IMPACT OF PRINT MEDIA ON PUBLIC OPINION AND STATE POLICY REGARDING THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR IN PAKISTAN

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ASIA e UNIVERSITY
2023

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A Thesis Submitted to Asia e University in
Fulfilment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

November 2023

ABSTRACT

The tragic 9/11 attacks have shaken the entire world, since then US & allies have initiated global war on terror (GWOT) to eliminate terrorism. Pakistan joined GWOT when then President Musharaf decided to join US in GWOT. Pakistan is facing a severe wave of terrorism, resulting in several deaths, injuries, and damaging consequences in economy, peace, and security. During GWOT, the role of media is criticized for playing a negative role that hampers efforts of respective governments. This research explores the impact of Pakistani print media on public opinion and state policy on GWOT. The research questions are which agendas are promoted and issues are framed by the print media of Pakistan on GWOT? What was the role of the media during GWOT? what was impact of framed issues and promoted agendas on public opinion and state policy? The objectives of the study are to analyze the agendas (agenda setting) by Pakistani media during global war on terror. To identify the role of Pakistani media during global war on terror. To examine the influence of media's agenda setting and issue framing on GWOT towards public opinion in Pakistan and towards Pakistan's policy. This is a qualitative research study, where case study research design is used. Two important case studies of Pakistan's GWOT are used, i.e., Musharraf's decision to join GWOT in 2001, and Operation Zarb e Azb. The population of study includes articles, editorials, and stories from two leading newspapers of Pakistan, i.e., Dawn and The Nation along with secondary sources. Content analysis with the aid of thematic analysis is used to interpret, categorize, and analyze collected data. The findings highlighted that Pakistani print media presented dominant antiwar agendas and framed issues negatively on GWOT. Pakistani print media played a negative role on GWOT. Pakistani print media impacted public opinion and policy matters of Pakistan in negative manner resulted in public protests and undesired policy shifts. The key implications of this study are that findings will allow policy makers and stakeholders including media outlets to device effective, efficient, and sustainable policies regarding security, media coverage and other related matters during GWOT. This research can help policy makers in evaluating and reformulating national integration and counterterrorism measures in Pakistan.

Keywords: Agenda setting, issue framing, Pakistani media, terrorism, war on terror

APPROVAL

This is to certify that this thesis conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in quality and scope, for the fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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This thesis was submitted to Asia e University and is accepted as fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Professor Dr. Siow Heng Loke
Asia e University
Chairman, Examination Committee
(22 November 2023)

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis submitted in fulfilment of the PhD degree is my own work and that all contributions from any other persons or sources are properly and duly cited. I further declare that the material has not been submitted either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university. In making this declaration, I understand and acknowledge any breaches in this declaration constitute academic misconduct, which may result in my expulsion from the programme and/or exclusion from the award of the degree.

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Signature of Candidate: **Date**: 22 November 2023

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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LIST OF ABBREVIATION

AeU	Asia e University
APS	Army Public School
AST	Agenda Setting Theory
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CNN	Cable News Network, Inc.
CPEC	China Pakistan Economic Corridor
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan
GWOT	Global War on Terror
IDP	Internally Displaced People
KPK	Khyber Pakhtoon Khawa
NACTA	National Counter Terrorism Authority
NAP	National Action Plan
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
PAK	Pakistan
PATA	Provincially Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan
PEMRA	Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority
RO	Research Objective
RQ	Research Question
TTP	Tehreek Taliban Pakistan
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction
WOT	War on Terror

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of the Study

The world has faced a serious wave of terrorism and many innocent lives have been lost in this ongoing struggle. Pakistan have faced one of the biggest burnt in the global war on terror. The attacks on 9/11 completely changed the geopolitics dynamics and transformed security policies of Pakistan. In the aftermath of 9/11 tragedy, Bush administration launched global war on terror (GWOT). The government of Pakistan aligned itself with United States (US) as a response and since then acting as a partner in war on terror. Pervez Musharraf, then president of Pakistan stated that Pakistan is supporting US in GWOT due to national interests and declared that Pakistan firmly believed in principles of humanity and peace. Logistic support in the form of aid was provided to Pakistan for fighting against terrorists in the northern parts of country (Khan, 2013). Pakistani military launched counter-terrorism operations mainly in the Waziristan and tribal areas near Afghanistan border. As a reaction to counter-terrorism measures and aligning with global war on terror policy, Pakistan become a battlefield where terrorists turned guns against government of Pakistan and series of terrorist attacks happened across country since then.

