Media Affecting Upon or Affected By Foreign Policy: The Case of Pakistan

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Abstract: In the modern democratic societies, mass media has emerged as an important contributing factor of foreign policy. Walter Lippmann defines media as ‘an organ of democracy’ because in democratic societies media has the potential to translate the dictum of ‘government of the people, by the people and for the people.’ Media and foreign policy relationships are discussed in two parts; the first part defines the issue in broader perspective while the second part describes the issue in Pakistan’s perspective. Media and foreign policy dimensions suggested by Hamid Mowlana (1997) are considered in the backdrop of media theories of agenda-setting, gatekeeping, framing, CNN effect, and propaganda model of Herman and Chomsky. Three types of relationships may exist between media and foreign policy; manipulative/monolithic/advocative; adversarial; and indifferent. Media of the capitalist countries and particularly the US media have been manipulative, monolithic and advocative. As far as Pakistani media is concerned, it has remained indifferent towards foreign policy for most of the time as it has been under strict government control during military regimes. Main goals of Pakistan’s foreign policy are discussed through the lenses of Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah. An overview of the different phases of Pakistan’s foreign policy, suggested by Hasan Askari, facilitates the reader to establish its relation with the media.

1. Introduction

Foreign policy is the face that a country shows to the outer world. Foreign policy is defined by different scholars. According to Joseph Frankel, “foreign policy consists of decisions and actions which involve to some appreciable extent relations between one state and others.” Huge Gibson defines foreign policy as, “foreign policy is a well rounded comprehensive plan based on knowledge and experience for conducting business of government with rest of the world.” The main argument of foreign policy suggests how a state
conducts external relations with the other states. Foreign policy is the set of government approaches related to international relations, national security and defense.

The concept of foreign policy is not new rather it is as old as the countries are. It is designed to achieve national interests and objectives while dealing with other nations. National interests are outlined and prioritized through foreign policy, and executed through tools under some strategies. Strategies help to make the most out of prevailing circumstances and purge problems that may serve as hindrances. Foreign policy is based on the goals to protect and advance national interests that policy makers seek to obtain abroad. It dictates political, social, economic and military behavior of a country with other countries.

Mass media could be defined as “devices for moving messages across distances or time to accomplish mass communication” (Defleur et al. 1989:239). Mass communication is the transmission of information, ideas, opinions and policies to heterogeneous, anonymous and large audiences through technical devices. In the contemporary world mass media and foreign policy are complementary because media serves as a device to show a country’s face to the outer world. Therefore, in the modern democratic societies, mass media has emerged as an important contributing factor of foreign policy. Walter Lippmann (1922, p. 229) defines media as ‘an organ of democracy’ because in democratic societies media has the potential to translates the dictum of ‘government of the people, by the people and for the people.’

2. State of the Art

Media is an important source of information to effect upon and to be effected by foreign policy. Theories and concepts of media that can be applied on foreign policy matters are; agenda-setting, framing, gatekeeping, Chomsky’s propaganda filter, CNN effect, embedded journalism, spiral of silence etc. Agenda-setting function of the media explains how media agenda and policy agenda are
related with each other. According to Daniel Hallin (1986) media content conforms with and reflects official agenda setting. The concept of ‘manufacturing consent’ suggested by Noam Chomsky substantiates this point.

2.1 Literature Review

Media turns to be an important tool in the pursuit of national interests outlined in the foreign policy. Merrill (1991, p. 66) states, “media are instrumental in creating, perpetuating, and modifying images of foreign nations and international leaders.” With the advancement of technology media have become more powerful as the information is now more pervasive, all-encompassing, and omnipresent. Media as a tool of political communication formulate national images that correlate different segments of society, provide a platform to voice public opinion, and serve as watchdog for surveillance of the country. With the technological advancement, media has surfaced as a powerful institution that affects politics from different dimensions.

Media and foreign policy relationship is subtle and complex. Hamid Mowlana (1997) suggests that the study of the media and foreign policy should consider the multifaceted nature of the phenomenon by focusing on the following dimensions;

- Public opinion and interest groups
- The culture of foreign policy
- Modern communication technology
- Security, peace and war
- Economic and trade as foreign policy
- Culture & information as foreign policy

Research shows that public opinion effects policy making (Burstein, 2003; Heith, 2003; Reiter & Tillman, 2002). Mass media has the power to affect both public opinion and policy
making. According to Cohen media have three primary roles in the foreign policy process; communication, interpretation and advocacy. Media through its communication feature sets the agenda for debates and discussions at national as well as international level.

