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Article:	Media and National Issues: Exploring Political Parallelism in Leading Pakistani Newspapers
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ABSTRACT

In political communication, media content is often parallel to political discourse. This content analysis study aims to determine whether and to what extent political parallelism exists in the coverage of major national issues published in the leading English newspapers of Pakistan. In order to identify the existence of High and Low forms of political parallelism reflected in the media content. Many parameters, such as media pluralism, media sociology, and media instrumentalization, determine existence of political parallelism in media. This study selected 11 national issues from Pakistan's leading dailies from 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2020. The major findings revealed that political parallelism appears in selection of media content. Furthermore, the study concludes that besides politicians and industrialists, the government is also one of the influencing factors that encourage political parallelism in Pakistan.

Keywords: National Issues, Political Parallelism, Media, Government, Opposition, Political Parties, Judiciary

Introduction:

There is ample research on framing of national and international issues in Pakistan, but the indicators to study media and political relations and their implications still require research. Political parallelism refers to the relationship of political parties, as portrayed through media organizations (Paolo Mancini, 2018). Seymour-Ure, Blumler, and Gurevitch introduced this concept in the 1970s. It was included as one of the four categories by Hallin and Mancini (2004) in comparative media systems. Since then, the concept has developed its universal applicability.

Political parallelism requires considerable political stability in the behavior of media organizations so that it is possible to see how politics and the media are in alignment. Only a competitive political system enables the investigation of this concept. Therefore, it appears that developing democracies like Pakistan have distinct political cleavages, which gives researchers a chance to examine the interaction between media and political actors. Political parties in Pakistan are creating political awareness about national issues through the media. English newspapers hold significant importance in altering opinion.

The media mostly reflect the Government's actions and the features of a particular society. Previously, the Government had control over the media and compelled it to showcase the policies of the ruling parties in a particular way (Azwar Muhammad Aslam, 2021). After the privatization of media in 2002, the political environment of Pakistan changed, and many media groups got influenced. They became politically inclined toward political parties, making it a political parallel media. At the advent of the twenty-first century, there came a revolution in Pakistani media and politics when the Government of General Pervaiz Musharraf permitted the establishment of privately owned television channels and radio stations. Before liberalization, Pakistan's electronic media was regulated by the government. For many decades, and the state maintained its monopoly over television and acted as a gatekeeper by controlling the information flow. Pakistan's media stayed under state control before liberalization, and the state maintained its monopoly and controlled the flow of information as a gatekeeper for five decades. The liberty of media under the dictatorial regime of General Musharraf was the polar opposite of the popular belief that dictators put strict control over the media (Mazzoleni, G., & Schulz, W, 1999). It is a unique case of Pakistan's media that in one decade, it has born and grown in the other decade (Media in Pakistan, 2009). This research has been designed to determine the extent to which news content of the English newspapers of Pakistan are politically parallel. The following research question has been made to achieve the study's objective

R.Q.1 To what extent does Political Parallelism in the media content on national issues exist in leading Pakistani newspapers?

Literature Review

Over the recent period, the mutual interdependence between politics and media has become increasingly popular. This relationship has been acknowledged by a significant amount of scholars (Stromback, 2008; Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999). However, the degree of this relation can vary according to national contexts (Ciaglia, A., 2013). The existing studies show that the Media has a contingent impact on politics. However, its size and direction are intertwined with variety of factors such as; media characteristics, issue characteristics, and political party characteristics (Walgrave & Van Aelst, 2006).

First, Seymour-Ure (1974) studied the relationship between the press and political parties and claimed that the ties between newspapers and political parties signify the existence of party-press parallelism. Blumler and Gurevitch (1995; 2002) also used the concept of party press parallelism to analyze the articulation between media and political institutions. Hallin and Mancini (2004) replaced the original term of parallel party press with a broader formula of political parallelism, which is also one of the dimensions of Hallin and Mancini's comparative model, besides media markets, the professional orientation of journalists and degree of state's intervention.

According to Albuquerque (2018), the concept of political parallelism refers to a relationship or pattern where media organizations reflect the structure of political parties. Paolo Mancini (2012) also defined political parallelism as "the existence of organized, stable groups where competing opinions are articulated and well rooted." Van Kempen (2007) extended the concept of party parallel press given by Seymour-Ure into media party parallelism, considering both television and press parallelism.