The word terrorism emerged from the word "terror" that is defined as spreading fear through violent acts, terrorism is any crime having political motivations and wanted to achieve certain objectives other than monetary benefit or revenge only (Ackerman & Burnham, 2021). Another scholar Di Filippo (2020) highlight terrorism as an organized politically motivated crime, where often the target of terrorists is to force the authorities to accept their demands (Di Filippo, 2020). The literature review highlights that terrorism has changed many forms during history. The world has seen

four major waves of terrorism, the first wave in the late 19th century, when target killings of important personalities was a major crime. One of the examples is murder of Austro-Hungarian prince, that murder is often referred as short-term cause of world war I. The second wave of terrorism was during anti-colonization era in early and mid of 20th century, where bombing of crowded places was major crime terrorists committed. The third wave of terrorism was common in the second half of 20th century that involves targeted attacks and hijacking of airplanes. The fourth wave of terrorism is also alleged as "religious terrorism" initiated in 1980's and world nations are currently fighting that war (Radil & Castan, 2022). The severity in latest wave of terrorism increased after 9/11 attacks, when United States decided to launch a global war on terror to eliminate terrorist groups.

The term global war on terror (GWOT) is a term that is defined as a coordinated effort of several partner countries against the terrorist organizations that involves military operations, intelligence sharing and where the major aim is to eliminate terror groups and fight against terrorist organizations (Ackerman & Burnham, 2021). The GWOT is led by US and its allies, and Pakistan is an important ally of US in GWOT. The GWOT was declared after 9/11 attacks and many countries joined hands with US in that war. Pakistan is neighbor of Afghanistan, which was strongest hold of Taliban and other terrorist organizations. Also, Pakistan shares a history with Taliban and Afghanistan during cold war, hence that makes Pakistan extremely important participant in GWOT. Once GWOT was launched, terrorist organizations also launched full blown attacks on Pakistani territory (Khan, 2013), and that makes this war extremely important for Pakistan, because peace and security of Pakistan was severely threatened.

Before 9/11, Pakistan have faced serious issue of terrorism, in the 1980's and 1990's (Radil & Castan Pinos, 2022) but that wave was a result of Pakistan's support of Afghanistan and US in war against USSR. That wave was somehow controlled when Pakistan recognized the government of Taliban in Afghanistan in 1990's despite massive opposition from US and western powers. But the elements of terrorism, never got eliminated, and Pakistan was in a continuous struggle to manage both religious extremism and its soft image in the world. The equation was although imbalanced, yet manageable by in terms of peace and security for Pakistan before 2001. But the equation changed dramatically after 9/11 attacks in the United States of America in 2001. That tragic event claimed many innocent lives and leaves United States at a spot where they must take a decisive action or face public anger. The Bush administration, hence decided to launch a global war on terrorism, against Taliban and Al-Qaida which was a terrorist organization operating in Afghanistan and for that purpose they asked for the help of NATO and allied countries (Zainievich, 2022). Pakistan is the center of attention due to the alleged presence of domestic and foreign terrorist organizations in the country. The US provided Pakistan with the two straight forward options that were "Either you are with us or with the terrorists." Pakistan was already in a serious clash with India, and had tense border situations, crippling economy, international sanctions due to their nuclear tests in 1998, which they conducted after the nuclear tests of India. Moreover, another difficulty for Pakistan was that they previously recognized the government of Taliban in Afghanistan, and two decades back, with the help of US, Pakistan have provided help and assistance to Afghani fighters in war against USSR during the cold war.

The issue of terrorism is not new to Pakistan, when we study the history of terrorism, Pakistan faced a first major threat of terrorism in the 1980s, a second wave

in the 1990s, both related to the Soviet Afghan war also known as Afghan miracle (Khan, 2013). Pakistan was also in a political turmoil, where during 1990's their political governments have changed frequently, fought a war with India on Kargil, and their democratic government was toppled by then military chief Pervez Musharraf, who declared Martial Law and later conducted allegedly disputed elections and became President of Pakistan. Hence, when United States provided Pakistan with two options, Pakistan internally, economically, and politically was not in a strong condition and their government was not enjoying majority support from media, political actors, and civil society.

