



RESEARCH PAPER

International Media's Take on Drone Strikes in Pakistan: Analysis of *Newsweek*, *The Economist*, and *Time* Magazines

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ABSTRACT

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To evaluate the representation of Drone strikes in Pakistan by the international media, articles of the three prominent news magazines namely the *Newsweek*, *The Economist*, and the *Time* were analyzed during the year 2013. The analysis of these international mainstream magazines revealed that their attitude was hostile towards Pakistan and they were extremely critical of her Army and intelligence agencies. *Newsweek* also castigated Pakistan on her relations with the US. *Newsweek* goes to frame an opinion that if the drone attacks continue to net results, and minimize civilian casualties, there should not be a problem. The *Economist* also frames the stance in favor of USA to the extent by saying that a surprising number of Pakistanis are in favor of drone strikes as the drones do not kill many civilians and that the Pakistani government has given its secret blessing to the CIA program.

Introduction

In shaping other countries issues, the mainstream international media often reports day to day happenings with some particular angle keeping in view the country's own specific policies and points of views. In order to examine the representation of Drone strikes in Pakistan in the international media three international magazines namely the *Newsweek*, *The Economist*, and the *Time* have been selected for the discourse analysis. This study examines the nature of treatment given by the above mentioned three most important international magazines on the specific issues of Pakistan related to drone strikes during the year 2013. The rationality behind the selection of these news magazines is that they play an important role in the formation of public opinion.

Newsweek

Newsweek Pakistan debuted on newsstands nationwide in August 2010 and featured the cover essay 'The World's Bravest Nation.' Produced by AG Publications under license from The Newsweek/Daily Beast Company, *Newsweek* Pakistan provides sensible, reliable, and authoritative news and information to its readers on a weekly basis (*Newsweek*, 2016). The newsmagazine is edited by Fasih Ahmed, who has written for *The Wall Street Journal* and was the inaugural Daniel Pearl fellow. *Newsweek* Pakistan has been widely praised for its editorial excellence. Founded by Thomas J. C. Martyn, the first issue of *News-Week* was published on Feb. 17, 1933 (*Newsweek*, 2016).

The Economist

The Economist was established in 1843 by its founder, James Wilson, who believed in free trade and internationalism. Till day the magazine has lived on, never abandoning its commitment to the classical 19th-century Liberal ideas of its founder. Even the most illustrious of its staff, however, write anonymously: only special reports, the longish supplements published about 20 times a year on various issues or countries, are signed. In May 2001, a redesign introduced more navigational information for readers and full colour on all editorial pages (Edwards, 1993).

TIME Magazine

Since its founding in 1923, TIME magazine has been one of the most authoritative and informative guide to what is happening in the world of health and science, politics, business, society and entertainment. TIME sets the agenda and explores ideas providing a roadmap for the future. TIME provides a fresh international perspective on the important issues of the day, together with candid and revealing profiles of people in the news(time.com).

Literature Review

This portion reviews studies on the US mass media and image of Pakistan, the different kinds of framing used in U.S and foreign news coverage related to drone attacks in Pakistan, Afghanistan and elsewhere, shifting of debate on Muslims and Islam after the incident of 9/11 attacks, the way in which five television channels framed the incident of 9/11, media frame the foreign policy issues, the framing of news stories related to terrorism and the socially constructed reality about war, the coverage of 2003 Iraq War, the nature of photo coverage of the War on Terrorism by US news-magazine in Afghanistan and Iraq, political warfare of the Washington Post, and the image of Iran in the western media.

Khan and Zaheen (2014) in their study titled "US Mass Media and Image of Pakistan: An Analysis of *Newsweek* and the *Economist* after Salala Incident"

examine the portrayal of Pakistan in the U.S mass media, the *Economist* and *Newsweek* in the light of cultural difference theory. Pakistan has been an important ally of U.S in “war on terror” after 9/11. NATO attack at Salala check post in which 28 Pakistani soldiers were killed became the core reason to strain this co-operation. As a result NATO supply was closed. The study analyses 27 articles from the *Economist* and 5 articles from *Newsweek* published during Dec. 1, 2011 to April 30, 2012 to check Pakistan’s image in the U.S media after Salala incident. Findings of the study suggest that both the magazines present Pakistan as foe and Pakistan received more unfavorable coverage in the *Economist* and *Newsweek*. Moreover, it is also found that the major reason of negative image of Pakistan is its “Islamic character” which is mainly portrayed as threat to the interest of America.

Jones, Sheets and Rowling (2011) explore the different kinds of framing used in U.S and foreign news coverage related to drone attacks in Pakistan, Afghanistan and elsewhere. The researcher content analyzed the three newspapers such as the *New York Times* (United States), *The Guardian* (Britain) and *Dawn* (Pakistan) for the study. The findings suggest that U.S and foreign journalist differ in the way they frame drone strikes policy. American journalists are more likely found in framing drone attacks as the way to protect the national identity of Americans. Moreover, in their news coverage American media avoid mentioning the casualties or deaths of civilians. American media mostly portray drone attacks as their legal right under international law. Whereas foreign media more regularly discuss deaths of civilians and the strikes of drones as illegal.