Hallin and Mancini (2004) also analyzed political parallelism and proposed five different variables: (1) Media content, (2) connections with organizations, (3) the political orientation of journalists, (4) Partisanship of audiences, (5) the Professional role of journalists. Although Hallin and Mancini (2004; 2012) did not devise these dimensions, they traced the work of Jay Blumler and Colin (1995).

Seymour-Ure (1974) but further explored and amplified different aspects of political parallelism (Thomas E. Patterson, 2007).

There are different features of political parallelism. Firstly, it indicates organizational linkages between media outlets and political parties, which either directly control it through subsidies or through other forms of control for seeking political influence (Paolo Mancini, 2015; Hallin & Mancini, 2004). The second feature of political parallelism represents the political orientations of media (Van der Pas, 2017) which affect the content of news (Paolo Mancini, 2015). Parallelism is stronger when partisan media or newspapers support a party, which is evident in the columns and editorial parts of the newspapers (Van Kempen, 2007). Thirdly, parallelism can also be expressed in the partisanship of audiences as party supporters (Van Kempen, 2006) read most of the newspapers. The partisanship of audiences can also be defined as their tendency to purchase newspapers or watch television (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Political orientation and journalists' professional role constitute the fourth feature of political parallelism. The journalists' professional culture defines professional orientation and practices in each media system. These practices move from commentary to information-oriented journalism. In addition, these professional practices of journalists are heavily studied areas of research. The professional orientation of news media is a practical term and refers to the ideal way of producing political news. However, this approach is purely based on journalistic interest (Mazzoleni, G. 2010), requiring journalists to be highly professional and need more instrumental (Hallin & Mancini, 2004).

Moreover, political parallelism in Media is also studied through pluralism (Bayram, S., 2010). According to the Oxford Advanced American Dictionary, "Pluralism is the existence of many different groups of people in one society, for example, different political or religious beliefs." Pluralism can be assessed by looking at the availability of different political views supplied by media outlets (Mancini, 2015). The concept of political parallelism is further

related to external and internal pluralism (Artero, J. P., 2015). Diversity in the news is sustained by internal and external pluralism (Yoon . J, 2013). The definition of internal pluralism says that this type of pluralism is achieved within each media organization by maintaining neutrality and avoiding strong institutional ties to political groups. External pluralism is defined as 'pluralism achieved at the level of the media system as a whole when the range of media organizations reflect viewpoints of different groups or tendencies in the society' (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Furthermore, different indicators of the media system, such as the structure of the media market, and state and journalistic norms, are also responsible for ensuring pluralism in the news (Yoon . J, 2013).

Though comparative media studies have a standard criterion in political communication, severe criticism is expressed regarding its applicability to non-western media systems (Voltmer, 2008; Hallin & Mancini, 2012). However, Voltmer (2012) stated that we must refine the categories Hallin and Mancini (2004) suggests to understand the nature of media systems beyond the western world. Therefore, it will not only "de-westernize" media studies (Curran & Park, 2000) but also broaden the theoretical framework. Furthermore, although characteristics of media systems emerged from Western countries, they provide a point for comparison against the non-Western world by revealing systematic differences between non-western and western political systems (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Therefore, greater comparative conceptualization in this field could contribute to further maturation.

These concepts can bring fruitful outcomes when applied to western societies, but for the rest of the world, two conditions should be fulfilled to make it productive. First, there is an institutionalized relationship between political agents and media, and political cleavages are clear for observers to identify those interaction patterns. Instead of "provincializing," this concept can become universally applicable (Albuquerque, 2013).

Norris (2009) claimed that theoretical frameworks in this field are needed to be revised for concepts that are more precise. The cross-national aggregate indices are emerging needs so that these measures can be used widely across different contexts. The categorical classification of media systems should be barred, and other components should be developed within the systems (Norris . P, 2009).

Furthermore, Voltmer (2008) also argued that new democracies have a different kind of media system, which cannot be classified into three models proposed by Hallin and Mancini (2004). Therefore, to study media in a broader geographical context, we need to understand the importance of diversity in the market, censorship, parallelism, and partisanship that may largely exist beyond the Western world. Media in Asia and the rest of the non-Western world has subdivisions and is considerably diverse (McCargo, 2012).