Undoubtedly, war on terror has received a lot of publicity due to severity of its nature. Journalists have played a significant role in media coverage and reportage of terrorist activities. It is alleged that they gave the public a new narrative to investigate during war on terror (Qadir & Alasuutari, 2013). Media plays an important role in identifying issues and planning strategies when they cover issues. The current affairs programs and print media have a significant impact on operational processes, national policies, management practices and public understanding of the issue. The role of media in such affairs of public importance becomes highly important because it is not only considered as a pillar of state but also it has the power and ability to impact public opinion through agenda setting and issue framing. The term agenda setting refers to a coverage practice of media where specific agendas are transferred towards the public from many issues. That transferred agendas have the potential to impact the opinion of public, and if biased agendas are set, that can negatively affect the opinion of public (Wolfe, 2013). In a similar manner, issue framing refers to a practice adopted by media, where out of several issues, specific issues are framed and shown to the public, that consequently can impact public opinion of a state. public opinion is extremely

important in democratic states, because of the election factor (Boydstun, 2013). And this is the reason policy makers always ensure considering public opinion when making state policies. Hence, a research gap arises that if we consider agenda setting and issue framing as independent factors, they can impact public opinion and state policy of state. This is the reason during GWOT, the role of media becomes extremely important for any participant state and research is needed to understand how media can leave impacts on public opinion and state policy through its agenda setting and issue framing.

When the Bush administration launched war on terror by attacking Afghanistan and Iraq with the help of the British government, its media played an important role in planning in line with America's security policy. The media presented the GWOT as a fight for survival because its audience strongly supported President Bush's war strategy. According to Khan (2013) after 9/11, the US media promoted the government's policies and views on war and terror (Khan, 2013), without giving it another thought. The US media describes Osama Bin Laden as the root of all evils and described him as a responsible for the horrific terrorist attacks (Qadir & Alasuutari, 2013); hence media supported the military operation as the right thing to do. In general, the American media covers terrorism and the global war on terrorism from the perspective of the US authorities and policies. Therefore, because of the considerable audience that follows the US media, many from the masses supported the actions of the government (Parks, 2018).

In the 21st century, the media is considered extremely important in state affairs around the globe. This is the era of globalization and information, where the mediums of information, especially media have earned the status of pillar of state. The role of western media played an important role in the success of the US during the war on

terror. However, independent Pakistani media have been criticized for playing a role that has proven counterproductive in the country's counter-terrorism efforts (Fair, 2012). The Pakistani media is accused of negative framing of terrorism cases and setting different agendas through reporting that are inconsistent with the government's position in the fight against extremism. The Pakistani media not only promoted the anti-war agendas but also criticized the US as the root of all evil for imposing GWOT on Pakistan. Finding out the dominant agendas set by the Pakistani media and their impact on Pakistani policy regarding the Global War on Terror is crucial, also the impact of these agendas on the public opinion is extremely important to identify.

Before conducting this research, we have less understanding about the Pakistani print media's role during GWOT, and its impact on public opinion and policies of the state because of existing research gap. Some research studies have attempted to answer the question by independently examining the impact on state policy or public opinion but there is a clear research gap present. This study aims to answer these questions and to conduct a research design that finds the impact of agenda setting and issue framing on state policy of Pakistan and public opinion. By addressing the issue at hand, this study explores the role of Pakistani media in presenting dominant agendas and identifying issues related to the global war on terrorism and its impact on public opinion and state policy. Where in this research study two extremely important case studies on the Global War on Terror are considered (i) The decision of Musharraf as president of Pakistan to join global war on terror in 2001 (ii) The military Operation of Zarb e Azb, which was one of the biggest military operations launched by Pakistan to combat terrorism. This background of problem statement leads us to major problem statement that is to identify the impact of Pakistani print media on public opinion and state policy on global war on terror.

