

The image of Pakistan in prestigious American newspaper editorials: a test of the media conformity theory

*Muhammad Ashraf Khan **

This study examines the theory that claims the American mass media generally conform to the foreign policy of the US government. Since Pakistan is a key ally in the US-led anti-terrorism coalition, it was posited that Pakistan would receive a more positive portrayal in the US news media after 9/11 than it had before. This study tests the media conformity theory using a content analysis of the editorial coverage of Pakistan in three elite American newspapers—The New York Times, The Washington Post, and The Wall Street Journal from October 1999 to May 2007. A total of 130 editorials were retrieved from the Lexis-Nexis database and analyzed. The findings do not support the media conformity theory, but instead conform more closely to a cultural difference theory advanced by Galtung, Said, Graber and Karim. The results indicate a general bias against the Muslim world by American editorial writers.

On September 11, 2001, the United States was attacked when hijacked planes flew into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. The attack claimed thousands of American lives on American soil. In the wake of these attacks, Pakistan offered unstinting cooperation to the United States in its fight against terrorism. Since the attacks, Pakistan has become a vital ally in the US-led anti-terror coalition and has provided full support to the US in helping to identify and detain extremists, tightening the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, deploying the Pakistan army on the Afghan border to stop terrorist infiltration, and banning terrorist organisations in the country (Kronstadt, 2005).

In the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks (9/11), the international press has faced tremendous challenges in reporting these events and helping to set the agenda for worldwide public discussion of the issue. This study attempts to shed light on the image of Pakistan in the US prestige media as represented by *The*

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Muhammad Ashraf Khan, Associate Professor, Department of Mass Communication, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan, Pakistan.

New York Times, The Washington Post and The Wall Street Journal in the seven and half years since October 1999.

Literature Review

Tunstall (1977) has said, “The media are American.” The presentation of news material in US media is of enormous importance to nations around the globe. The influence of US media makes their coverage of international issues of great importance to foreign policy decisions in the United States as well as abroad (Cohen, 1963). It is evident that the American mass media have a pivotal role in creating awareness and in shaping public opinion and influencing government decision-making (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996; Graber, 1980 and 1990; Cohen, 1963). At the same time, however, people have complained that US media is not objective and fair in its coverage of national and international events and affairs (Khalid, 2001).

Wilfred (1993) notes that the United States and Western media have been frequently criticized by the Third World countries for the limited coverage they receive. They complain that the majority of the attention given to them focuses on coups, crises and conflicts. Third World countries are particularly sensitive to the image of their countries created by the international media because many of them are in the process of development and regaining national pride after decades of colonialism. They complain that negative portrayals of their countries does not serve the purpose of strengthening their economy, social structure or national pride (Wilfred, 1993).

A number of studies suggest that the American audience is primarily interested in events and issues within the United States (Rubin, 1979). Due to this limited interest in the international affairs, American newspapers generally present only those foreign news items that report violence or are most dramatic (Rosenblum, 1979). Graber (1980) says violence, conflict, disaster and familiar persons and situations are the main selection criteria for international coverage in US mass media.

Determinants of International Event Coverage in the US Media

Chang, Shoemaker, et. al., (1987) argue that the normative deviance of an event, its relevance to the United States, the potential for social change and the geographical distance of the occurrence of an event from America are four major determinants, which significantly contribute to the coverage of international events in the US media. Lent (1977) mentions four main characteristics of foreign events covered in the US media: national interest, crises-oriented reporting, censorship policies and image building activities of other countries. According to Graber (1980), violence, conflict, disaster, and familiar persons or situations are the major selection criteria in the US media. Negative and conflict news seem to be more important in the United States than in any other society (Graber, 1980).

Galtung (1992) examines the influences of geographic and cultural relationship on international news coverage in US media. He says these influences have much to do with the level of attention the media give to various nations and regions of the world. In a similar vein, Malik (2006) says reporters, editors and broadcasters are, generally, products of their societies, and their judgments derive mainly from their cultural values. He argues that these values guide the journalists in framing stories. Van Dijk (1996) reveals that the ideological stands of the journalists somehow influence their opinions, which reflect in their editorials and op-ed articles. He says that ideologies are reflected through the use of words, sentences, perspectives, etc., which illustrates the ideological bias of the media.

According to Said (1997), Islam is regularly equated with fundamentalism, a creation of minds of the US policy makers. He maintains that misrepresentation of facts about Islam in the Western media is a deliberate example of cultural prejudices. According to Said, Islam's portrayal in the media is generally based on stereotyped and spiteful generalities. Said (1987) also observes that the Western media represent Islam as a sadistic and reproachful religion for individuals and civilisation.