Ibrahim (2010) investigates the shifting of debate on Muslims and Islam after the incident of 9/11 attacks. The study analyses the visual frames and verbal frames used to depict Islam with America and outside of it. The findings suggest that Islam is not given objective coverage, not just in America but also the world outside. The researcher also suggests that the reporters must adhere to transparency and objectivity in their discussion related to Islam and Muslims.

Li (2010) investigates the way in which five television channels framed the incident of 9/11 during the first 24 hours. The Findings suggest that the frames were changing and they were not static. The frames changed with the change of events rapidly. Moreover, the results also show that television mainly served to inform instead of providing guidance and comfort at the time of crisis.

Boydstein and Glazier (2009) describe that presidents have strong control over the way in which media frame the foreign policy issues and the way these issues are understood by the public. The researchers examine the conditions in which media follows or doesn’t follow the foreign policy related to the issues regarding war on terror. Content analysis technique is employed to get data from *New York Times* articles and *Wall Street Journal* abstracts related to the War. Findings suggest that dominant media frames have become vulnerable to be

examined or analyzed. As the president attempts to reframe the issues, simultaneously the media finds new ways of framing those issues.

Ali (2008) studies the coverage and image of Pakistan in U.S mass media. The researcher content analyzed 20 articles from *Newsweek* and *Time* magazine. The findings suggest that the proportion of positive coverage is greater than negative coverage. Moreover, the issues related to Kashmir dispute, the Kargil issue, nuclear proliferation and the political disputes in Pakistan are dealt critically by both the magazines. Furthermore both the magazines appreciated the efforts of General Pervaiz Musharraf against Taliban.

Lipschultz (2007) explores the use of the term “war on terror” by the administration of George W. Bush. The researcher also attempts to explore the framing of news stories related to terrorism and the socially constructed reality about war. The news transcripts from three TV networks *ABC*, *CBS* and *NBC* for the first three years after the 9/11 attacks were content analyzed. The findings of the study suggest that during the period of study most of the news coverage is related to terrorism and the phrase “war on terror” is used by Bush administration just to get public support in favor of the policies related to war on terror.

Limin (2006) examines the coverage of 2003 Iraq War in the *New York Times*, *The Times of London* and *The PeoplesDaily* of China in the light of media conformity theory. Findings of the study suggest that the newspapers followed their respective foreign policy in covering or presenting Iraq War. Moreover, the findings also suggest that the public opinion against govt. foreign policy could not make matters any different.

Griffin (2004) discusses the nature of photo coverage of the War on Terrorism by US news-magazine in Afghanistan and Iraq. The findings suggest that the photographs of the news magazines support the government’s policy or stance regarding war and rarely give unique visual information.

In an article, “Political warfare of the Washington Post”, Syed Adeeb (2004), claims that Washington Post has been cynical with respect to its coverage of Pakistan. It’s reporting and analysis were based on misconceptions and disinformation, giving a misleading view of the political activities in Pakistan as well as Pakistan’s connection with Al-Qaeda and Nuclear proliferation.

Mughhees-ud-Din (1995), in his study on the “Image of Iran in the Western Media”, emphasized that Iran was framed negatively by the western media for being a Muslim country. It was referred to as a fundamentalist and terrorist country that poses threat to the rest of the world. The western media gave prejudiced treatment to Iran on the basis of long held stereotype images of Muslims and U.S interest in theregion.

To study the representation of Drone strikes in Pakistan by the international media through an analysis of the *Newsweek*, *The Economist*, and *Time* magazines during 2013, following theoretical perspectives were used.

Agenda Setting Theory: Two basic assumptions underline most research on agenda- setting: (1) the press and the media do not reflect reality; they filter and shape it; (2) media concentration on a few issues and subjects leads the public to perceive those issues as more important than other issues. One of the most critical aspects in the concept of an agenda-setting role of mass communication is the time frame for this phenomenon. In addition, different media have different agenda-setting potential (Severin and Tankard, 2001). Apart from Agenda Setting, framing and priming aspects of the theory would also be employed.

Media Framing: In the perspective of the agenda setting, framing is a process through which the media emphasize some aspects of reality and downplay other aspects. Frames are the lenses through which social reality is viewed.

Material and Methods

The study is conducted in the light of agenda setting and framing theory to investigate the representation of Drone attacks in Pakistan by the *Newsweek*, *The Economist*, and *Time* magazines by conducting the discourse analysis. The data of the study include all articles using the word Pak-US relations and drone strikes in Pakistan. Entire population of article published in the *Newsweek*, *The Economist*, and *Time* magazines during 2013 are the population of the study. So for the selection of article, convenience sampling technique is employed. The entire articles related to Pak – US relations and drone strikes published in the above mentioned magazines are the sample of the study.