Selection of news items and framing by global media has profound influence upon foreign policies. For example, the way US-Iraq conflict was covered by the corporate media; discourses of ‘weapons of mass destruction’ (WMD) in Iraq and ‘dictatorship’ of Saddam were emphasized. Since democracy is projected as a ‘sacred’ and ‘ideal’ thing to be achieved, corporate media tried to justify US invasion and presence in that region.

According to Bernard Cohen (1963), it is the media that draws political maps of the world in the modern times. He commented on the role of media, “the media may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but they are ‘stunningly successful in telling people what to think about.” This famous quotation of Cohen explains the agenda-setting role of media. Media has the power to highlight important issues, events and debates as well as it can undermine by ignoring them. According to Cohen media helps to ‘create or shape the outlines of foreign policy issues in the minds of the general public, of organized groups, and of government official more or less remote or removed from these particular issues” (1965, pp 199-200). Therefore, governments try to control or spin media focus regarding policy matters. Agenda setting theory explains how policy agenda, media agenda and public agenda are related with each other.
Framing, the second order of agenda-setting, deals with the news treatment, structure, arrangement, selection of words, and phrasing. Media analyses of issues and events that are related with foreign policy effect upon the ultimate objectives of foreign policy. Media by its virtue of highlighting or marginalizing certain discourses may facilitate or impede the execution of foreign policy. For example, the coverage of drone attacks in Pakistan are ignored or marginalized and discourses of war against terrorism are highlighted in the global media. After 9/11 not a single terrorist attack has occurred on the soil of US but since then Pakistan had faced hundreds and thousands of deaths in the name of ‘war against terrorism.’

Evaluating the research on framing, D'Angelo (2002) suggests three different framing paradigms; cognitivist, constructionist, and critical. Cognitivist paradigm explains how media texts embody audiences’ cognitive structures, thinking patterns and mental schema. Media texts dominate the cognitive threshold of audience and formulate the consciousness. Entman (2007) explain the role of U.S. media in promoting capitalism throughout the world to govern cognitivist and constructionist paradigms. He maintains that the US has rich, well developed media industries, advertising firms, TV, music, etc. Therefore US exports films and other communication software to the rest of the world. It is very
much a one-way system that promotes the values and commodities of capitalism.

Constructionist paradigm views journalists as providing interpretative packages of the world events and issues. For example portrayal of Arabs in Hollywood films as uncivilized, illiterate and conservative serve as media text that dominates the mental images of the West. Discourses of ‘orientalism’ are another example of this paradigm. Critical paradigm sees media outcomes as the embedded values of the elite and the powerful. First two paradigms facilitate a state to use media for supporting the foreign policy.

Government policies are communicated and projected through media. For example, Bush doctrine of ‘preemptive attacks for security concerns’ has been emphasized through media as war against terrorism. The official statement for attacking Iraq was explained by Collin Powell as “national security strategy declared that Washington has a sovereign right to use force to defend ourselves from nations that possess weapons of mass destruction and cooperate with terrorists” (Chomsky, 2004. p. 1).

Media has the potential to expedite the processes of international relations and can constrain future policies. Media images of famine in Ethiopia (1984) mobilized public opinion that ultimately influenced upon foreign policy priorities. As Mandelbaum, (1994, p.16) notes, “The televised pictures of starving people in Northern Iraq, Somalia, and Bosnia created a political clamor to feed them, which propelled the US military into those three distant parts of the world.” Media can change foreign policy priorities through its framing and agenda setting roles. When media agenda is translated into public agenda, public can influence upon government policies through vote, lobbying, interest groups etc. Therefore, public can influence upon shaping foreign policy through different options.

Weiss (1999) suggests that media and foreign policy are intertwined and affect each other by circulating information among masses and formulating public opinion. Global media
has made information instantaneous and television has cashed on the maxim of ‘seeing is believing.’ Live telecast and on the spot coverage of Gulf war made the television ‘a window on reality’ and brought ‘fog of war’ to the living room. Theory of CNN effect explicitly describes this aspect of the media. In an article ‘Policy vs. TV,’ published in Washington Post, Jessica Mathews (1994) wrote, “In the absence of a post Cold War doctrine...televised events that stir emotions have an unprecedented ability to manipulate policy.”