Mughees (1995), in his article "Image of Iran in the Western media", finds that the Western media encourage stereotypes about Islam. He remarks that the US media has attempted to generate conflict and misunderstanding between Islam and Christianity by representing Islam as a non-tolerant religion and Christianity as a tolerant one. Karim (2000) says Western media present Islam as a potential threat to Western interests by portraying Muslims as supporters of militancy and anti-modernism. He also claims that the trans-national media of the Western world have maintained a global narrative of Islam that portrays Muslims as archrivals of the West.

Khalid (2001) says that Muslim analysts believe that misrepresentation and the overwhelmingly negative coverage of the Muslim world is an attempt by US foreign policy architects to invent a new enemy to fight with after the collapse of Soviet Union and nearly worldwide demise of communism. The United States and Western journalists are manipulating the current situation by reminding the Western world of the clash of civilisations between Islam and the West (Lapidus, 1996).

Media Framing and International Coverage

Goffman (1974) defines framing as a specific set of expectations that are exercised to make sense of a social situation. According to Tuchman (1978: p. 1), "news is a window on the world." People see and learn of themselves and others through these windows. They learn about their institutions, leaders and lifestyles and those of other nations and their people. But these windows are bounded by a constructed frame. News media set the frames within which people interpret and

discuss events and issues, and that the quality of civic dialogue compulsorily depends on the available information (Tuchman, 1978).

Entman (1993) points out that frames can be identified as the absence or presence of key words or sources of information, and he further suggests that frames usually mean stereotypes or schemes. With regard to frames, he concludes that omissions of potential problems, explanations, definitions and suggestions can be as critical as their inclusions in guiding the audience.

Lippman (1922) and Shoemaker and Reese (1996) argue that there can be a substantial difference between the media reality and the objective reality. Shoemaker and Reese (1996) say that one's perceptions of the outside world are dependant on the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the second-hand sources one depends on. The second-hand source, the media, creates a pseudo-environment that differs from objective reality.

Framing is one of the important factors in news coverage. The framing technique in media is part of agenda-setting. Gitlin (1980) explains framing as "a significant social force", which formulates public ideology. According to Herman and Chomsky (2000), media frames play a substantial role in presenting, shaping or destroying the picture of an event. Chang (1988) maintains that the Americans' opinions regarding international issues mostly depend on the mainstream media.

Merrill (1995) argues that the mass media create favourable and unfavourable images of the world in the mind of the people. Perlmutter (1998), too, argues that the opinion of the American people can easily be tangled about the world through the news coverage by the US media.

According to Zheng (2006), a lot of studies have examined the coverage of foreign events in the US media since 1980s with a focus on framing. For example, Entman (1991) examined how US news magazines framed the Soviet Union's downing of a Korean Airliner and the US downing of an Iranian Airliner, Reese and Bucklaw (1995) studied the framing of the Persian Gulf War by local US television, Reta (2000) investigated how US newspapers framed the South African elections of 1994, and Sean, John, and Steven (2005) explored coverage of the 2003 Iraq war in the US broadcast news using framing methods (p. 12).

Khalid (2001) describes several research studies that have been conducted specifically on the Muslim world using framing methods that suggest that the US press generally portray the Muslim world as a threat to Western interests (Asi, 1981; Ghandour, 1984; Ghareeb, 1983; Mishra, 1979; Terry, 1975).

Media Conformity to Foreign Policy

In democracies, media theoretically operate independently of the state, and work according to democratic standards. But, in times of international crisis, the mass media in both the United States and the United Kingdom have generally conformed to their respective governments' foreign policy (Fishman, 1980; Bennet, 1993; Carpenter, 1995; Largio, 2004, et. al.).

Fishman (1980) finds that the US media determine the newsworthiness of occurrences based on the interpretations of government authorities and officials. Berry (1990) shows that during the Bay of Pigs crisis, *The New York Times*' perspective was consistent with US government foreign policy. Bennet (1993), while investigating *The New York Times*' coverage of the US involvement in the Nicaraguan conflict, observes that the opinions in the daily mostly came from government authorities.

Carpenter (1995) finds that the main US news media supported US military intervention in the Yugoslavian conflict. Largio (2004) finds that *The New York Times*' coverage of the Iraq war also indicated considerable conformity with the US foreign policy. Similarly, Zheng (2006) examines the media's conformity with government foreign policy by comparing the coverage of Iraq war 2003 among three prestigious newspapers, and finds that those newspapers generally followed the official line.

Ramaprasad (1984) finds that the coverage of foreign events in the US mass media had followed the twists and turns of the United States foreign policy toward India. She argues that coverage about other countries as well was dependent upon their relationship with the United States. When the official relationship with a country improved, coverage of the country also became more favourable, and vice versa. Chang (1989) finds that as the US government moved toward more favourable relations with China, the coverage of "Red" China by *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* also became more favourable.

