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Political Transition and Frame Shift in Elite Newspaper Narratives of Pakistan-United States Relations: From PTI Security-Geopolitics to Post-PTI Sovereignty-Economy Reset

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the ways in which the elite newspapers coverage of the Pakistan-United States relations evolved during the PTI government and post-PTI transition. It is founded on the thesis data, methodologies, results, vocabulary and references well. The theses corpus employed is an extended opinion-ecosystem corpus of 154 retrieved candidate records of Dawn, The News International, The New York Times and The Washington Post. The major analysis corpus comprised 98 strong- include units. The approach involved a mix of qualitative and quantitative content analysis, with inductive frame development, in the form of frequencies, cross- tabulations and chi-square tests. This article predicts time findings. The Pak-US relations during the PTI period were guided by the geopolitics/great-power alignment and security/counterterrorism and Afghanistan. It had 67 strong units in the PTI period and 2021 with the highest of 36 strong units, representing the Afghan withdrawal, the Taliban reentry and the Biden administration review and the no bases debate. During the post-PTI era, 31 strong units of the corpus and the preponderant interpretive milieu changed towards sovereignty/ anti-interventionism, economy/trade/IMF, diplomatic reset and democratic legitimacy. The primary-frame association by period was statistically significant, Chi square(4,N=98) = 30.30, P=.001 with Cramers V=.56 which is a strong frame shift. Security was only found as a primary frame of PTI-period and economy/trade/IMF was found only in the post PTI period. The two periods had the sovereignty but it enhanced respectively following the PTI government. The paper concludes that the transition of the PTI to post-PTI did not merely weaken or strengthen elite opinion discourse about Pak-US relations; it merely altered the terms in which the relation was viewed. The thesis constraint maintained in the paper is that, valence was coded To code and accordingly sentiment distributions are not provided.

Introduction

Foreign-policy discourse can be restructure without altering the fundamental diplomatic relationship as a result of political transitions. The way Pakistan relates to the United States has continued to be strategically significant throughout and following the PTI government as well as before the PTI government but the thesis indicates that the framing of elite newspapers differed significantly between the PTI to post-PTI divide. This timepiece discovery has been transferred into a research paper in this paper. Its key point of argument is that, the PTI period was structured predominantly using a strategic-security vocabulary whereas the post-PTI period was structured using sovereignty, economic vulnerability, democratic legitimacy and diplomatic reset.

The PTI period was not as easy as anti-Americanism. The thesis observed that the government of Imran Khan was able to balance nationalist and anti-colonial rhetoric and real-world diplomacy, particularly in the Afghan peace process and his involvement with the Trump administration. The role of Pakistan in Afghanistan, U.S. plans to withdraw, negotiations with Taliban, the debate over no-bases, U.S-Pakistan relations, CPEC, the debate about India and Russia all entered the realm of elite opinion. The relationship was then posed as strategic but changeable. Pakistan was embodied, as it was needed to be in a regional organizing, but also restricted to mistrust and rival loyalties.

The post-PTI environment transformed the interpretive environment. Following the April 2022 no-confidence vote, Pak-US relations were embroiled in home-grown legitimacy, the cipher narrative, charges of foreign intervention and the anti-Americanism debate. Simultaneously, Pakistan was under severe economic pressure, such as IMF negotiations and stabilization search. Thus ever more, elite opinion started to position the United States as not merely a security agent, but also as an icon in the politics of sovereignty and as a driver in economic renewal. Such U.S. articulations of elections, democracy and nuclear safety of Pakistan also made their way into the discussion as governance and legitimacy issues.

The paper will focus on the following question: in what ways did the elite newspaper coverage of the Pak-US relations differ in the PTI and post-PTI periods? It employs the corpus of 98 units of the thesis and the five frame families mentioned, namely, geopolitics/great-power alignment, security/ counterterrorism and Afghanistan, sovereignty/ anti-interventionism, economy/trade/IMF and democracy/governance/rule of law. The article does not come up with new findings. It records the time distribution of the thesis, the number of frames, statistics tests, interpretative results and limitations. It also preserves the distinction between frame and valence of thesis due to the fact that sentiment coding was not yet done.

Literature Review

The thesis is based on the theory of framing and foreign-policy media research. According to Entman (1993) framing can be defined as choice of aspects of reality, rendering them visible in a text in such a manner that specifies problems, prognoses of causes, moral judgments and prescriptions. This framework also fits the process of political transitions well since transitions generate an interpretive uncertainty. When a government is changed, things do not self-explain. They are sorted into continuity, rupture, betrayal, reset, crisis, or opportunity, by the institutions of media and by highbrow commentators.

