical coverage of [global] television to intervene in Iraq in 1991 with a basic reason of saving the Kurds while on the same analogy the U.S. intervened in Somalia in 1992 to help people, who were suffering of massive shortage of food. These arguments support the event-driven model that suggests that media [can] influence government's policy when tragic events occurred, especially during war time (Lawrence, 2000).

The above arguments raise question, which is worth to investigate, that how and to what extent media influence policy-making process? In this regard, the available scholarship revealed a little or weak influence of media on foreign policy matters (Livingston, Echus., 1995; Wheeler, 2000; Robinson, 2001). In scholarly debate on the role of media in policy-making, it is argued that the U.S. intervention in Somalia doesn't provide evidence of the television's power that compelled the government rather it is evidence of the government's power of using/ mobilizing television (Mermin, 1999). However, apart from the discussion that either the media influence government's policy or government elites generate debate that media has to follow, time is another determinant of the media coverage of policy matters. In this regard, studies that evaluated the UK media role during wartime (Robinson et al, 2009) and the U.S. media coverage of war (Bennett et al., 2008) suggested that initially the media approach towards governments was supportive, but with the passage of time they [media] tended to critical coverage.

Pakistan, which is not only in confrontation with India on the issue of Kashmir and other issues like water dispute etc., but has also been facing law and order situation, particularly after 9/11 attacks in the U.S. hence, the Pakistani government has, most often, to deal with conflicts at home. Unlike, the policy treatment in western media that cover war/conflicts at distance, this study is an attempt to thoroughly evaluate the media -policy relationship in Pakistan in the context of "conflicts at home- a key determinant of media coverage of the policy related matters".

### **Synergy of indexing and media-policy interactions models**

Many scholars including Aday; Entman, 2003; Lawrence, 2000; Livingston, and Wolfsfeld, 1997, have contributed to the diversified nature of scholarship on media-government relationship in the context of [foreign] policy. They, mainly, studied the state of relationship between government and media during humanitarian crisis and conflicts while applying and/or presenting different theoretical perspectives.

Here, in the study the researchers present the synergy of two models i.e. indexing and media-policy interaction models, with a basic aim to investigate the relationship between media and government in Pakistan during policy crisis. For carrying out the study, the researchers have selected three issues including the U.S attack on Salala check post in Pakistan, the issue of Kashmir after the killing of Burhan Wani in Indian held Kashmir, and the issue of joining the Saudi Arab led Islamic military counter terrorism coalition.

While employing the indexing model (Bennett,1990) for media coverage of the politically controlled issue of Kashmir in the context of Burhan Wani's killing and the Pak-U.S relations after attack on Salala check post, most obviously, the Pakistani media gave dominant space to viewpoints of the political as well as military's elites in their coverage. Pakistani media seem dependent on elites' sources, as suggested by Bennett (1990), to avoid interrupting in the powerful political interests regarding the above foreign policy related issues.

The researchers applied the Pier Robinson (2001) policy-media interaction model with the basic aim to evaluate the nature of media coverage i.e. supportive, negotiated and critical to government's stance on the selected issues, where policy uncertainty prevails in the issue of Saudi Arab led Islamic countries' alliance while certainty exists on the issue of Kashmir, and Salala check post attack.

**R.Q.1:** What is the distribution of key frames and slants in foreign policy related issues when they are passing through a violent phase?

**R.Q.2:** In which scenario the media get more independence to framed selected issue[s] critically?

**Ho:** There is no significant relationship between media coverage and nature of issue [violent and nonviolent].

**H1:** There is significant relationship between media coverage and nature of issue [violent and nonviolent].

**Ho:** There is no significant relationship between media coverage and the issue of certainty.

**H2:** There is significant relationship between media coverage and the issue of certainty.

### **Research Methodology**

Investigating the government and media relations in the context of foreign policy issues, the researchers conducted the content analysis of two elite English language newspapers- *Dawn* and *The News*. These newspapers have established their credibility, besides having high circulation in the country (Ali, H., Hussain & et al., 2017). The timeframe set for the study consist of first three months after the killing of Burhan Wani in case of Kashmir issue, and carrying out attack on Salala check post by NATO forces. However, taking into consideration the wide spreading duration of the third issue i.e. Saudi Arab led military coalition, the timeframe consists of four months- March and April, 2015 and November-December, 2017, which were crucial periods of the issue.