Political parallelism:

The control of political parties on the newspaper was replaced by the involvement of newspapers in politics, which is defined as political parallelism (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). This concept has been re-conceptualized after the decline of party-press parallelism, and now it is explained as the alignment of newspapers with subordinate ideologies held by political actors (Allen & Blach-Orsten, 2011; Mancini, 2012)

Political parallelism also indicates a symbolic relationship between the media system and different social organizations, reflected in the media content (Mancini, 2008). On the one hand, political parallelism explains different patterns of variation in a news organization due to

different ideological preferences and in another context idea of political parallelism also refers to the interaction of media markets with political parties, which greatly affects the coverage of news (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Paolo Mancini, 2012). Therefore, political parallelism is considered a central dimension to differentiate between different media, and it can measure media's alignment that varies due to ideological and political views (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). This concept encompasses other indicators besides the content, including political actors (Allen & Blach-Orsten, 2011), media outlets, and audiences' preferences (van Kempen, 2007).

Van Kempen (2007) measured the party preferences of audiences and patterns of media consumption voters through survey data from the 1999 European elections and found that media-political parallelism can increase voter turnout (Van Kempen, 2007). However, it is important to know that partisanship of audiences is the weakest form of parallelism as it can provide conservative estimates (van der Pas et al., 2017).

Political parallelism may appear high in some segments of media systems and low in others. Such conditions are to be conceptualized under which these various forms exist. (Hallin 2012). Some scholars have measured the impact of the country-level variable on individual behavior and found that a higher level of political parallelism is linked with lower exposure to contradictory views (Goldman & Mutz, 2011). According to van Kempen (2007), a higher level of political participation is associated with a higher level of political parallelism.

Subsequently, Nir and Howrtiz (2014) stated that countries experiencing a higher level of political parallelism have partisan media, which can stimulate partisanship as there is a probability that person starts following biased media due to their exposure (Nir & Howrtiz,2014). The partisan media first affect the attitudes and behavior of elites, and they may further affect citizen attitudes and behavior (Arceneaux et al., 2013; Clinton & Enamorado, 2014). Thus, political parallelism between media and political parties is confirmed by selective exposure and a greater probability of media showing sympathies to political parties (Walgrave, S., & Van Aelst, P., 2006). Contrarily, Albuquerque (2018) stated that political parallelism is a topological idea, which supposes that the media reproduce structural patterns of relationships existing in the political arena. Furthermore, Norris (2009) claimed that the operationalization of political parallelism is unclear in terms of partisanship of media, and to classify partisan bias in media, systematic content analysis is required to study media partisanship that varies within particular countries (Norris, 2009). Similarly, Tresch (2008) argued that the effect of media content on attitudes and behavior is more likely a media bias than aspects of parallelism, and it is conceptualized as media outlets' issue agenda and differences in political actors' opinion (Tresch, 2008).

In this regard, Volmer (2008) stated that political parallelism can become challenging as partisanship and advocacy of a political party can engage in hatred against an opponent, which political parallelism weakens the idea of democracy (Vltmer,2008).

Hallin and Mancini (2004) explained that political parallelism is stronger in countries with multi-party systems and high state intervention. Furthermore, societies that tend to have religious and ideological groups also favor political parallelism, and those countries that were resistant to liberalization and lately adopted modernization processes tend to have a high degree of political parallelism (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Nevertheless, the role of political parties varies everywhere, as party lines need more morality in countries with a presidential system than parliamentarian ones (Samuels, 2002).

Consequently, Albuquerque (2013) suggested that instead of making political parallelism a universally applicable product of certain settings, which will include both stable political and unstable political environments that would allow observers to study the media system.

Similarly, there is a need to study the concept of political parallelism beyond the media's ideological understanding of issues and empirical measurements of party actors in the news. Such measurements can help investigate larger parts of discourse (Kaiser & Kleinen-von Konigslow, 2015). Many scholars have operationalized the concept of political parallelism, which Norris (2009) warned is a "massive undertaking." Although political parallelism has been addressed successfully in recent years (Hallin, 2016) and has multiple associated pathways, to what extent different forms and dimensions will vary together is an open question. The above discussion leads the researcher to expect the following hypothesis and research question:

H1: There is a likelihood that political parallelism would be higher in the media content on national issues.