Krishnaiah, et. al., (1993) and Graber (1980) also note that US foreign policy interests are considered the anchor of coverage of international events by the US media. Gans (1979) says the US media cover foreign stories relevant to Americans interests. Paletz and Entman (1981) say that international reporting is generally consistent with US foreign policy because reporters normally rely on sources sympathetic to representing the American interest; while Shoemaker and Reese (1996) argue that factors of ideology and government policy influence news content. Still other researchers also find that reporting on international events in US news media has been consistent with the US government foreign policy (Yu and Riffe, 1988; Chang, 1988; Merrill, 1995; Malek and Weigand 1997; Dorogi, 2001). These studies generally advance a theory of media conformity with government policy.

Statement of the Problem

This particular study investigates US media portrayal of Pakistan. The purpose of the study is to examine the image of Pakistan in elite US newspaper editorial coverage before and after 9/11. The literature review establishes that the US media generally support the foreign policy positions of the US government and are inclined to portray positively those countries who are close to the interests of the US government. However, the Western press generally presents the Islamic world as anti-modernism, pro-militant, non-tolerant and a threat to Western interests. With this in mind, it is possible that Pakistan may be presented favourably because Pakistan is enjoying close friendship with United States, or it may be that, because Pakistan is a leading Muslim country at a time when Muslim countries are under considerable pressure from the US, it would receive unfavourable editorial coverage.

Research Questions

Based on the literature reviewed, the following research questions are advanced:

- RQ1.** In the case of Pakistan, during the Musharraf regime, which best explains editorial coverage in elite US newspapers – the media conformity theory or the cultural difference theory?
- RQ2.** How was the national image of Pakistan presented in the editorials of elite US newspapers from October 1999 to May 2007?
- RQ3.** Did the image of Pakistan in elite US newspapers differ after September 11, 2001 from before?
- RQ4.** What was the slant of the coverage before and after September 11, 2001?
- RQ5.** What frames/themes were evident in the coverage of Pakistan before and after September 11, 2001?

Hypotheses

To answer these questions, the following hypotheses are advanced based on what is known from the literature reviewed about the predictive power of the media conformity theory.

- H1a:** The proportion of favourable portrayals of Pakistan will be higher after September 11, 2001 than before. **H1b:** The proportion of unfavourable portrayals of Pakistan will be lower after September 11, 2001 than before. **H2a:** The proportion of

editorials framing Pakistan as a friend will be lower before September 11, 2001 than after. **H2b:** The proportion of editorials framing Pakistan as a foe will be higher before September 11, 2001 than after.

Schramm and Atwood (1981) identify 15 different categories that provide a base for examining the coverage of a country. Some modifications have been made in these categories, but they are essentially their configurations. With this in mind, the following hypotheses are also advanced:

- H3:** Editorial coverage of Pakistan referencing the war on terrorism will be more unfavourable before than after September 11.
- H4:** Editorial coverage of Pakistan referencing the nuclear issue will be more unfavourable before than after September 11.
- H5:** Editorial coverage of Religion/Islamic movements/ Religious activities in Pakistan will be more unfavourable before than after September 11.
- H6:** Editorial coverage of Pakistan referencing international politics will be more unfavourable before than after September 11.
- H7:** Editorial coverage of Pakistan referencing domestic politics will be more unfavourable before than after September 11.
- H8:** Editorial coverage of Pakistan referencing disastrous events will be more unfavourable before and than after September 11.
- H9:** Editorial coverage of Pakistan on developmental activities will be more unfavourable before than after September 11. **H10:** Editorial coverage of Pakistan on Pak-India conflicts including Kashmir will be more unfavourable before than after September 11.
- H11:** Editorial coverage of Musharraf will be more unfavourable before than after September 11.

Method

This study explores editorial coverage of Pakistan in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and *The Wall Street Journal* before and after 9/11 using content analysis. The period for this study is the seven and half years from October 1999 to May 2007. This period is divided into two parts; (a) October 1999 to September 10, 2001; and (b) September 11, 2001 to May 2007. General Musharraf came to power in October 1999 and still remained in power in May 2007.

Editorials are considered the official opinion of a newspaper. According to Henry and Tator (2002), editorial study proves to be very important when analysing the ideological role of news media. The data for this research study include all editorials using the word “Pakistan” in the headline or lead paragraph in the selected newspapers from October 1999 to May 2007. The editorials were retrieved from the Lexis-Nexis electronic database. The database provided 70, 44 and 16 editorials for *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and *The Wall Street Journal*, respectively. Given the small number of editorials, a census was conducted. Each editorial was coded in terms of topic, slant, frame and length. Variables for inter-coder reliability were topic, slant and frame; and the overall score was 89 per cent, using Holsti’s (1969) method.