Scheufele (1999), Pan and Kosicki (1993), and Gamson and Modigliani (1989) prove helpful in comprehending frames as stable interpretive packages, and not individual keywords. In the Pak-US case, it is not just a case of sovereignty, security, reset, Afghanistan, IMF, China and democracy. They play the role of organizing frames which relate events to historical recollections, policy issues and moral evaluations. The Afghan withdrawal can be used to describe Pakistan as helpful, untrustworthy, weak or simply weak in terms of strategy. Engagement by the IMF would put U.S. involvement in the frame of pragmatic necessity, interdependence or diplomatic gain.

Pak-US relations are also contextualized in the thesis based on the literature on media and foreign policy. Previous studies mentioned in the thesis indicate that Pakistani and American newspapers have regularly projected and presented Pakistan and the United States in terms of security, mistrust, aid, drone strikes, Afghanistan and sovereignty. As discovered by Saleem and Mian (2014), U.S. policy towards South Asia exposed to diverse framing by the Pakistani press across issues and across newspapers. The previous administrations in the past studied the representation of Pak-US relations in the elite press, as argued by Yousaf (2013). Riaz (2017) examined the U.S. newspaper reporting of the U.S. Pakistan relations. These pieces show how national interest, editorial policy and geopolitical context shape these media frames.

The comparison between PTI and post-PTI offers a certain gap that that literature fills. A lot of this preceding work is devoted to the War on Terror, drone attacks, Afghanistan or previous regimes. The thesis has been further extended to the time of the contents being analyzed when Afghanistan withdrawal, no-bases discussion, the timing of the Imran Khan visit to Moscow, no-confidence vote, cipher narrative, economic crisis, IMF negotiations, and the 2024 election legitimacy discussion remodeled the societal meaning of the Pak-US relations. It as such adds a period based framing analysis as opposed to merely a general description of Pakistani or U.S. media representation.

The method of the thesis is also supported in the literature. Frequency, salience and recurring frames of media texts are better identified through content analysis (Krippendorff, 2019; Neuendorf, 2017; Riffe et al., 2019). The thesis employs inductive frame formation since Pak-US discourse in and around PTI has context-specific frames, in particular, sovereignty/anti-interventionism and economy/IMF, which might not be exhausted by generic frame categories. The significance of this inductive approach is that, the post-PTI period brought on the inductive elements of narrative which were unique to the domestic political crisis in Pakistan and economic vulnerability.

Theoretical Framework

The conceptual framework integrates both the framing theory and political-transition temporal perspective. It is a simple assumption that the frames should vary as the political and diplomatic environment varies. Frames are not fixed categorizations but constructive objects that become mobilized based on events. Security and geopolitics became very salient during the PTI period, with the issues of Afghanistan, counterterrorism, the U.S. withdrawal, China, CPEC, India, Russia, and the no-bases debate playing critical roles. The no-confidence vote, cipher narrative, economic crisis, IMF negotiations, diplomatic reset and election legitimacy debates triggered frames of sovereignty, economy and democracy during the post-PTI period.

The five frame families applied in this paper are based on the thesis. The Geopolitics/great-power alignment views Pak-US relations via China, CPEC, India, Russia and world power dynamics. Security/ counter terrorism and Afghanistan views the relationship in the terms of peace in Afghanistan, U.S. withdrawal, terrorism, bases and regional stability. The relationship is viewed by Sovereignty/anti-interventionism as one that is based on dignity, autonomy, mistrust, interference and non-alignment. Economy/trade/IMF views its engagement in the form of aid, trade, investment, IMF stabilization and economic vulnerability. Democracy/ governance/ rule of law views Pakistan in terms of elections, rights, liberty of press, legitimacy and democratic credibility.

The time-frame anticipates continuity as well as change. Geopolitics will most likely continue since the location of Pakistan between the United States, China, India and Afghanistan is not going to fade away with the change of the regime. Security will tend to become more salient in the course of the PTI due to the withdrawal of the Afghanistan and the debate over no-bases issue. The no-confidence vote is likely to raise sovereignty due to the domestic political exploitation of foreign-interference narratives. It is projected that economy will come out in post-PTI age due to IMF talks and the economic crisis. Democracy will be lesser both in turnover and normative importance since U.S. statements and opinion expression can arrange Pakistan in terms of elections, rights, and legitimacy.

This structure also describes the inadequacy of frequency only. The thesis indicates that the PTI period had more strong units in comparison to the post-PTI period, but that salience is not simply an issue of quantity. Fewer post-PTI items may have high interpretive intensity when they restructure the relationship. And it is precisely due to this reason that the post-PTI economy and sovereignty frames should be important. They exhibit a shift in meaning even in those areas where the amount of coverage decreased.