1.1 Problem Statement

After the attacks of 9/11 on world trade center, Pakistan joined hands with United States in global war on terror (GWOT) to eliminate the threat of terrorism. United States launched war in Afghanistan, which was a stronghold of Taliban who are considered as responsible for 9/11 attacks, and Pakistan become closest ally of United States (Ali et al., 2013). Since then, Pakistani is facing a wave of terrorism, and fighting its war of survival both at internal and external fronts but the role of Pakistani media during this war is highly debatable. The Pakistani media blamed for hampering the efforts of GWOT through its coverage. This research aims to find out what was the role of media during the global war on terror and how the role played by the media impacted public opinion and state policy of the country. This research also aims to find out what agendas were presented by the Pakistani media during global war on terror, which issues were framed and what was the impact of those agendas and framed issues on the opinion of the public. Further it will investigate how those presented agendas and framed issues impacted state policy during GWOT.

When Pakistan decided to join United States in global war on terror, media highly criticized the policies of the government of Pakistan. There was rigorous reporting of the issue, where media blamed Pakistani government for jumping in an unwanted war. Pakistani print media published articles calling the war as a conspiracy theory against Muslim world and labeled Pakistani government as puppet of United States of America (Abbasi, 2013). Consequently, Pakistani government faced severe criticism from both political factions and public. Several news articles pointed out weaknesses in policy of Pakistan and highlights how the joining of GWOT poses serious threats to security and sovereignty of Pakistan. As a result, fingers were pointed on the ability of the state to fight war against terrorism. Previously research has been

conducted on the role of Pakistan in GWOT, but little research is conducted on the role of Pakistani media during global war on terror. There is a significant gap present, and it is need of time to understand that what role Pakistani media played during global war on terror.

Previously, Pakistan was having a pro-Taliban policy, after joining GWOT, the sudden shift in Pakistan's policy towards Taliban created massive problems for Pakistan. As a result of this decision, a series of bombings, suicide attacks and killings have shaken the security and peace of the country. There is another blame Pakistani government face that is they have no coherent policy over GWOT and regulation of media on that issue (Abbasi, 2013). The economic basis has been shaken and Pakistan is facing serious economic crisis due to issue of terrorism as investors fear to invest in a warzone. Due to all these tragedies during GWOT; public and experts raising questions on Pakistan's capabilities like nuclear assets safety and success of counterterrorism operations (Khan, 2013). Similarly, US is also not pleased with the efforts of Pakistan and demanding to 'do more', that further increases the problems for Pakistan on international platforms. Pakistani media is blamed for negative reporting of GWOT and irresponsible coverage, where media is accused to provide coverage to terrorists that fueled public rage and hampered success of counter terrorism operations. Moreover, during the GWOT, Pakistani Public at large considers US and western allies big enemy due to media's negative coverage of GWOT. This also leads to worsening foreign relations with former allies. During the GWOT, Pakistani media have covered the issue and reported mass protests in public against drone attacks, GWOT actions and counterterrorism operations (Abbasi, 2013). Additionally, elections in Pakistan are won by parties that support the public sentiments and those who fail to act accordingly lose public support, like Musharraf lost public support after decision of joining GWOT

(Sultan, 2016). This is the reason role of media during GWOT becomes even more relevant and important. During GWOT, on the issues of operations and peace talks with terrorists; at times Pakistani governments were forced to amend, defend, or change their policies when public pressure increased, which indicates the strength of public opinion and impact of media in modern era.

In a similar manner, the impact of media on public opinion and state policy is debatable across the globe. In the western world, the role of media is studied through content analysis and scholars are trying to identify impacts of agenda setting and issue framing by media on public opinion and state policy. In Pakistan, there is a research gap present, where less research is conducted on impact of agenda setting and issue framing by media on public opinion and state policy during GWOT. This research will also answer this theoretical gap and try to explore the role of media considering agenda setting and issue framing theories. Moreover, agenda setting, and issue framing theories are not extensively tested on Pakistani print media, in addition CNN theory and its impact of Pakistani media coverage during GWOT yet to be tested and these theoretical gaps makes this research study essential and research problem extremely important. Where according to Palloshi (2015) CNN theory highlights that US media impacted public opinion and state policy of US in the past. The cable news network (CNN) is a popular media house in the US, and its impact is being studied by various researchers (Palloshi, 2015). Some previous studies conducted on role of western media, but less research focused on role of Asian or Pakistani media during GWOT with theoretical debates. Some of the theoretical debates on role of media highlight that the impact on public opinion consequently impacts policy matters that makes this study even further unique and research gap essential to address.