Content Categories

Boulding (1969) explains several factors that play a role in building the national image of a country, such as friendships and alliances, hostilities and conflicts among nations, geographical space, strengths and weaknesses of nations in terms of political, military and economic field. Hanan (2006) narrates that positive or negative portrayal of a country in terms of political, diplomatic, economic, military, historical and religious context in the media determines its national image. Schramm and Atwood (1981) identify 15 different categories that provide a base to examine the coverage of a country. Some modifications have been made in these categories according to the need of this study. Different aspects of image of Pakistan have been categorized into the following ten content categories:

1. War on terrorism, **2.** nuclear issue, **3.** religion/Islamic movements/religious activities, **4.** international politics, **5.** domestic politics, **6.** disasters, **7.** development, **8.** Pak-India conflicts including Kashmir, **9.** President General Pervez Musharraf, **10.** others.

In this particular study, slant refers to the writer's attitude in the editorial. The study follows the existing studies (Kim, 2000; Liu, 1969) by dividing slant into three categories; i.e., Favourable, unfavourable and neutral. Slant was coded separately for each of the ten topics. Slant has been classified as favourable, unfavourable and neutral, whereas frames were found in the entire editorial from the contextual point of view. The frames identified in this study were Pakistan as a friend and foe to the United States or identified as neutral. The length of the editorial was measured by words in the item on the ratio level.

Coding Unit

In the present study, headline and lead paragraph(s) were the coding unit for

identifying the topic. The editorial as a whole served as contextual unit, and each single sentence was the coding unit for identification of slant in the editorial. Sentences which indicated positive changes and development in war on terrorism, nuclear non-proliferation, religious harmony, domestic or international politics, economics, art and culture, peace promotion activities, initiatives taken for peace process with India and signing agreements with other countries leading to peace and progress, were coded as favourable. On the other hand, sentences which reflected non-cooperation in war on terror, reluctance in peace promoting efforts, involvement in supporting terrorist activities, natural accidents and disasters, nuclear proliferation, religious disharmony/conflict, infiltration and militancy in Kashmir, chaos and anarchy, and political, economic and social unrest and conflicts were coded as unfavourable. All sentences which did not depict either favourable or unfavourable slant were coded as neutral.

Rationale for the Selection of the Three Newspapers

Ho (1962) defines prestige newspapers by two standards: (a) quality of news reports; and (b) the influence on other media and political elites. According to this definition of prestige newspapers, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and *The Wall Street Journal* are selected for this study both for quality and influence.

According to Izadi (2007), *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and *The Wall Street Journal* are considered prestige newspapers; and all three are among the largest media outlets in the united States. He notes that these are also leading newspapers regarding the coverage of international events.

Findings

There were 130 editorials analysed—70 in *The New York Times* (53.8%), 44 in *The Washington Post* (33.8%) and 16 in *The Wall Street Journal* (12.3%). Thirty-one (23.8%) out of the 130 editorials were published before and 99 (76.2%) after the 9/11 incident. The topic-wise break-up of editorials was 23 on war on terrorism, eight on the nuclear issue, four on religion, 12 on international politics, 16 on domestic politics, 10 on disasters, five on development, 24 on Pak-India conflict, 22 on Musharraf, and six in the category named “others”. The mean story length by words during the pre-9/11 period was 448, and 505 in the post-9/11 period.

While analysing distribution of slant in the 130 editorials, 19 (14.6%) were favourable, 86 (66.2%) unfavourable and 25 (19.2%) neutral (see Table 1). With regard to framing, there were 15 (11.5%) editorials in which Pakistan was framed as friend, in 56 (43.1%) as foe and in 59 (45.4%) as neutral (Table 1).

Hypothesis H1a suggests that the proportion of favourable portrayals of Pakistan would be higher after September 11, 2001 than before. Of the 19 favourable editorials, not a single one was found during the period before 9/11. All 19 (19.2% of 99 editorials) favourable editorials were printed after the 9/11 incident (Table 1). The hypothesis was thus supported.

Hypothesis H1b predicts that the proportion of unfavourable portrayals of Pakistan would be lower after September 11, 2001 than before. The results did not support this hypothesis. There were 20 (64.5% of 31) unfavourable editorials published during the period before 9/11, while 66 (66.6% of 99) afterward. There was a slight upward trend in the unfavourable slant after 9/11. The results also show 11 (35.5% of 31) neutral editorials during the pre-9/11 period, but just 14 (14.2% of 99) in the post-9/11 period. So, unfavourable editorials continued to account for the majority of editorials.