In this age of technological advancement, social media has emerged as a significant tool to effect upon foreign policy. Uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Syria, and Bahrain in 2011 elaborate the power of social media and its effect upon international relations. Due to social media, audiences are no more atomized and dupes. They react to policies and their reaction is properly channelized through social media. Therefore, media foreign policy relationships are now more considerable and significant.

As far as American foreign policy is concerned, Rosati & Scott (2007) describe six key foreign policy appointments that the US president makes:

1. Special assistant to the president for national security affairs (better known as the national security adviser or NSC adviser)
2. Secretary of state
3. Secretary of defense
4. Director of central intelligence, and, since 2005, the director of national intelligence
5. Special assistant to the president for economic affairs (called the national economic adviser or NEC adviser)
6. Secretary of the treasury

According to Rosati & Scott, “these officials are responsible for the foreign policy organizations within the
executive branch: the National Security Council, the Department of State, the Department of Defense, the Central Intelligence Agency and the overall intelligence community, the National Economic Council, and the Department of the Treasury.”

The formulation of American foreign policy may be perceived in a pyramid style; On the top is the president then comes national security council, facilitated by White House staff, who are propelled by foreign policy bureaucracies and Congress, and at the bottom appears American public.

Livingston (1997) comments on American foreign policy during Clinton’s regime as post cold war US ‘humanitarian’ interventions. He describes the various steps on the part of the government for making a decision of intervention. The first step refers to the President Decision Directives 25 (PDD25) that is based on the clear statement of American interest at stake in the operation. Then it needs approval of Congress, availability of funding for the operation, and roll back plan. It also needs an agreed upon command and control system. Literature review of the previous studies
shows three types of relations that may exist between media and foreign policy:

1. Manipulative/Monolithic/Advocative relation
2. Adversarial relation
3. Indifferent relation

Manipulative/Monolithic/Advocative Relation

Studies about media control and ownership patterns suggest great deal of government influence upon news media. The large media organizations of the US are vertically integrated, controlling everything from initial production to final distribution. The organizations include General Electric, Walt Disney, News Corporations, Time Warner, Viacom, and CBS. These media giants lobby for government policies and in turn successfully keep them away from increasing tariffs and taxes.

Media has the power to ‘manufacture’ reality for desirable change. Media’s role of framing issues in a particular manner and the construction of social reality falls under this category. Literature in this tradition includes models offered by Gilton 1980, Chomsky 1980, Gramsci 1971, Gans 1979, Altschal 1984, Cohen & Young 1979, which shows the dominant perspective and focus on the advocative, manipulative and monolithic role of media. For example, American interventions on ‘humanitarian grounds’ in different countries such as in northern Iraq (1991) and in Somalia (1992) show media foreign policy linkages. Critical studies of real time coverage of CNN with immediacy and strong persuasiveness establishes this point.

Media and foreign policy advocative relation is quite obvious in the case of American attack on Afghanistan after 9/11. Bob and Woodward and Dan Balz, the staff writers of Washington Post reported that President Bush commented on his decision of military action against Afghanistan in 2001 as, “I knew full well that if we could rally the American
people behind a long and difficult chore, that our job would be easier.” Media sometimes work as a multiplying force which not only set public agenda but also inter-media agenda.

The Anglo-American information order developed by CNN and BBC circulates and perpetuates information that favors American foreign policy and safeguards her interests. Herman and Chomsky give examples of Polish and Turkish governments to explain how US media toes the foreign policy of US government. In 1980s, Polish government was considered an enemy of the US while the then Turkish government was perceived as a friend of US. Turkish and Polish both governments were behaving brutally towards political prisoners, however, it was only the Polish government that was getting negative treatment in the US news media. Hesmondhalgh (2006, p. 55) notes, “The US government supported the Turkish martial law government from its inception in 1980, and the U.S. business community has been warm towards regimes that profess fervent anticommunism, encourage foreign investment, repress unions, and loyally support U.S. foreign policy.”