Methodology

The current paper is based on the mixed content-analysis design of the thesis. The opinion material of the elite newspapers of Dawn, The News International, The New York Times and The Washington Post was used as source material. The extended retrieval file had 154 candidate records. The screening results were 98 Include -strong, 55 Screen - medium and 1 Exclude. Strong records of 98 records were taken as the principal record of analysis. The medium records were kept on the need to be robust and may be expanded upon the verification of full-text.

The timeframe was that of August 2018-February 2024 which was then broken down into PTI period that was in the months of August 2018-April 2022 and the post-PTI period that was in the months of April 2022-February 2024. This is in line with the thesis and goes with the tenure of PTI government and the follow up PDM/Shehbaz Sharif and caretaker transition. Individual opinion-ecosystem item was the unit of analysis. The types of articles found in the strong corpus include Editorial/Opinion, Column, Opinion and Op-Ed. There were 49 Editorial/Opinion items, 45 Columns, 2 Opinion items and 2 Op-Eds.

Coding categories were developed inductively and based on the corpus and into the five major frame families presented above. Main frame, outlet, year and political period were the key attributes of each powerful unit. Frequencies and cross-tabulations were then employed to determine frame salience and differences in periods in the thesis. The statistical tests and chi-square tests, as well as Cramer V, were involved in statistical analysis. The central temporal test was period by primary frame: $\chi^2(4, N = 98) = 30.30, p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .56$. This test is the empirical heart of the given paper since it is the test that assesses the change of frame distribution between the periods of PTI and after that between the PTI and post-PTI period.

There are no valence findings reported in the paper since the marked corpus contained valence that was labeled To code. This is important methodologically. The thesis series based on the methodology includes positive, negative, and neutral categories of coding (discussed), but the working file of empirical Chapter 4 did not include completed valence codes. As such, allegations about sentiment or tone distributions or outlet differences in positive/negative would not be supported. The article does not also have fabricated quotes. It then utilizes frame illustrations of the exemplars of the thesis headline, but not of full-text evidence.

Table 1. Active and inactive work status

Outlet	Strong	Medium	All retrieved	Strong share
Dawn	31	15	47	66.0%
The News	42	15	57	73.7%
The Washington Post	23	22	45	51.1%
The New York Times	2	3	5	40.0%

Findings

The initial temporal observation is that the number of strong units per period is unevenly distributed. There were 67 strong units in the PTI period as well as 31 in the post-PTI period. This implies that 68.4 percent of the strong corpus were presented during the PTI period and 31.6 percent during the post-PTI period. The larger the PTI volume indicates the prominence of the Afghanistan situation, the American withdrawal, Taliban comeback, the no-bases debate, the reassessment by the Biden administration, and the China/CPEC deliberations and strategic repositioning.

This conclusion is endorsed by the annual distribution. The strong corpus contained 1 unit in 2018, 14 in 2019, 9 in 2020, 36 in 2021, 20 in 2022, 7 in 2023 and 11 in 2024. The highest year was in 2021 with 36 good units. This peak is interpreted in the thesis as an outcome of the withdrawal of Afghanistan, the coming back of Taliban, the reassessment of U.S. policies concerning the region and the no-bases discussion. The year 2022 was also high with 20 units due to the fact that the Russia-Ukraine timing of Khan visit to Moscow, the no-confidence/cipher discourse and the post-PTI transition enhanced sovereignty and geopolitical discussions.

The second result relates to the distribution of frames by the period. During PTI period, geopolitics/great-power alignment explained 29 units/43.3 percent of PTI strong unit. The potentials 24 units/35.8 percent would be security/counterterrorism and Afghanistan. Sovereignty/anti-interventionism contributed 12 or 17.9 percent. Democracy/rule of law/governance had the highest accounting/accounted 2 units or 3.0 percent. Economy/trade/IMF had not strong UNITS of PTI in the thesis table. This distribution indicates that a straightforward-security core: geopolitics and Afghanistan/security used 53 out of 67 PTI strong units.

The distribution was different in the post-PTI period. Sovereignty/anti-interventionism had 12 units which is 38.7 percent of strong units in post-PTI. Geopolitics/great-power alignment had a count of 11 units or 35.5 percent. Economy/trade/IMF was at 7 units or 22.6 percent. Democracy/governance/rule of law, 1 unit or 3.2 percent. There were none of the post-PTI primary-frame units of security/counterterrorism or Afghanistan in the strong corpus. This shows the most obvious symptom of a frame shift: security was lost as a mainstream post-PTI frame, and only in the post-PTI period did economy make its appearance.