Hypothesis H2a says that the proportion of editorials framing Pakistan as a friend would be lower before September 11, 2001 than after. This hypothesis was supported as all the 15 (15.1% of 99) editorials depicting Pakistan as a friend were printed after the 9/11 incident and none were published before 9/11 (Table 1).

Table 1 Distribution of Slant and Frame by Period

	Pre-9/11 N (%)	Post-9/11 N(%)	N(%)
Slant			
Favourable	0 (.0)	19 (19.2)	19 (14.6)
Unfavourable	20 (64.5)	66 (66.6)	86 (66.2)
Neutra	11 (35.5)	14 (14.2)	25 (19.2)
N (%)	31 (100)	99 (100)	130 (100)
Frame			
Friend	0(.0)	15 (15.1)	15 (11.5)
Foe	11 (35.5)	45 (45.5)	56 (43.1)
Neutral	20 (64.5)	39 (39.4)	59 (45.4)
N (%)	31 (100)	99 (100)	130 (100)

Hypothesis H2b posited that the proportion of editorials framing Pakistan as a foe would be higher before September 11, 2001 than after. This hypothesis was not supported as there were 11 (35.5% of 31) editorials depicting Pakistan as a foe in the pre-9/11 period and 45 (45.5% of 99) during the post-9/11 period. There were 20 (64.5% of 31) editorials coded neutral during the pre-9/11 period and 39 (39.4% of 99) during the post-9/11 period. Clearly, there was a big drop in neutrality after 9/11

(Table 1).

Hypothesis H3 states that the editorial coverage of Pakistan referencing the war on terrorism would be more unfavourable before than after September 11. The first part of the hypothesis was supported as five (5.05% of 99) editorials had a favourable slant after 9/11 and none prior to 9/11. However, the second part of the hypothesis was not supported as one (3.2% of 31) editorial with unfavourable slant was published during the pre-9/11 period, and 13 (13.13% of 99) in the post9/11 period (see Table 2). A sizeable increase in the percentage of unfavourable slant can be seen after 9/11.

Hypothesis H4 says that the editorial coverage of Pakistan referencing the nuclear issue would be more unfavourable before than after September 11. The first part of the hypothesis was supported as only one editorial on the nuclear issue was published before 9/11 and that was unfavourable, whereas the second part of the hypothesis was not supported as all seven editorials published after 9/11 were unfavourable. Not a single editorial was found with favourable slant in this category. The frequency of unfavourable editorials increased from 3.22% to 7.07% between the two periods (Table 2).

Hypothesis H5 predicts that the editorial coverage of religion/Islamic movements/religious activities in Pakistan would be more unfavourable before than after September 11. The first part of the hypothesis was not supported as no editorial on religion was found during the pre-9/11 period. The results also did not support the second part of the hypothesis since all three (3.03% of 99) editorials during the post-9/11 period had an unfavourable slant (See Table 2 on p. 117).