Monolithic relation shows society as a homogeneous and dependent upon media messages for seeking information as explained in ‘Media Dependency Theory’ by Sandra Ball Rokeach and Melvin L. Defleur (1976). Dependency theory proposes an integral relationship among audiences, media and the larger social system. Monolithic perspective suggests that media facilitate government to maintain the status quo by disseminating and perpetuating official policies. Monolithic and manipulative relation is characterized by the projection of peculiar realities, unyielding views and consistent ideology on a massive scale. The concept of embedded journalism also elaborates advocative or manipulative role of the media in foreign policy matters.

Adversarial relation

Media formulates public opinion on different issues that may be contradicting and challenging to government policies
thereby effecting upon policy making. Instead of serving as a mouthpiece, media acts independently and criticizes government policies. But it is not more than a myth. Media can never play an independent, free and neutral role. The studies of Cohen (1963), Larson (1984), Mughees (1993) etc. confirm that western press is in accordance with their international interest. However, media sometimes play a critical role towards foreign policy matters as noted by Herman and Chomsky that the media ‘periodically attack and expose corporate and governmental malfiances’ and portray those who vehemently oppose power interest as ‘heroic outsiders’.

The critiques on the foreign policy of developed and hegemonic countries are of limited nature and face tough time to be heard or published in the influential media. For example, U.S. overlooked Turkish government for attacking trade unions and torturing political prisoners for its anticommunist disposition as compared to Polish government. U.S. business community has always been cordial to countries that were anticommunist. Hesmondhalgh notes, “Media that chose to feature Turkish violence against their own citizenry would have had to go to extra expense to find and check out information sources; they would elicit flak from government, business and organized right-wing flak machines, and they might be looked upon with disfavor by the corporate community (including advertisers) for indulging in such a quixotic interest and crusade. They would tend to stand alone in focusing on victims that from the standpoint of dominant American interests were unworthy” (2006, pp. 55-56).

These voices are usually taken as deviances or labeled as conspiracy theories. With the emergence of corporate media and increasing conglomeration trends, power structures are strongly related with media ownership patterns. Therefore, western powerful media seldom plays an adversarial role. However, media of developing countries are influenced through different tactics and bribed sometimes, to play a hostile role for the country’s national interests.
Indifferent Relation:

Media may appear as indifferent to foreign policy issues depending on the social systems, media structures and performance. However, the perceived impact of media is related to many factors including; policy certainty, issue obtrusiveness, and people’s interest. In 2004, President Bush agreed to include seven new countries in NATO including Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Romania. This decision was adding more liabilities and commitments to US defense as the countries were bordering Russia. US media ignored the issue and the decision was ratified by the Senate without much criticism. In societies where citizens are participants and not mere subjects, media can no longer be indifferent on policy matters.

Foreign policy and media both are dynamic. There are no set patterns in media foreign policy relationship. Media behave differently in different countries depending on the systems and situations. Since media is not the sole arbiter of foreign policy, it may react to policies and policy makers react to coverage in a continuum. It may play a role to expedite, impede, change or modify the policy, but cannot ‘make’ the policy at first instance. It is always the corollary of circumstances, at all levels, that facilitates the process.

**Pakistan’s Foreign Policy and Media**

Pakistan is an ideological state and came into being on the basis of two nation theory. According to Christenson, et al. (1985), ideology performs five functions for political entities. It gives a cognitive structure; operationalizes collective actions and decisions; helps conflict management; assists self-identification and recognition among nations; and serves as a workforce, spirit and energy of the people to guide for their ultimate objective. The document of ‘Pakistan Resolution’ that was reflecting the ideology of Pakistan proved a guidepost for the formulation of Pakistan’s foreign policy in its infancy. Pakistan’s foreign policy from its beginning can be analyzed through the speeches of Qaid-e-
Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah. Though there are many, extracts from a few are given below.