After thoroughly reading of the relevant news stories on front and back pages of the selected newspapers the total 459 news stories were evaluated on the basis of 10 identified frames, relevant to the selected issues. Out of total news stories 68 stories were published on Salala attack, 162 news stories were related to the issue of joining the Saudi led alliance while the highest number of stories i.e. 229, were published on the issue of Kashmir. To analysis the media and government relationship at the time of policy crisis, the researchers used frames to get crux and clear image of issues (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989), and slants to determine the nature of media coverage (Entman, 2007).

### **Findings (testing research questions)**

**R.Q.1:** *What is the distribution of key frames and slants in foreign policy related issues when they are passing through a violent phase?*

Below tables 1 & 2 are consist of data relating to two selected issues i.e. Salala check post attack and the issue of Kashmir after the killing of Burhan Wani, a young popular freedom fighter, in India held Kashmir as both issues were passed through violent phase.

Table 1. Distribution of frames and slants regarding Salala check post attack

Newspapers	Protests/ condemnation	Pakistan's sovereignty	U.S.response to the issue	Total
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
Dawn	10	15	11	36
The News	08	18	06	32
Grant total	18 (26.47%)	33 (48.53%)	17 (25%)	68 (100)

$$X^2 (2, N=68) = 7.09, p < 0.02$$

Newspapers	Supportive	Negotiated/Neutral	Oppositional/Critical	Total
Dawn	22	09	05	36
The News	25	05	02	32
Grant total	47 (69.12%)	14 (20.59%)	07 (10.29%)	68(100)

$$X^2 (2, N=68) = 40.28, p = 0.000, \text{ or } p < 0.001$$

Table 2. Distribution of frames and slants regarding the issue of Kashmir

Newspapers	Legitimate struggle	Victimization of Kashmiri	Peaceful resolution	Role of international community	Total
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	
Dawn	26	50	10	21	107
The News	38	52	17	15	122
Grant total	64 (27.95%)	102 (44.54%)	27 (11.79%)	36 (15.72%)	229 (100)

$$X^2 (3, N=229) = 66.55, p < 0.001$$

Newspapers	Supportive	Negotiated/Neutral	Oppositional/Critical	Total
Dawn	66	26	15	107
The News	91	18	13	122
Grant total	157 (68.56%)	44 (19.21)	28 (12.23%)	229 (100)

$$X^2 (2, N=229) = 129.55, p < 0.001$$

In the table 1, it is shown that the selected newspapers framed the issue of Salala check post attack more in the context of Pakistan's sovereignty (48.53 %) followed by protests/condemnation frame (26.47%) and the U.S. response to the issue of Salala check post attack (25%). The chi square test shows that there is significant difference among the three framing categories i.e. Pakistan's sovereignty, protests/condemnation and U.S.response to the issue, in the coverage of selected newspapers ( $X^2 (2, N=68) = 7.09, p < 0.02$ ). The media coverage of the issue of Salala check post attack in light of three selected frames, mostly, go

in support of [Pakistan] government's immediate response to the issue, which it termed the attack against integrity and sovereignty of Pakistan. The slants, given in second part of table 1, show that 69.12% media coverage support the government's stance on Salala check post attack while 20.59% coverage was negotiated/neutral and 10.29% of the coverage criticized the government's policy towards U.S in the context of Salala incident.

The chi square test shows the significant differences among categories of slants, which confirming that media [Pakistani] give more supportive coverage when the issue is passing through violent phase ( $X^2 (2, N=68) = 40.28, p=0.000, \text{ or } p<0.001^*$ ).