Upon joining GWOT, then President of Pakistan, Musharraf accepted the condition of United States of America and joined global war on terror, which makes the decision of Pakistan to join GWOT an extremely important case study for this research. In the following years, Pakistan faced serious threats, series of attacks and bombings were conducted by terrorists' groups across the country, Pakistan lost several lives, faced worst economic crisis; their cultural and global image affected largely. Pakistan also tried to hold talks with Taliban to reach some peace deal, but all in vain. There were certain other factors including policies, decisions, internal and external factors that were playing the role. It was 2014, when Pakistan finally decided to conduct a decisive operation against terrorists, namely operation Zarb e Azb, where Zarb e Azb literally means "Sharp and Cutting Strike" against the terrorism in Pakistan (Khan & Akhtar, 2016). Hence, this makes case study of operation Zarb e Azb extremely important whenever we conduct any research study on global war on terror in Pakistan. Moreover, this makes it extremely important to answer the questions on what issues were framed and as a result which agendas Pakistani media presented during global war on terror. Also, it becomes imperative to find that what was the role of print media during global war on terror and what was the impact of coverage of print media during global war on terror on public opinion and state policy.

Moreover, there is a debate on how media impacted public opinion and state policy during the global war on terror. In Pakistan, policy makers are trying to find the sustainable solutions to eliminate terrorism from the country. After the withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan, Taliban reclaimed control over Kabul, and there are still dark clouds of terrorism looming over Pakistan (Jan, 2022). There is a clear gap in the implications of role of media during GWOT in Pakistan on public opinion and state policy. Less research is conducted on this issue and this research becomes extremely

important to study the gap of implications too. Another significance of the research problem is that there is heated debate on the role of media during past two decades in Pakistan during GWOT. Hence that leads to a gap in analysis that can not only help in understanding what role media played during global war on terror but also how after studying these gaps policy makers and stakeholders can device future policies. Some research findings are conducted on how agenda setting theory and issue framing theory are impacting on public opinion and state policy independently. In perspective of GWOT, this leaves a theoretical gap to answer, where this research will study the data in the light of these abovementioned theories to find out what was the impact of Pakistani media on public opinion and state policy.

Whenever research is conducted on societies and complex issues, qualitative research methods hold great importance. The qualitative research method not only allows us to understand the complex situation at hand but also allows the researchers to reach findings through analytical tools (Lichtman, 2013). In Pakistan, some research used quantitative methods to understand the impact of media but that leaves a methodology gap. Hence this research will employ the qualitative research method, where case study research design will be used and content analysis as a tool to identify the impact of Pakistani media on public opinion and state policy during GWOT.

There are some important perspectives that have become extremely important for Pakistan and GWOT. Firstly, when Pakistan joined the GWOT, US was leading GWOT actively in the region. Recently US withdrawal of forces from Afghanistan and Taliban's takeover of Kabul have completely changed the dynamics and added new perspective (Jan, 2022). Another perspective is that when Pakistan joined GWOT, there was a government headed by military dictators namely Pervez Musharaf. Now democracy is evolving in Pakistan, although still no Pakistani Prime Minister

completed its five years term, yet three successive elections have been conducted in past two decades resulted in formation of democratic governments. Another important perspective is that Pakistani media's reach have increased multi-fold, and that also increased the readership of print media. These perspectives added a new dimension and gaps to the issue of role of Pakistani media during GWOT. Hence, in these changing perspectives the need to conduct research on impact of print media on public opinion and state policy becomes extremely important research problem.

In the current circumstances, identifying the role of Pakistani print media during GWOT considering agenda setting and issue framing is essential. Also, exploring the impact of agenda setting and issue framing on public opinion and state policy is need of time which is also research problem of this study. Hence, this research problem is aimed to fulfill these abovementioned gaps and aims to analyze and explore the role of Pakistani media during global war on terror. The findings of the research will greatly help policy makers, Pakistani media industry, politicians, and future researchers in understanding the impact of Pakistani print media during GWOT on public opinion and state policy. This will also help key stakeholders in understanding the burning issue of GWOT and devising strategies accordingly.

1.2 Research Objectives

This research study has four primary objectives, which are:

i. To analyze the agendas (agenda setting) by Pakistani media during global war on terror.

ii. To identify the role of Pakistani media during global war on terror.

iii. To examine the influence of media's agenda setting towards public opinion in Pakistan.