Pakistan’s Foreign Policy through the Lenses of Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah:

Speech of Qaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah at the inauguration of Pakistan Constituent Assembly at Karachi on August 14, 1947 reflects Quaid’s approach to interact with the outer world. Jabbar (1997) quotes him saying, “I assure you that we shall not be wanting in friendly spirit with our neighbours and with all nations of the world” (p. 902). Similar message was relayed on radio on August 15, 1947, at the inauguration of Pakistan Broadcasting Service. He said, “Our object should be peace within and peace without. We want to live peacefully and maintain cordial and friendly relations with our immediate neighbours and with the world at large; we have no aggressive designs against anyone” (Ibid. p. 903). In his reply to the speech made by the first ambassador of France to Pakhsitan on January 21, 1948, Quaid-e-Azam said,

“I assure your Excellency that we in Pakistan will give you our support and cooperation which you may require in promoting relationship of goodwill and friendship between our two countries and I trust that in the result, Pakistan and France will unitedly play their part in reestablishing peace and prosperity in the present distracted world.”

Mohammad Ali Jinnah used media to establish friendly relations with the outer world. In February 1948, Mohammad Ali Jinnah said in his broadcast to the USA,

“Our foreign policy is one of friendliness and goodwill towards the nations of the world. We do not cherish aggressive designs against any country or nation. We believe in the principle of honesty and fair-play in national and international dealings and are prepared to make our utmost contribution to the promotion of peace and prosperity among the nations of the world. Pakistan will never be found lacking in extending its material and moral support to the oppressed
and suppressed peoples of the world, and in upholding the principles of the United Nations Charter.”

Pakistan’s foreign policy towards India can be concluded in the words of Mohammad Ali Jinnah. Speaking at a press conference in New Delhi on July 14, 1947, he said: “I sincerely hope that they [relations between India and Pakistan] will be friendly and cordial. We have a great deal to do... and think that we can be of use to each other [and to] the world.”

Quaid’s speeches reflect his vision and aspirations to have cordial and friendly relations with all the countries and to promote peace and prosperity in the world.

Historical Perspective

For a better understanding of Pakistan’s foreign policy and media relationships, it seems appropriate to look into the historical perspective and circumstances that led the formation of Pakistan. Before its independence, Muslim League as a political party was the representative of political thoughts and vision of the Muslims. Allama Iqbal, the co-founder of Pakistan, was a great proponent of the concept of ‘Millet,’ (unity and integrity among the Muslim World). That is why during the WWI, Muslims of the subcontinent demonstrated deep love and support for Turkey when Ottoman Empire was staggering. This attribute of the Muslims of the subcontinent continued and operationalized in the form of foreign policy when Pakistan came into being.

Pakistan was facing both internal and external problems immediately after its establishment. Hindus were not happy with the idea of partition that is why India adopted a hostile foreign policy towards Pakistan since its inception. As Field Marshal Claude Auchinleck reported to the British Prime Minister Attlee in October 1947, “The present Indian cabinet is implacably determined to do all in their power to prevent the establishment of Dominion of Pakistan on a firm basis”. Foreign policy of Pakistan in the early period can be elaborated in the backdrop of the struggle of All India
Muslim League. During the WWII, when Egypt, Syria, Turkey and Palestine were vulnerable, Muslim League announced, “in the event of any attack upon Muslim countries, Muslim India will be forced to stand by them and give all the support it can.” After the establishment of Pakistan, Muslim League’s support turned into diplomatic support of Pakistan towards Muslim world.

Rizvi (2004) divides Pakistan’s foreign policy into seven major phases;

a. 1947-53: Explorations and friendship with all
b. 1953-62: Alignment with the West
c. 1962-71: Transition
d. 1972-79: Bilateralism and nonalignment
e. 1980-90: Afghanistan and Partnership with the U.S.
f. 1990-2001: Post-Cold War Era and Pakistan’s Dilemmas
g. 2001 onwards: Pakistan and Counter Terrorism

Rizvi concludes that ‘a host of factors influence the foreign policy choices of a country, which include the dynamics of regional and international situation, the availability of human and material resources and the disposition and priorities of the policy makers.’ Regional and international situation is a complex and ever changing factor linked with multiple factors. Since the media govern our perceptions and formulate cognitive threshold, they have gained a powerful position. Media and foreign policy relationship are affected by the extent to which media are autonomous and enjoy freedom and autonomy. Pakistani media from its beginning till 1988 was completely under the control of governments (military regimes). Therefore it served as a mouthpiece of governments, used to sustain the power.