Methodology

A quantitative content analysis method was employed to collect data regarding mainstream newspapers and examine their political orientation. National issues of Pakistan are considered a "topic" to study the effect of political parallelism on media content. The categories are, in essence, the conceptual scheme of the research design (Harold, 1977). The story was examined as a unit of analysis in this study. For "topic," the headline and introduction of each paragraph are the recording unit for identifying parallelism in the story, and each story was considered as the context unit. For example, three frames, High, Moderate, and Low, are being developed to analyze the strength of political parallelism. News stories having three or more paragraphs portraying the strong political orientation would be coded as "High." Stories having an even number of paragraphs portraying the political orientation would be coded as "Moderate." Stories having less than three paragraphs portraying the political orientation would be coded as "Low." In this study 11 national issues were selected from newspapers, namely Daily Dawn, Express Tribune, The News and the Nation from 1st January 2020 to 31st December 2020.

Findings

Table 1. Characteristics of National Issues, Newspapers, Sources and Political Parallelism.

The content analysis results present the frequency of political parallelism in newspapers selected for this study. Findings also provide the pattern of frequency of political parallelism within national issues and sources. Furthermore, the relationship between political parallelism

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Newspaper	The News	1782	30.0
	Dawn	1275	21.5
	Express Tribune	1362	23.0
	The Nation	1515	25.5
National Issues	Political Conflicts	1375	23.2
	Health Issues	646	10.9
	Corruption	629	10.6
	Economic Crisis	410	6.9
	Foreign Policy	451	7.6
	CPEC	130	2.2
	Justice and law enforcement	1058	17.8
	Crime	71	1.2
	Tax	116	2.0
	Energy Crisis	42	0.7
Political Parallelism	High	3398	57.3
	Moderate	690	11.6
	Low	1846	31.1
Source	Media	1405	23.7
	Government	2830	47.7
	Opposition	645	10.9
	Political Parties	71	1.2
	Judiciary	809	13.6

content categories, sources, and newspapers was also evaluated. It is evident from the findings of Table 1 that more coverage was given to the Political Conflict=23.2 as compared to other national issues. However, the percentage of the coverage given to Justice and Law Enforcement is 17.8. According to the given data, 57.3 percent of Political Parallelism is higher among all the Newspapers. As far as Sources are concerned, 47.7 percent of the news was coming from the Government source, which was the dominant source in the majority of the news stories. However, Media was the source of 23.7 percent of the news stories, which was also the major source.

Table 2: Political Parallelism and Newspapers

Political Parallelism	Newspapers				Chi-Square
	DAWN	The NEWS	Express Tribune	The Nation	
High	939	615	828	1016	Chi-Square=391.640 Sig=.000
Moderate	258	75	90	267	
Low	585	585	444	232	

The findings of Table 2. show that Political Parallelism was significantly higher in The Nation=1016 as compared to the rest of the newspapers. However, Dawn=939 also shows a higher level of political parallelism. Respectively, the value of chi-square= 391.640 shows a significant difference.

Table 3. Political Parallelism and National Issues

Content Categories	Political Parallelism			Chi-Square
	High	Moderate	Low	
Political conflicts	1130	105	140	Chi-Square=2306.490 Sig=.000
Health issue	368	68	210	
Corruption	351	45	233	
Economic crisis	274	20	166	
Foreign policy	348	34	69	
CPEC	102	11	17	
Justice and law enforcement	56	122	880	
Crime	15	14	42	
Tax	64	11	41	
Energy crisis	33	3	6	

Findings of Table 3. Shows that Political Conflicts have a higher level of Political Parallelism= 1130 amongst all the national issues. However, Justice and Law Enforcement have a low Political Parallelism= of 880. Respectively, the value of chi-square=2306.490 shows a significant difference.