The third one is a statistical strength of the shift. The period-by-primary-frame association was significant: chi-square(4, N = 98) = 30.30, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .56. This is construed as a powerful frame shift in the thesis. This finding lends credence to the argument that the transformation of PTI into post-PTI was not a descriptive incidental one. Periodic variations occurred in the distribution of frames.

The fourth result relates to continuity. During both periods, geopolitics had continued to be predominant but its share had fallen a notch lower than it had been in the PTI period of 43.3 percent to the post-PTI period of 35.5 percent. The continuity matters as it avoids the overstatement of rupture that is caused by the temporal analysis. The Pak-US relations continued to be entrenched in China, CPEC, India, Russia, Afghanistan and alignment with the world pressures. It was not the loss of geopolitics but the language used as a secondary vocabulary that had changed. Security was geopolitics associated with the PTI. Geopolitics labored after PTI with economy and sovereignty.

The fifth conclusion relates to sovereignty. The sovereignty was found in 12 PTI units and 12 post-PTI units. The counts were constant, whereas the proportional share went up by 17.9 percent of PTI strong units to 38.7 percent of post-PTI strong units. This proportional increase is significant since the post-PTI corpus was less. The largest proportional post-PTI frame was sovereignty which was associated with dignity, autonomy, mistrust, alleged interference, non-alignment and domestic political legitimacy. The thesis is supported by examples of the words Absolutely not and Countering a narrative to explain how sovereignty reduced the debate of no-bases as well as the discourse of post-PTI foreign-conspiracy.

The sixth conclusion relates to economy/ trade/IMF. This frame consisted of no, strong, PTI units but 7, post-PTI units. This is interpreted in the thesis as the development of a practical reset vocabulary grounded on economic vulnerability. Economic crisis, IMF negotiations, U.S. oriented financial diplomacy, trade and stabilization were significant following the PTI government. These can be seen in Dawn's Does Pakistan really need Uncle Sam and The News A reset in ties?. The background,

which made such an economy frame meaningful, includes the IMF and its Stand-By Arrangement of 2023 and the Extended Fund Facility of 2024.

The seventh observation is that of democracy/governance/rule of law. This frame was tiny in both periods: 2 PTI units and 1 post-PTI unit. It was infrequent but the thesis makes it normatively significant. Frames such as democracy and governance are particularly apparent in U.S. opinion discourse and in election period discourse, the issue of press freedom, rights, legitimacy and attention of U.S. congress or State Department. The low frequency does not imply the frame was irrelevant; it implies that it was not the main organizing frame of the working corpus.

The eighth result has to do with strength. According to the thesis, in the strong-plus-medium corpus of 153 units, geopolitics were the most prevalent frame with 62 units, or 40.5 percent. The level of security was 42 units, or 27.5 percent. Sovereignty was still significant with 28 units, or 18.3 percent. Economy was 10 with 8 units of democracy. This stability test is compatible with the core frame hierarchy: a geopolitics frame is dominant, security and sovereignty are significant frames. Although the addition of the medium queue would not correlate with a strong-only analysis, it would still need to be added to the final analysis after verification with the full-text.

Table 2. Strong corpus by year and outlet

Year	Dawn	The News	W. Post	NYT	Total
2018	0	1	0	0	1
2019	4	3	7	0	14
2020	3	3	3	0	9
2021	10	16	9	1	36
2022	7	8	4	1	20
2023	4	3	0	0	7
2024	3	8	0	0	11

Table 3. Primary frame distribution by political period

Primary frame	PTI	Post-PTI	Total	PTI share	Post-PTI share
Geopolitics/great-power alignment	29	11	40	43.3%	35.5%
Security/counterterrorism & Afghanistan	24	0	24	35.8%	0.0%
Sovereignty/anti-interventionism	12	12	24	17.9%	38.7%
Economy/trade/IMF	0	7	7	0.0%	22.6%
Democracy/governance/rule of law	2	1	3	3.0%	3.2%

Table 4. Statistical tests reported in the thesis

Test	chi-square	df	p	Cramer's V	Interpretation
Period x primary frame	30.30	4	< .001	0.56	Strong frame shift
Outlet x primary frame	19.21	12	.084	0.26	Moderate outlet difference
Outlet x period	8.76	3	.033	0.30	Distribution differs by period

Discussion

These results indicate that the shift between the PTI and the post-PTI transition altered the interpretive framework of the relations between Pakistan and the US in discourse on elite opinions. Geopolitics and security pressures were the main types of relationship framing in PTI. Afghanistan was central. The Afghan peace, Taliban return and regional counterterrorism calculations, were all dependent on Pakistan to the U.S. withdrawal. Simultaneously, the geopolitical frame was formed due to relations of Pakistan with China, CPEC, with India, with Kashmir and with Russia. The opinion of the elite viewed Pakistan as a nation that is adopting a challenging environment of alignment and not a nation that is enjoying the option of diplomacy without restrictions.