*\*statistically, when the p-value is recorded 0.000 it would be considered as  $p<0.001$*

In the table 2, the selected newspapers framed the issue of Kashmir after Burhan Wani killing more in the context of victimization of Kashmiri by the hands of Indian security forces (44.54 %) followed by frame, seeking the international community role in resolving the issue (36.15%); wherein the selected newspapers framed the freedom struggle of local Kashmiri as their legitimate struggle (27.95%) and asking for peaceful resolution (11.79%0 of the issue of Kashmir. The chi square test reported significant differences among the above mentioned four framing categories i.e. ( $X^2 (3, N=229) = 66.55, p<0.001$ ). The coverage of selected newspapers indicates that Pakistani media was found focusing on victimization of Kashmiri as they were, reportedly, suffered of such like situation after the killing of Burhan Wani. The table 2, further in its part second, shows the nature of media coverage on the issue of Kashmir. Both the selected newspapers framed the issue in support of [Pakistani] government's stance (68.56%). However, the selected newspapers gave critical coverage (12.13%) to the issue of Kashmir while their negotiated/neutral coverage was recorded (19.21%) of the total coverage being given to the issue of Kashmir in the context of Burhan Wani's killing.

The chi square test shows the significant differences among categories of slants, confirming that media [Pakistani] give more supportive coverage when the issue is passing through violent phase, and there prevails politically controlled environment ( $X^2 (2, N=229) = 129.55, p<0.001$ ).

These findings are in line with the indexing model, which predicts that news content on political and policy issues, generally, indexing the elite debate (Bennett,1990). Similarly, the findings also support the key arguments of Robinson's media-policy interaction model that argues that there is possibility of media 'taking side' during elite debates over policy formulation (Robinson, 2001). Thus, the critical coverage is unlikely to occur when the [government's] policy is certain, and the issue is politically controlled by elites.

Table 3. Distribution of frames and slants regarding Saudi Arab led military coalition

Newspapers	Diplomatic/political process on Yemen	Neutrality	Policy uncertainty	Total
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
Dawn	40	15	28	83
The News	37	21	21	79
Grant total	77 (47.53%)	36 (22.22%)	49 (30.25%)	162 (100)
$X^2 (2, N=162) = 122.34, p<0.001$				
Newspapers	Supportive	Negotiated/Neutral	Oppositional/Critical	Total
Dawn	15	45	23	83
The News	19	31	29	79
Grant total	34 (20.99%)	76 (46.91%)	52 (32.10%)	162 (100)



$X^2(2, N=162) = 120.96, p < 0.001$

The above table 3 shows that unlike the issues of Kashmir and Salala, the selected newspapers framed the issue of joining the Saudi Arab led military coalition in a way that their coverage, mainly, urged diplomatic/political process on Yemen (47.53%) while indicating the policy uncertainty (30.25%) in Pakistan regarding the Yemen issue. This prevailing political scenario was resulted in 22.22% of neutral media coverage, where the government of Pakistan was asked to maintain neutrality on the issue. The chi square test confirmed the significant differences among all the three framing categories ( $X^2(2, N=162) = 122.34, p < 0.001$ ).

However, in the second part of table 3, the chi square test ( $X^2(2, N=162) = 120.96, p < 0.001$ ) shows that there are significant differences among categories of slants, confirming that media [Pakistani] give more negotiated and/or critical coverage when the issue is lacking policy certainty.

**R.Q.2: In which scenario the media get more independence to framed selected issue[s] critically?**

Comparing the data, given in the above three tables, it is shown that critical coverage in Pakistani media was, comparatively, reported high in the issue of joining the Saudi Arab led military coalition [see table.3], whereas the critical/ oppositional coverage was recorded 32.10% along with the negotiated coverage 46.91%, urging Pakistan to remain neutral in the issue relating to Yemen. In rest of issues the oppositional coverage was documented as 12.23% and 10.29% in the issue of Kashmir and Salala attack respectively. These findings are in line with the main arguments of the Pier Robinson (2001) model of policy-media interaction, where it is argued that there will be extensive and critical coverage of news media when the government policy line is uncertain (Robinson, 2017). Similar situation prevailed in the issue of joining the Saudi Arab led coalition as [Pakistan] government was uncertain not only about its role in the coalition but also about the [possible] reaction of Iran to issue.