Results and Discussion

On Pakistan's Drone Dilemma, the *Newsweek* in its article "At a delicate time of transition, another US Strike", by Jahanzeb Aslam (2013, June 14) writes: On May 29, less than a week after U.S. President Barack Obama pledged to make the drone program more transparent and provided new guidelines for its use, six men, including a senior Taliban leader, were killed in a suspected drone strike in Pakistan's federally-administered tribal areas. For the incoming government of Prime Minister- elect Nawaz Sharif it couldn't have come at a worsetime. Sharif, the leader of the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz), has been a vocal critic of the drone program. Both he and cricketer turned politician Imran Khan, whose Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party has formed the provincial government in the Khyber- Pakhtunkhwa province along the tribal belt, campaigned on promises to end the drone strikes, describing them as a violation of Pakistan's sovereignty. Khan even went so far as to promise his supporters that if elected prime minister, he would order Pakistan's Air Force to shoot down any drones that entered the country's airspace. After the May 29 drone strike, it issued another statement

expressing ‘serious concerns’ over the latest incident. If Islamabad and Washington don’t learn to collaborate on drone strikes within Pakistan, those concerns could become a lot more serious. If the drone attacks continue to net results, and minimize civilian casualties, there shouldn’t be a problem.”

In yet another article “Friends like these Multan”, the *Newsweek* (2013, September 13) reads: “A recent series of reports by The Washington Post on the U.S. “black budget” a 178- page classified document about America’s National Intelligence Program spells out the continuing mistrust between the Pentagon and the Pakistan Army. Leaked by National Security Agency whistleblower Edward Snowden, the budget document shows that the U.S. remains concerned about the safety of Pakistan’s nuclear weapons. A budget section on stemming the spread of weapons of mass destruction divides the world into two categories: Pakistan, and everyone else. But at the same time the document also acknowledges critical intelligence gaps regarding the nuclear safety protocols exercised by Islamabad. (For good measure, the document also registers a slight concern about India’s nukes.)”

The Economist in its article “Drones over Pakistan drop the pilot” (2013, October 19) writes: A surprising number of Pakistanis are in favor of drone strikes. National surveys find that Pakistanis are overwhelmingly opposed to CIA drone strikes against suspected militants in the tribal badlands close to the Afghan border. The strikes are seen by many as an abuse of sovereignty, a symbol of American arrogance and the cause of civilian deaths. “But interviews by *The Economist* with twenty residents of the tribal areas confirmed that many see individual drone strikes as preferable to the artillery barrages of the Pakistani military. They also insisted that the drones do not kill many civilians - a view starkly at odds with mainstream Pakistani opinion. Though there is ample evidence that the Pakistani government has given its secret blessing to the CIA program, it still allows anti-drone sentiment to blossom. Domestic anger over drones can be a useful negotiating chip on other issues, says one former American official. The government also fears reprisals from militants.”

The *Time* magazine in its “Briefing” on “Pakistan rocked by Taliban leader’s Drone strike death” reports (2013, November 18): “Planned peace talks between Islamabad and the Pakistani Taliban were thrown into disarray after a US drone reportedly killed the militant group’s leader on November 1. The Pakistani government lashed out at Washington over the timing of the strike in North Waziristan that killed Hakimullah Mehsud, saying it undermined the negotiations that were imminent.

The reaction in Pakistan to Mehsud’s death ranged from relief to outrage over what many saw as yet another egregious American violation of Pakistan’s sovereignty. Cricketer turned politician Imran Khan said the US was trying to derail the peace process; Khan has proposed organizing a blockade of supplies going to NATO forces in neighboring Afghanistan. Some political leaders

described Mehsud as a martyr, and the Taliban pledged revenge, causing widespread concern among citizens who regularly bear the brunt of terrorist attacks.

It remains unclear who will succeed Mehsud as head of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) an umbrella organization comprising several groups. Whether the new leader will be amenable to peace talks is hard to know. But observers say Mehsud's absence isn't likely to weaken the terrorist group's abilities. Choosing a new leader may 'open up rifts', says analyst Hasan Askari Rizvi. But the TTP still has a lot of capacity to engage in bombing. Amid the political furor, one thing is clear: if there is a backlash from the terrorists, it will be felt most by ordinary Pakistanis. A US State Department report earlier this year concluded that more than 2,000 civilians were killed in terrorist attacks in Pakistan in 2012."

Conclusion

The representation of Drone strikes in Pakistan by the international media, three international news magazines namely the *Newsweek*, *The Economist*, and the *Time* were analyzed. Sample for this study includes all those articles on Pak - US relations and drone strikes in Pakistan during the year 2013. For the selection of relevant articles, convenience sampling technique was employed. The analysis of the *Newsweek*, *The Economist*, and *Time* magazine show that *Newsweek* has given more coverage to Pak-US relations in Pakistan in its articles as compared to *The Economist* and *Time* magazine. The obtained data reveals that the attitude of *The Economist* is more hostile towards Pakistan following the fact that *Newsweek* and *The Economist* were critical of Pakistan's Army and intelligence agencies in their articles. *Newsweek* also castigated Pakistan on her relations with the US. *Newsweek* goes to frame an opinion that if the drone attacks continue to net results, and minimize civilian casualties, there shouldn't be a problem. The *Economist* also frames the stance in favour of USA to the extent by saying that a surprising number of Pakistanis are in favor of drone strikes as the drones do not kill many civilians and that the Pakistani government has given its secret blessing to the CIA program.

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