The security concentration of the period of the PTI indicates the force, which the post-9/11 relationship still has. When the United States started to withdraw large-scale military involvement in Afghanistan, Afghanistan was still the interpretative memory, and the scale of value and risk was evaluated by Pakistan. Pakistani opinion discourse tended to be ambivalent in its approach to security cooperation due to the potential of both diplomatic relevance and pressures, blame as well as the cost of sovereignty. Cooperation, leverage, reliability and counterterrorism expectations interpreted Pakistan through the opinion discourse of the U.S. The PTI era thus maintained a strategic-security framework despite the shifting official war policy.

The discourse changed with the post-PTI period. The loss of security as a primary strong-corpus frame does not imply the loss of terrorism or Afghanistan as an issue. Instead, it implies that they stopped structuring the retrieved opinion discourse in a similar manner. The connection started to be less war-oriented and more of the legitimacy-economy-reset. The no-confidence vote, cipher narrative and allegations of foreign influence tied the relations between Pakistan and the USA to national political identity. The United States was not only an intervening force but also a reference group concerning the issues of sovereignty, betrayal, dignity and constitutional order.

The introduction of the economy/trade/IMF frame is also significant. It demonstrates that the post-PTI discourse was not grievance/conspiracy discourse. It also acknowledged feasible limitations. The IMF talks and economic crisis in Pakistan rendered interaction with United States and other financial institutions in the West tough to dodge. The frame had a pragmatic vocabulary thus: reset, stabilization, trade, investment, aid and dependence. That is why the post-PTI era cannot be characterized just as anti-American and more cooperative. More clearly influenced was its milieu by necessity and vulnerability.

The transition between the two periods is sovereignty. It manifested itself in PTI in the debate of no bases, strategic autonomy and the non-alignment. It was aggravated following PTI since foreign interference became a domestic legitimacy concern due to a political transition. It was the same frame in that way various functions took place at different times. Sovereignty in PTI had been an attitude of foreign policy. It was a post-PTI domestic-political language of how to understand the elimination of a government, U.S. influence, anti-Americanism and the details of diplomatic reset.

The continuity frame was geopolitics. It was the biggest in total and still prominent during both periods. This indicates that structural pressures surrounding Pak-US relation were not eliminated with the political transition. On its relations with China and CPEC and its rivalry with India, its relations with Afghanistan and its effort to keep strategic space to maneuver all remained an element in shaping elite opinion in Pakistan. The change after PTI was not so a shift of geopolitics to non-geopolitics. It was a geopolitics-plus even security to geopolitics-plus even sovereignty and economy.

This interpretation is reinforced by the statistical finding. The period-by-frame correlation with Cramer $V = .56$ relates to a lot of relationship between frame distribution and political period. The thesis supports thus powerful shift thesis. Nevertheless, the change is to be taken with caution. It is not a definitive 310-350 unit census but a working corpus of 98 strong units. The New York Times is underrepresented. Certain records require full-text authentication. Valence is not coded. Such restrictions outline the scope of the conclusion but cannot annul the obvious trend in the accessible data.

Temporal analysis also illustrates that it is advantageous to treat frames and events jointly. These are not neutral time-containers of the corpus. Every year had its triggers that set some frames: 2019 as to Khan-Trump engagement, Kashmir after Article 370 and Afghanistan diplomacy; 2020 as to CPEC/China debate, Afghan debate, and U.S. drawdown debate; 2021 as to withdrawal, Taliban return, and no-base debate; 2022 as to Moscow visit timing, no-confidence and cipher debate; 2023 as to economic crisis, IMF negotiations and anti-Americanism debate; and 2024 as to election legitimacy, U.S. congressional focus, proposed reset and IMF Extended Fund Facility. This event frame association is the key in explaining the discourse shift.

Event-Frame Interpretation

The triggers per year on which the temporal shift was built can be found in the thesis. In 2018, there is only one strong unit in the corpus, and therefore, the year cannot have a big interpretive claim. The most related aspects are that it has helped to set the onset of the PTI period and the shift in expectations between Islamabad and Washington. As of 2019, the corpus increased to 14 strong units. This is linked by the thesis to Khan-Trump, Kashmir post-Article 370 and Afghanistan diplomacy. These incidents have exposed Pakistan strategically and regionally to enable geopolitics and security to come into the limelight.