On other issues, the media-government relations were found supportive to the stances of later as the selected newspapers gave 69.12% supportive coverage to the issue of Salala check post attack along with less critical coverage (10.29%) of the total coverage. Similarly, media approach towards the issue of Kashmir was more supportive (68.56%), comparing to the critical coverage (12.23%). These findings support the key arguments of indexing model i.e. the Pakistani media tended to reflect elite consensus on issue of Kashmir and the Pak-U.S relations in the context of Salala check post attack (Bennett, 1990).

**Testing research hypothesis**

**Table 4. Pearson Correlation Matrix**

		Slant	Nature of issue
Slant	Pearson Correlation	1	.634**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	459	459
Nature of issue	Pearson Correlation	.634**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	459	459

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The above table 4, shows the Pearson correlation matrix, whereas it explains the relationship of slants [media coverage] i.e. supportive, negotiated/neutral and oppositional/critical with the nature of issue i.e. violent and nonviolent. The Pearson correlation is 0.634 that, statistically, indicates that there is strong relations or association between the two given variables i.e. the nature of media coverage and nature of issue. Similarly, the P-value, which has been used to identify the relationship between the nature of issue and the nature of media coverage, is 0.000. Indicating that there exists strong relationship between the given variables. Statistically, when the P-value is recorded 0.000 then it would be taken/ considered as  $p < 0.001$ . In light of the above statistical findings reject the null hypothesis, and, subsequently approved the alternative hypothesis [H1] that there is significant relationship between media coverage and nature of issue [violent and nonviolent]. These findings support the indexing model, as the selected newspapers covered two out of three selected issues including Salala check post attack and the issue of Kashmir in light of the elite debate (Bennett,1990). However, the issue of joining the Saudi Arab led military coalition [see table 3], mainly, support the policy-media interaction model as the policy uncertainty (Robinson, 2017) produced more critical coverage than the rest of two issues.

**Table 5. Pearson Correlation Matrix**

		Slant	Issue of certainty
Slant	Pearson Correlation	1	.743**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	459	459
Issue of certainty	Pearson Correlation	.743**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	459	459

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The above table 5, shows the Pearson correlation matrix, explaining the relationship of slants [media coverage] with the issue of certainty i.e. policy certainty and policy uncertainty. The Pearson correlation is 0.743, indicating the existence of strong relationship between the two given variables i.e. the nature of media coverage and issue of certainty. Whereas the P-value, in this case too, is recorded 0.000. These findings reject the null hypothesis while confirming the alternative hypothesis [H2] that there is significant relationship between media coverage and the issue of certainty. These findings are also in line with the key arguments of the policy-media interaction model that determine the media coverage on the basis of policy certainty (Robinson, 2001).

### Concluding Summary

The researchers while analyzing the media coverage of the three selected issues, which had their effects on Pakistan's foreign policy towards India, the U.S. Saudi Arabia, and, to some extent, Iran, have studied the key arguments of indexing model (Bennett, 1990) and policy-media interaction model (Robinson, 2001). The main objective of the study was to evaluate that how the foreign policy related issues treated in Pakistani media. Besides, the study was also outlined the objective to examine that whether the findings of the study support the key arguments of existing literature or they are, potentially, challenge them. The overall findings, mixed in their nature, support the key arguments of both the models i.e. indexing and policy-media interaction in the prevailing political scenario in Pakistan. However, this study is subject to further addition or, even replication as there are certain limitations. The researchers only selected two elite English newspapers. Urdu as well as other regional language newspapers are also worth to be studied. Secondly, the nature of effect of

the policy issues is also worth to be examined, which may be an influencing factor. Suppose, if the issue has drastic and direct effects on a country, it is likely that its media will provide supportive coverage to government [refer to the case of Kashmir and Salala attack in this study].

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