Table 2
Shift in Slant by Period in Different Topics

Slant in the editorial	Pre-and Post-9/11		Total
	Pre-9/11	Post-9/11	

Favourable	Topics of the	War on terror	0	0	0	0	0	0	5(5.05)	5(3.85)
Unfavourable	editorials Sub	International	0(.0)			1(1.01)	1(1.01)	1(1.01)	1(1.01)	1(.77)
Neutral	Total Topics	politics	1(3.22)	2(2.02)	2(1.53)	2(1.53)	2(1.53)	2(1.53)	2(1.53)	2(1.53)
	of the	Disasters	1(3.22)	0	3(3.03)	3(2.30)	3(2.30)	3(2.30)	3(2.30)	3(2.30)
	editorials Sub	Development	4(12.90)	5(5.05)	5(3.85)	5(3.85)	5(3.85)	5(3.85)	5(3.85)	5(3.85)
	Total Topics	Pak-India	10(32.25)	3(3.03)	3(2.30)	3(2.30)	3(2.30)	3(2.30)	3(2.30)	3(2.30)
	of the	conflict	2(6.45)	0	0	0	0	0	19(19.2)	19(14.6)
	editorials Sub	Musharraf War	1(3.22)	13(13.13)	14(10.76)	14(10.76)	14(10.76)	14(10.76)	14(10.76)	14(10.76)
	Total	on terror	1(3.22)	7(7.07)	8(6.15)	8(6.15)	8(6.15)	8(6.15)	8(6.15)	8(6.15)
		Nuclear issue	20(64.5)	3(3.03)	3(2.30)	3(2.30)	3(2.30)	3(2.30)	3(2.30)	3(2.30)
		Religion	1(3.22)	0	0	0	0	0	5(5.05)	9(6.92)
		International	1(3.22)	0	0	0	0	0	6(6.06)	16(12.30)
		politics	7(22.58)	4(4.04)	6(4.61)	6(4.61)	6(4.61)	6(4.61)	4(4.04)	6(4.61)
		Domestic	2(6.45)	1(1.01)	1(.77)	1(.77)	1(.77)	1(.77)	1(1.01)	1(.77)
		politics	11(35.5)	6(6.06)	6(4.61)	6(4.61)	6(4.61)	6(4.61)	6(6.06)	6(4.61)
		Disasters		18(18.18)	19(14.61)	19(14.61)	19(14.61)	19(14.61)	18(18.18)	19(14.61)
		Development		3(3.03)	4(3.07)	4(3.07)	4(3.07)	4(3.07)	3(3.03)	4(3.07)
		Pak-India		66(66.6)	86(66.2)	86(66.2)	86(66.2)	86(66.2)	66(66.6)	86(66.2)
		conflict		3(3.03)	0	4(3.07)	0	4(3.07)	3(3.03)	0
		Musharraf		1(1.01)	1(.77)	1(.77)	1(.77)	1(.77)	1(1.01)	1(.77)
		Others War on		1(1.01)	2(1.53)	2(1.53)	2(1.53)	2(1.53)	1(1.01)	2(1.53)
		terror Nuclear		2(2.02)	2(1.53)	2(1.53)	2(1.53)	2(1.53)	2(2.02)	2(1.53)
		issue Religion		1(1.01)	1(.77)	1(.77)	1(.77)	1(.77)	1(1.01)	1(.77)
		International		6(6.06)	0	13(10.0)	0	13(10.0)	6(6.06)	0
		politics		14(14.2)	2(1.53)	2(1.53)	2(1.53)	2(1.53)	14(14.2)	2(1.53)
		Disasters			25(19.2)	25(19.2)	25(19.2)	25(19.2)		25(19.2)
		Development								
		Pak-India								
		conflict								
		Others								

Total 31(100) 99(100) 130(100)

Hypothesis H6 posits that the editorial coverage of Pakistan referencing international politics would be more unfavourable before than after September 11. The first portion of the hypothesis was supported as one (1.01% of 99) favourable editorial was printed after and none with this slant was printed before September 11 (Table 2). The second portion of the hypothesis was supported in the sense that the number of unfavourable editorials moved downward from the pre-to post-9/11 period. On international politics, the percentage of unfavourable editorials declined from 12.90 % to 5.05% (See Table 2 on p 117). While the editorial coverage was largely negative

throughout the entire period, the frequency of negative editorials decreased considerably after 9/11.

Hypothesis H7 states that editorial the coverage of Pakistan referencing domestic politics would be more unfavourable before than after September 11. The first part of the hypothesis was partially supported in the sense that the percentage of unfavourable slant declined from 32.25% to 6.06% between the two periods (Table 2). Not a single favourable editorial on domestic politics was published during the seven and a half years studied. The second part of the hypothesis was, however, not supported because there were no favourable editorials printed in either period (Table 2).

Hypothesis H8 predicts that the editorial coverage of Pakistan referencing disastrous events would be more unfavourable before than after September 11. The first part of the hypothesis was supported as no favourable editorial was published before September 11, whereas two (2.02% of 99) favourable editorials were published after September 11 (Table 2). The second part of the hypothesis was partially supported since 2.02% favourable and 2.02% neutral editorials were published after 9/11, whereas four (4.04% of 99) unfavourable editorials also appeared afterward. There was a minor decline in the trend of unfavourable slant from 6.45% to 4.04% between the two periods (Table 2).

Hypothesis H9 states that editorial coverage of Pakistan on developmental activities will be more unfavourable before than after September 11. The results supported the first part of the hypothesis as there were three (3.03%) favourable and one (1.01%) neutral editorials after September 11 (Table 2). No favourable editorial was found before September 11. The second part of the hypothesis was also supported as there was only one (1.01%) unfavourable editorial after 9/11, but three (3.03%) favourable and one (1.01%) neutral editorials were published after 9/11 (Table 2).

Hypothesis H10 suggests that editorial coverage of Pakistan on Pak-India conflicts including Kashmir would be more unfavourable before than after September 11. The first portion of the hypothesis was not supported. All seven (22.58%) editorials prior to 9/11 were neutral in slant (Table 2). The second portion of the hypothesis was also not supported. Pak-India conflicts received five (5.05%) favourable and six (6.06%) unfavourable comments in the post-9/11 period. The results also depict a decline in neutrality going from 22.58% to 6.06% between the two periods—an overall unfavourable coverage trend (Table 2).