There were 9 strong units in the corpus in 2020. The prime evocations were the debate on CPEC/China, the Afghan negotiations, and the arguments of drawdown by the U.S. This year is significant as it demonstrates that geopolitics and security were not periodic accidents. They were turning out to be persistent interpretive frameworks. The China factor brought Pakistan-US relations into a bigger set of perspective in the debate of alignment and the process of the negotiations in Afghanistan kept making Pakistan pertinent to U.S. regional policy.

The peak of the PTI-period was in 2021, which had 36 robust units. To connect this peak to Afghanistan withdrawal, the Taliban returning, the no bases debate and reassessment of the Biden Administration, the thesis is made. The volume and frame concentration demonstrates that the attention of opinions of the elites was greatly increased when Pakistan was perceived as a dangerous yet a competition actor in the termination of the of the U.S. war in Afghanistan. This year gives the reason why security/counterterrorism and Afghanistan took so much center stage during the PTI period. It was not a frame on terrorism as well, but of bases, withdrawal, of regional stability, of the leverage Pakistan has, and of the costs of dependence on security.

The theatrical year 2022 with 20 good units was a transitional year. It comprised late PTI and early post-PTI dynamics. The thesis recognizes the timing of the visit to Moscow by the Khan in Russia-Ukraine and the discussion of no-confidence/cipher, and the transition at the end of PTI as the triggers. This is where sovereignty started to become a subject of foreign-policy stance into domestic-political challenge. The US has become an archetype on the discussions about regime change, foreign compulsion and national honor. This caused the sovereignty frame post-PTI to be more intense than the sovereignty frame during periods, although this did not pertain to a change in the raw count in the same direction.

The post-PTI vocabulary is more reflected in 2023 and 2024. As of 2023, there were 7 strong units in the corpus and the thesis lists economic crisis, IMF negotiations and anti-Americanism debate as key catalysts. In 2024, it had 11 powerful units in the corpus and the primary triggers were election legitimacy, U.S. congressional attention, proposed reset and IMF Extended Fund Facility. These years justify the explanation of why the economical/trade/IMF frame is present in the post-PTI time, whereas the meaning of democracy/governance/rule of law is low but still analytically valid.

This series of events frames helps to achieve the main hypothesis of the paper. The time change was no accident. It was successive to the change in the political and diplomatic climate. The Afghanistan withdrawal jump-started security; the non-bases and the non-alignment jump-started sovereignty; the no-confidence/cipher debate jump-started sovereignty; election debates jump-started democracy and rule-of-law framing. The thesis thus demonstrates that the key events do not just raise or lower coverage. They shift the vocabulary of interpretation in which the relationship is publicly construed.

Postulates: Corpus Integrity and Evidentiary Boundaries

The strong temporal findings have been made yet the thesis is very careful in outlining the evidentiary limit. Not a conclusive and overblown census but an extended working corpus are the 98 strong units. Archive retrieval and full-text testing, rather than scaling the existing data, should lead to the achievement of the desired final range of 310-350 units. This difference is at the heart of research integrity. The scaling up of the 98 case distribution would not provide further evidence as it would predetermine the results. The thesis proceeds to consider the 55 medium records as organized expansion queue, which can only get back into the final corpus once the full-text has reviewed the article, and the Pak-US relations are either main or secondary to the argument of the article.

The same has been recommended to valence. The thesis is made up of positive negative and neutral categories under the methodological discussion though the working data indicates that the valence is To code. The current paper would not thus indicate that the PTI period was worse or that the period after PTI was better. It indicates that the main frames were shifted. It is no trifling technicality. A sovereignty frame might disparage the United States, justify Pakistan or insist on pragmatic balance or be wary of populist anti-Americanism. Dependence can be reinforced with the support of an economy frame. A democracy frame is permitted to complain about the complete government in Pakistan without a blanket statement about the entire relationship. Only full-text valence coding is able to isolate those evaluative patterns.

The level of verification is also important to temporal interpretation. Quotations and frame analysis can be supported by full text official records. The records of metadata and secondary confirmations in the form of indexed pages may assist in mapping the corpus though are to be considered more carefully. The advice of the thesis to verify full-text before submitting is thus not simply procedural. Any final article that would want to utilize representative excerpts, dependable valence coding, or finer-grained rhetorical analysis, necessitates it.

These connections do not weaken the central term finding. The periodbyframe association is both statistically significant and substantively strong in the working corpus. The boundaries, what they do, is avoid overreach. The article can conclude that there is a significant switching of frames in the data that are present. It may as well conclude that final publication should enlarge retrieval, corroborate texts, finish valence coding and report reliability. This constitutes the substantive level of interpretation coupled with methodological restraint, and it is an advantage of the thesis.