Table 4: Political Parallelism and Sources

Sources	Political Parallelism			Chi-Square
	High	Moderate	Low	
Media	718	121	442	Chi-Square=1077.511 Sig=.000
Government	1624	286	453	
Opposition	356	50	138	
Political Parties	541	155	162	
Judiciary	108	59	574	

Findings of Table 4. Shows that Government is the major source as there exists a higher level of Political Parallelism=1924 between media content and the Government. However, Media is the second dominant source which also reflects a higher level of Political Parallelism= 811, between media content and the media organizations. At the same time, Political Parties show a low level of Political Parallelism = 31, between media content and the political parties. Respectively, the value of chi-square=1007.511 shows a significant difference.

Discussion

Previous studies tried operationalizing the concept of parallelism by measuring partisan affiliations of newspaper readers and evaluating organizational ties. However, no concrete measurements were conducted (Norris,2009). However, they are not considered an effective and apt way, as they no longer exist in institutional ties (Mancini,2012). Therefore, it is preferable to measure the effect of parallelism on newspaper content. Van Kempen (2007) studied political parallelism to compare it among different countries but emphasized individual newspapers and the existence of parallelism in the selection of national issues.

Van der Pas (2017) also claimed that the political orientation of Media is represented by political parallelism, and it is present in the content of news (Mancini., 2015) And the strongest form of parallelism is evident in the different parts of newspapers (Van Kempen,2007).

This study operationalizes the political parallelism content of newspapers; it needed to be analyzed to know about the partisanship of media (Norris,2009). Therefore, to study the relationship between media content and political parallelism researcher has proposed the following hypothesis.

H1: There is a likelihood that political parallelism would be higher in the media content on national issues.

The content analysis results indicate that political parallelism was higher in some parts of the selected national issues, such as political conflict, and lower amongst news stories covered on Justice and Law enforcement. Thus, the present study supports the assertions of Hallin (2012) that political parallelism may appear high in some segments of media systems and low in other parts.

The current study also revealed that all selected major newspapers were from leading media groups. 'The News' shows a high level of political parallelism, and most news stories come from a government source. It gave concrete evidence that newspapers in Pakistan are highly parallel with the Government. Peculiarly, survey data results also show that Government is the prime source of news stories.

These similarities in the findings provide adequate and consistent theoretical support to the literature. As Voltmer (2002) noted, the media has to face political interference it does no matter which party forms the Government. Politicians are always reluctant to accept the independence of media to take control over control over public, so the press is always politicized with the partisan line largely.

The present study indicates that political parallelism in the media content of Pakistani newspapers is higher, which signifies that the press highly parallels in issue selection. Jost et al. (2009) also asserted that newspaper parallelism tends to appear in interpreting issues and selecting news content. The current study also identified that Political conflicts were given more coverage in the Pakistani press than other national issues. Firstly, the major reason for

giving political conflicts more coverage is due to the strong influence of political parties and the Government, which makes the Pakistani press highly parallel. As Jost et al. (2009) referred, political parallelism only appears in the ideological patterns of newspapers in present identifiable political linkages.

According to Hallin and Mancini (2004), political parallelism is stronger in countries with multi-party systems and high state intervention. Societies with political groups also favor political parallelism, and those who have lately adopted democracy and modernization tend to have a high degree of political parallelism. The findings of the current study support Hallin and Mancini (2004) as Pakistan is among the growing democracies and possesses identifiable strong political and ideological groups with a high level of state intervention in the alignment of media. It can be conceived from the above that the Pakistani press signifies a high level of political parallelism.

Conclusion

The concept of political parallelism is used to analyze the articulation between media and political institutions. This notion also encompasses around many indicators such as media political actors, media outlets and preferences of journalists. This study concludes that amongst all English newspapers included in the study, Political Parallelism is significantly higher in “The Nation” than other newspapers selected for this research. The results of the study also revealed that the press gave higher coverage to “political conflicts” as compared other the national issues. It has been empirically investigated through present research that the construction of new stories was based on government source and majority of them were also parallel with government’s stance. Furthermore, findings indicate that other than politicians and media, government is also one of the main influencing factors which fosters the existence of political parallelism in Pakistan. Present study contributes to the framework of Hallin and Mancini (2012) by adding another parameter of government to measure political parallelism. However, research on other aspects such as media plurality (external and internal pluralism) and instrumentalization of journalists is required for future studies.

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