Hypothesis H11 suggests that editorial coverage of Musharraf would be more unfavourable before than after September 11. The first portion of the hypothesis was supported. There were no favourable editorials published on Musharraf before 9/11 (Table 2). The results did not, however, support the second portion of the hypothesis. As noted in the literature, Musharraf is a leading partner of the US government on war against terror, but he received rather unfavourable coverage. Only three (3.03%)

favourable editorials were published on Musharraf after 9/11. No neutral editorials appeared at all, and 18 (18.18% of 99) were unfavourable (Table 2). This shows that Musharraf, despite his cooperation with the US administration, received an unfavourable editorial coverage in the elite US press. It is noteworthy that across almost all topics coded, the number of unfavourable editorials actually increased after 9/11 and the start of strong Pakistani support of US efforts in combating terrorism.

The first research question looked at whether the editorial coverage of Pakistan in the elite US newspaper during the Musharraf regime was in line with the media conformity theory or the cultural difference theory. Generally, the findings did not support the media conformity theory. The results were, however, consistent with other image studies on the Muslim world that indicate a Western fear of Islam as a potential threat to the interests of the Western world.

RQ2 asked how the national image of Pakistan was presented in the editorials of elite US newspapers between October 1999 and May 2007. Keeping in view the crucial circumstances that arose after the Pakistani nuclear tests, the military coup and the 9/11 incidents, the issues of war on terror, the nuclear issue, Islamic movements/religious activities, international and domestic politics, Pak-India conflicts and president general Pervez Musharraf as a leader of the nation, were considered important factors in image building process for Pakistan. Results revealed that Pakistan received unfavourable coverage across almost all topics coded.

RQ3 asked whether the image of Pakistan in elite US newspapers differed after September 11, 2001 from before. The results depicted that the image of Pakistan in the elite US newspapers did not improve after September 11, but instead declined, contradictory to the conformity theory.

Research question four looked at the slant of the coverage before and after September 11, 2001. The findings relating to RQ4 revealed that the slant of the coverage of the newspapers was unfavourable before September 11 because of the tests of nuclear weapons and the military coup. After September 11, when Pakistan became a partner of the United States in its war on terror, a few favourable editorials on the war on terror, Pak-India conflicts and Musharraf were published, but soon the situation reversed. Results depict that overall percentage of unfavourable editorials (66.2%) was much higher than the favourable (14.6%) and neutral (19.2%). There was virtually no change in the proportion of unfavourable editorial coverage before and after 9/11.

RQ5 asked what frames were evident in the coverage of Pakistan before and after September 11, 2001. Pakistan was equated predominantly with neutral frame (64.5%) before September 11, whereas after the 9/11 incidents, the neutrality factor drastically dropped from 64.5% to 39.4%; and Pakistan as a foe frame jumped from 35.5% to

45.5%.

Discussion

Several research studies have shown that elite US press coverage of foreign nations generally conforms to US government policy (Zheng, 2006; Largio, 2004; Shoemaker and Reese, 1996; Berry, 1990 ; Chang, 1989; Ramaprasad, 1984; Paletz and Entman, 1981; et. al.). This study's findings do not support the theory. Prior to September 11, 2001, American policy toward Pakistan was quite critical. In the 1990s, the country had disposed of its democratically elected government in a military takeover, had set off nuclear weapons, and had engaged in war with neighbouring India. The US government had imposed sanctions and issued numerous critical statements about actions taken by Pakistani authorities. The editorial coverage of Pakistan in the late 1990s was decidedly on the negative side, just as earlier studies would suggest. A general conformity did exist between the newspapers' editorial positions and government policy.

After the 9/11 attacks on America, US government policy shifted dramatically as it sought to enlist the Pakistani state in its war against terror. The sanctions were soon lifted, and statements about the Pakistani government became increasingly positive. The conformity theory would predicts that editorial coverage would change in a similar fashion, but it did not. Positive editorials went from zero previously to almost 20 per cent of coverage. However, rather than a decrease in the negative coverage, that too increased, albeit slightly as a proportion of editorializing. What changed most dramatically was a polarisation of editorial opinion where the proportion of neutral or balanced editorials decreased considerably. In the post 9/11 opinion, Pakistan was either bad or good. There was far less middle ground afforded to the ally than had been given when the country was out of official favour.

Pakistan was framed as a "foe" before 9/11 and remained a foe after 9/11 in the editorial pages. Indeed, the percentage of editorials depicting the country as a foe actually increased as American policy warmed toward it, with editorials describing a friendly relationship accounting for just 15 per cent of the total. As with the positive/negative measure above, the friend/foe measure showed a sizeable decrease in the middle ground.