Synthesis through Research Question

The temporal analysis is a period-oriented way of answering the thesis research questions. RQ1 inquired of frequency and extent of coverage. The response is that, the PTI period was heavily covered with strong coverage more than the post-PTI period, 67 strong units versus 31. The maximum volume was present in 2021, which proves that the intensity of coverage increased when the Pak-US relations have crossed the Afghanistan withdrawal, the Taliban-return and no-bases debate. The post-PTI period lessen strong units but units were analytically significant since they were focalized on sovereignty, economy and democratic legitimacy.

RQ2 inquired about the patterns of thematization and coverage character. The time evidence reveals the change of the character of coverage to that one of a strategic-security interpretation through the sovereignty-economy-reset interpretation. Most of the

discourse was organised by geopolitics and security during PTI. Following PTI, sovereignty was the most prolific proportional frame, economy was the first primary frame in the strong corpus of relevance and democracy was the minor normatively relevant frame. The character of coverage thus shifted to heritage of war and alignment strategy to domestic legitimacy, useful reliance and diplomatic mendicancy.

The question of RQ3 was used to respond to how the Pakistani and U.S. elite newspapers differed in terms of framing and editorial tone. Since valence was not encoded, the tone aspect can not be empirically answered in positive, negative or neutral percentages. The frame component can be responded in conjunction more safely. Pakistani news outlets focused on the sovereignty, national interest, independence and pragmatic reset whereas U.S. element, particularly the Washington Post, focused on Afghanistan, security and democratic principles. This difference became more acute with the shift in periods since post-PTI discourse on Pakistani governance became more sensitive to foreign influence and economic reliance whereas U.S.-related governance discourse continued to be connected with elections and legitimacy.

This constantinople shows that the date change is not a one-variable finding. It is a combination of change in the volume of articles, frame distribution, event trigger and national standpoint. The relations between Pak and the US were revealed in terms of Afghanistan and strategic alignment in the PTI period. Their visibility was created by the post-PTI period which created sovereignty anxiety, IMF-associated vulnerability and doubts of democratic legitimacy. That is the most publication worthy result of the thesis, assuming the limitations on the completeness and valence of the corpus are kept. .

Reading the Transition as a Discursive Sequence

It is important to read the temporal evidence as a discursive series, and not two distinct blocks. The PTI period did not start with one fixed frame and the post-PTI period did not take over all the previous meanings. Rather, there is accumulation and rearrangement in the corpus. The existence of geopolitics when the Khan government came to power was already there since Pakistan had been viewed through the prism of China, CPEC, India, Russia and the geopolitical implications of U.S. strategy. Security then escalated as Afghanistan headed towards a withdrawal/Taliban-returning. Also observable during PTI was sovereignty in the form of non-alignment and refusal of bases but following the no-confidence transition resulted in sovereignty being more directly coupled with domestic legitimacy and the innuendo of foreign intervention.

This series aids the explanation of why unhistoric frame counts should be interpreted historically. The two periods have the same count of sovereignty, 12 PTI units and 12 post-PTI units, although it had a different proportional and political meaning after April 2022. During the PTI time, sovereignty was working in conjunction with security and geopolitics. During the post-PTI era, the total corpus had decreased and security ceased to be a principle frame therefore; the sovereignty took up more of the interpretive field. The fact that sovereignty existed is thus not the finding of the thesis. It follows that the more the bilateral question was involved in domestic political transition, the more central to the organization of the relationship became the sovereignty of how elites opinion would organize itself.

There is also an economy/trade/IMF frame with sequence. It does not seem to be a main frame in the strong corpus of the PTI-period, but it is repeat seven times in its occurrence after PTI. The paper cannot read this as an indication that in the past before 2022, the economy did not have issues or that the security did not cease to exist in diplomatic reality since 2022. It implies that, in the strong opinion corpus, economic dependence and reset language occurred as prime organizing frames in the post-PTI years. It aligns with the chronology of economic crisis, IMF negotiations and proposed reset and the 2024 Extended Fund Facility as triggers post-PTI, as demonstrated in the event chronology of the thesis.

Reading the transition as a sequence also clarifies the democracy/governance/rule-of-law frame. It has low frequency, having three units in total but low frequency does not render it irrelevant. Democracy and legitimacy turned out to be analytically significant as they overlap with U.S. congressional focus, election wrangles and Pakistani anxieties over outside critique. The limited number of frames on the frame necessitates care, and its timing makes it interpretive. It is thus the frequency and proportion, the context and methodological restraint of the events that make the temporal argument the strongest.

Implications

The results have theoretical, methodological and policy implications. Theoretically, they validate the dynamism of foreign-policy frames. Bilateral relationship, however, can be restructured when there is a shift in domestic political authority, when war ceases, when an economic crisis worsens or when there is a challenge to the legitimacy. The PTI-to-post-PTI shift indicates that frames are not the sole pattern of media routine; they are also a response to the altering political opportunity structure and anxieties in the people.