According to Hijazi and Naqqash (1995) Pakistan and media both were facing difficulties and heartbreaks in their
infancy. Newspapers were facing acute shortage of equipment, latest technology and revenues. In 1947, there were four major Muslim owned newspapers in Pakistan; Pakistan Times, Zamindar, Nawa-i- Waqt, and Civil and Military Gazette, and among the four two English dailies were published from Lahore. However, many other newspapers moved to Pakistan including Dawn, the Morning News, Jang and Anjam. There were three radio stations working in Pakistan; Lahore, Peshawar and Dhaka. Television channel started in Pakistan in 1964.

According to Hasan Askari, “The second phase of Pakistan’s foreign policy was characterized by a transition from an independent foreign policy to a multifaceted alignment with the West.” In this phase Pakistan joined South East Asian Treaty Organization, Central Treaty Organization, and signed a bilateral agreement of cooperation with US in 1959 for military and economic assistance. These ties with the West weakened Pakistan’s relations with Soviet Union, Middle East, and the Muslim world.

The first constitution of Pakistan was promulgated in 1956 which contained an article on freedom of speech. It stated that freedom of speech could be exercised by every citizen subject to “any reasonable restriction imposed by law in the interest of the security of Pakistan, friendly relations with foreign states...” However, the press was never given freedom practically as the newspapers were under government control. The constitution of 1956 was abrogated just after three years of its enforcement in October 1958. After eleven years of its establishment, Pakistan was facing first martial law. Military regimes had ruled the country most of the time as compared to democratic governments. All the military regimes curbed press freedom and tried to control media.

Media in any society cannot operate independent of the society as it is the part and parcel of that very society in which it is operating. As Herbert Altschull (1984) rightly pointed out that an independent press cannot exist and that
“the news are agents of the people who exercise political and economic control” (cited in Lamidi et al 2008). In Pakistan, after the demise of Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah there has been a continued struggle for power by military, politicians, and bureaucracies. Ultimately, army got over in 1958 as General Muhammad Ayub Khan, the then Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, became the Chief Martial Law Administrator. Ayub Khan controlled and subdued media by taking different measures. He established National Press Trust (NPT) and nationalized popular newspapers. NPT later on served as the mouthpiece of successive governments. Therefore it is said that media has been in chains in Pakistan for most of the time. Media served as a mouthpiece of the state and was used to sustain power. Role of media in the foreign policy was almost absent.

The constitution of 1962 was promulgated by a military regime and it continued the previous concept of freedom of expression however, there was no separate chapter on fundamental rights. There were some English and Urdu newspapers carrying independent and progressive policy and were much popular among the readers. The newspapers included Pakistan Times, Imroz, and Lailo Nihar which were taken over by the government for their anti-Americanism approach. Since Faiz Ahmad Faiz was the editor of daily the Pakistan Times and known for his pro communist ideas, therefore, the paper was taken over. During this phase, Pakistan faced two major crisis of its history; war of 1965 and dismemberment of East Pakistan in 1971. Media was completely in the control of government and could not play an efficient part especially in 1971 crisis.

Due to the non-supportive attitude of US in the wars of 1965 and 1971, Pakistan’s foreign policy was reshaping and turned into an era of bilateral relations and nonaligned level. In this phase Pakistan withdrew from SEATO, CENTO and Commonwealth and joined Non-aligned Movement. Pakistan’s relations with Middle East countries improved as economic support and diplomatic assistance came into practice. However, Pakistan was experiencing very poor relations towards US as Pakistan successfully made an
agreement with France for the acquisition of nuclear technology plant. Pakistan hosted second Islamic Summit Conference in 1974 and the media of Islamic world projected Pakistan as a vibrant, friendly and peace loving country. Pakistan ties with the Islamic world especially with the Middle East were strengthened.

During the period of Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Pakistan was deeply affected. Pakistan’s geo-strategic condition made it more significant during the crisis and US extended its military and economic assistance to Pakistan. During the crisis, Pakistan was supported by Organization of Islamic Conference, China and US. Pakistan was experiencing martial law imposed by General Zia-ul-Haq, the 4th martial law administrator. Media was totally subdued and its role in the foreign policy was almost nil. Geneva accords for the peaceful resolution of Afghanistan problem served as a sigh of relief for Pakistan.