When specific topics were examined, the polarization pattern was again evident. Where there earlier were no positive editorials about Pakistan's role in war on terror, the Indo-Pak conflict, or Musharraf's military regime; positive editorials on these three topics accounted for 13 per cent of all coverage after 9/11. Negative coverage of these same topics went up from six per cent to 38 per cent. Even while the US government was portraying Pakistan as an ally in the war on terror, lending it greater

support in Indo-Pak discussions, and financially supporting the Musharraf government; the editorial pages were deeply critical of Pakistan on all these counts.

Such editorial coverage was given despite the fact that Pakistan had taken major steps to eradicate terrorism from the region and changed its foreign policy toward its neighbours dramatically. Although it had been a close ally of the Taliban regime since its inception, after 9/11 Pakistan withdrew all support to the Taliban and extended unstinting cooperation to the United States in its military campaign in Afghanistan. Pakistan helped the United States by identifying and detaining extremists, tightening the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, deploying its army on the Afghan border to stop terrorist infiltration, continuing military actions in North and South Waziristan, and banning terrorist organisations in the country. In addition, Pakistan introduced notable social reforms aimed at presenting Pakistan as a moderate Islamic country. Nevertheless, Pakistan was portrayed just as unfavourably after all this as before.

It is the depiction of Musharraf, however, that runs most directly counter to the conformity theory. President General Pervez Musharraf had extended his full cooperation to the United States in the war on terror, but only three favourable editorials were published about him after 9/11. The other 18 that mentioned him were all unfavourable. One reason behind this trend might have been the editorial perception of Musharraf as someone who had failed to fulfil his promises of democracy for his own country.

Titles such as, “Gen. Musharraf’s Lies” (October 02, 2005), “Broken Promises” (September 21, 2004), “The General’s Broken Promise” (May 15, 2002), “Just a Dictator” (October 17, 2000), and “Pakistan’s Perpetual President” (April 17, 2002), all argued that the general was to blame for the continuing presence of terrorists in the region despite the arrest of hundreds of Al-Qaeda remnants and continuing military operations in Pakistani territory aimed at stopping terrorist infiltration.

A reading of the selected editorials reveals that there were a number of demonizing words frequently used for Muslims in the selected newspapers— “Islamic extremists”, “Islamic militants”, “Islamic fundamentalism”, “Islamic terrorism”, “fundamentalist guerrillas”, “Islamic guerrillas”, “Islamic radicals”, “rigidly Islamist movement”, “radical Islamic group”, “fundamentalist terrorists”, “Islamic fanatics”, “violent Islamic extremists”, “Muslim fundamentalist *Mullahs*”, “Islamic warrior forces”, “radical brand of Islam”, “Islamic fundamentalist state”, “radical Islamic terrorism”, “mad *Mullahs*”, “Muslim bomb”. The frequent use of such polarising language in the editorials examined suggests a stereotypical mindset.

One possible explanation for the polarization observed in the editorial slant is that the 9/11 attacks on America and the resulting war on terror has fuelled an anti-Muslim

sentiment that colours all foreign policy considerations. Pakistan is an officially Muslim state. Ninety-six per cent of its citizens are Muslims.⁴ When the US government changed course and embraced Pakistan as an ally in the war on terror, a few editorials recognized the shift and portrayed Pakistani actions favourably. But, at the same time, anti-Muslim sentiments grew and editorialists were less and less able to find a middle course when discussing any Muslim country—even an ally. Because Muslims were bad, Pakistan had to be bad.

Overall, the findings do not support the media conformity theory, but instead fall closely to the cultural difference theory advanced by Galtung, 1992; Said, 1987, 1997; Graber, 1980; Mughees, 1995; Karim, 2000; Khalid, 2001; et. al. The results indicate a general bias against the Muslims by American editorial writers.

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Notes & References

1

Schramm and Atwood's first category was split up into (1) war on terrorism (2) nuclear issue, and (3) Indo-Pak conflicts including Kashmir. Their 2nd and 3rd categories relating to international and domestic politics were taken as two separate categories. Their categories 4, 5, 6, 9, 11, 12 and 13 were merged into one category named development. Categories 7, 8, and 10 were merged into the category of disasters. Their 14th category about religion was taken as a full category due to the perception about the coverage trend of US media regarding the Muslim world. A separate category about President of Pakistan, General Pervez Musharraf, was included because this study mainly revolves around the events that took place under his regime. Schramm and Atwood's category No. 15 was also taken as a separate category to include editorials that did not fall under the themes of the above redesigned nine categories.

2

Coding instructions are with the author.

3

The following percentages were calculated accordingly from 31 and 99 editorials for pre-9/11 and post-9/11 periods, respectively.

4

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Pakistan retrieved on September 11, 2007.