The results are methodologically inductive to the thesis. Such a pure frame scheme would report conflict or responsibility but fail to recognize the context specific meaning of sovereignty/anti-interventionism and economy/ trade /IMF in the discourse of

post-PTI in Pakistan. The five frame typology is thus more appropriate to the empirical material. Meanwhile, the warning of the thesis on valence and verification illustrates that disciplined inductive framing should be exercised. It must not turn headings into feeling or metadata into full-text evidence.

In case of Pakistani policymakers, the post-PTI results suggest that Pakistan-US restarting cannot be signaled in the realm of diplomatic or economic discourses exclusively. Sovereignty remains central. Outreach messaging should elaborate the engagement on the basis of dignity, autonomy and usefulness. A reset story which does not consider the mistrust of the population is bound to be refracted into the prism of anti-interventionist discourse. To give an increasingly plausible account, the history of suspicion would be taken into consideration but concrete gains in the areas of trade, education, climate cooperation, science, health, investment and institutional consistency would emerge.

The implication of the findings to the U.S. policymakers is that statements related to Pakistan get in a delicate domestic frame context. The comments made on the elections, nuclear security, democracy or military cooperation can be discussed in terms of sovereignty and debates of legitimacy. This is not to say that normative statements should be avoided by U.S. officials but that it is important to consider wording and timing. Pakistani autonomy can be perceived as something pinned down by diplomatic reset that is apparent in public diplomacy that is dismissive of it.

In the case of newsrooms, the results indicate that they should expand the coverage of Pak-US opinion to other frames other than crisis frames. Security and geopolitics are the focus but not the limit. Alternative frames would be less reliant on war, aid or crisis, including economy, education, climate, public health, and diaspora connections, science and technology collaboration. Neither does it claim that these frames are dominant, and in fact, the data indicate that economy and democracy are underrepresented. The fact that it is underrepresented in the first place indicates an editorial possibility.

Limitations

The constraints mentioned in the thesis are maintained in this paper. Empirical analysis is done on 98 strong- include units of a 154 records working retrieval file. Institutional archive search and full-text confirmation should be hired to expand the intended final corpus. The New York Times is not prominent enough, and you cannot make certain outcomes about that newspaper. Not all records have the same level of verification and there are metadata, snippets or indexed pages that are not a full-text record. Valence is indicated To code, and, therefore, sentiment conclusions are not reportable. The opinion eco system is a mixture of the editorial, column and op-ed, opinion and opinion, and op-ed, which needs to be differentiated in the future analysis. Lastly, inter-coder reliability must be reported once the codebook has finalized stabilization and full-text coding. Inflated claims are not allowed by these limits, but a cautious conclusion regarding frame shift in the working corpus is acceptable.

Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated that the Pak-US relations have been framed differently between the PTI and post-PTI period by elite newspapers. In the context of PTI, the strategic-security basis was used to present the relationship based on geopolitics/great-power alignment and security/counterterrorism and Afghanistan. Fueled by the Afghan withdrawal, Taliban re-entry, reassessment and no-bases debate of the Biden government, the 2021 peak in coverage was to be expected. The relationship after the period of PTI was redefined in terms of sovereignty, economic vulnerability, diplomatic reset and democratic legitimacy. Security lost its top post-PTI frame in the strong corpus, whereas economy/trade/IMF was only found in the post-PTI period. Sovereignty was still there during both periods but increased proportionally following PTI.

The statistical value helps in the interpretation: period by primary frame was significant, $\chi^2(4, N = 98) = 30.30, p < .001$, Cramer $V = .56$. Such is the best measure that the transition shifted the framing environment. However, the end is not that Pak-US relations were shifted towards friendly relations, or negative to positive coverage. Valence was not coded. It is concluded that there was an organizational change in vocabulary. Through Afghanistan, counterterrorism, bases, China and strategic alignment, the PTI period rendered the Pak-US relations meaningful. They acquired their meaning post-PTI into the interference, dignity, IMF stabilization, reset and democratic legitimacy.

The general observation is that there is a discursive instability in the Pak-US relations that makes normalization troublesome. They are also associated with various unanswered questions, which include: where does Pakistan stand between China and the United States, the legacy of Afghanistan, application of anti-interventionist language domestically, economic reliance on Western-backed financial stabilization, and election and democratic credibility disputes. Elite newspapers code all these tensions into frames through which the viewers interpret the relationship. The five-frame typology of the thesis is thus a good starting point to future studies, although corpus growth, complete verification of text, valence coding and reliability testing must be achieved first before more dramatic sentiment or specific outlet assertions are reached.

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