Rizvi points out, “four major issues dominated Pakistan’s foreign policy in the 1990s. These were a drift in Pakistan-U.S. relations, the Afghanistan problem, the Kashmir insurgency and its impact on Indo-Pakistan relations, and the nuclear explosions.” Pakistan made successful nuclear explosions in 1998.

Twenty first century is marked by fighting against terrorism. Pakistan emerged as a US ally to curb terrorism. Though Pakistan’s relations with Russia and China improved, many developmental projects were signed and started. Global media portrayed Pakistan as supporting terrorists. Pakistani media remained susceptible to the coverage of global media due to lack of technology, and competition with media giants. According to Rahimullah Yousaf Zai, editor in chief of daily the News in Peshawar, “There is no presence of Pakistani correspondents in Kabul. Media houses don’t spend money on letting journalist go there. Instead they get news from international news agencies. The same is true for the Afghan media. They don’t have any reporters in Pakistan, but rely on a few Pakistani reporters in Peshawar that work as stringers.”
Pakistani media was not powerful in the 20th century. However, media regulations like EMRA and later on PEMRA ensured media freedom. As a result, mushroom growth of electronic media outlets is quite visible. Only a powerful media has the potential to affect upon foreign policy as; an accelerant agent, a source of impediment, and as an agenda setting agency expediting the process of decision making and execution.

According to Javed Jabbar, the three most significant changes in media laws of Pakistan took place during the period of two unelected caretaker governments. The first one was promulgated in the tenure of President Ghulam Ishaq Khan in September 1988 known as Registration of Printing Press and Publication Ordinance (RPPO), and the second was promulgated during the tenure of President Farooq Leghari and Prime Minister Malik Mairaj Khalid in February 1997 known as Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (EMRA) Ordinance 1997. Media is now enjoying freedom but the severe competition and survival is causing a threat for media to work independently and freely. According to Gallup survey and Economic survey report, in fiscal year 2008-2009, the total advertising expenditures were Rs. 26.96 billion and the total GDP was Rs. 14,156 billion and the ratio of advertising expenditure to GDP is about 0.19%. Average revenue of a news channel in Pakistan is 40 million per month and there were 60 private channels working in 2009. The number is increased now. Advertising is yielding very insignificant amount to the channels. There is a need to explore the other sources providing funding to these channels. The latest media regulation PEMRA does not mention anything about the foreign ownership. Therefore, it seems necessary to closely observe the controlling and patronizing patterns of media in Pakistan.

False impressions about Pakistan’s foreign policy

Pakistan is an Islamic state that believes in giving basic rights to all the citizens irrespective of their religion, cast creed or ethnic differences. However, Pakistan is wrongly
perceived as a religious state that focuses much upon religious dispositions in its foreign policy. This is not the reality rather those countries perceived as secular covertly carry out their foreign policies in the religious backdrop. For example, U.S. foreign policy reflects the concept of the state as the covenant and the government as the institution formed to fulfill the promise and duties of this covenant (Rybkowski, 2009). This can be explained in the perspective of ‘Puritanism’ that is explained by Perry Miller as ‘Puritanism was one of the major expressions of the Western intellect’ that made U.S. to perceive itself as ‘higher authority’ in the religious background. This perception persists in most of its military conflicts with the outer world, whether it is the case of US-Spanish war of 1898, or recent US-Afghan and US-Iraq conflicts.

In the 21st century, social media is getting popularity and effecting both public and private spheres. In the Middle East social media is effecting upon the political scenario and empowering suppressed masses. It is providing an opportunity to get connected with the global and the local discourses simultaneously. In Pakistan, weblogs are serving as platforms to voice opinions. Pakistani youth is using social media and its popularity is increasing. In the case of Governor Salman Taseer’s assassination, social media served as a forum to reflect and comment upon blasphemy laws. Pakisitan Tahreek-e-Insaf is also getting popularity on social media. Different campaigns like to join a cause or to be a member of a group or to vote for a particular person, idea etc are very common on the social media. The power of this social media phenomenon can be observed in the form of ban on facebook in Pakistan. In May 2010, Lahore High Court ordered to ban facebook because of the blasphemous fan page. Therefore it can be concluded that social media along with the traditional media has the power to effect upon political, social, economic and military behavior of a country. These factors not only determine the foreign policy but also dictate other countries how to establish relations with that country.

References
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