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Role of Media in Constructing Pakistani National Identity with reference to War on Terror, USA and Afghanistan (2001-2015)¹

Abstract

Drawing upon Ruth Wodak's framework of national identity construction and social identity theory, this study analyzes role of Pakistani indigenous media in positioning Pakistan's national identity in comparison to USA and Afghanistan as a partner in the war on terror. This study employed mixed methods approach. Content analysis was carried out in order to quantify data in the categories of positive self-representation and negative other-representation. The researcher selected Pakistani leading daily English and Urdu newspapers including The News, Dawn, Jang and Nawa-i-Waqt from 2001-2015. The study adopted systematic sampling technique to draw the sample. The unit of analysis was news story published in the newspapers regarding Pak-US and Pak-Afghan relations and war on terror. Framework for discourse analysis was adapted partially from Ruth Wodak and Van Dijk's principles of linguistic and discourse analysis.

Results from quantitative content analysis of news stories indicated that Pakistani English and Urdu press positioned positive identity of Pakistan as sovereign, cooperative, and peaceful in comparison to USA and Afghanistan. Discourse analysis revealed that Pakistani media utilized transformative strategy to construct positive self-identity of Pakistan as key ally and stakeholder of US war on terror, facilitator in fighting terrorism, a victim of terrorism, supporter and a contributor towards global peace.

Keywords: National Identity; discourse analysis; framing; Pakistan-US relation; Pakistan-Afghanistan relations; positive self-representation; negative other-representation.

Introduction

Drawing upon Ruth Wodak's (2004) framework of analyzing discourses about nations and national identity construction this research seeks to understand how Pakistani national identity is constructed in indigenous media to promote national solidarity and construction of national 'we' or 'us'. National identity has been described as a collective identity at the nation-state level that simultaneously holds

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components of both internal sameness or collective personality at one level and external differences between themselves and other states on the other. (Anderson, 1983 cited in Weimer, 2013). The dichotomization or polarization between ‘us’ and ‘them’ is vital to the being of a nation-state as it ensures the continuity of the group as a form of social organization. (Triandafyllidou, 2002)

Benedict Anderson (2006: 6) argues that the “nation is an ‘imagined political community’”. Anderson offered two understandings: the nation is a construct and the media play a significant role in its construction. Kathryn Woodward (cited in O’Shaughnessy, 2002) stresses the role of media, images and language in contribution to our identities. James Curran (2002: 28) states that “it have been print-based media that promoted the view of Britain as a freedom-loving, constitutional, Protestant country in contrast to the tyrannical Catholic nations of Europe.”

In the post 9/11 scenario, Pakistan has been a key ally to USA in the war against terror. The researcher contends that Pakistan’s national identity can be defined not only by projection of positive self but also through polarizarion to “other” nations including Afghanistan and USA concerning the issues of foreign relations and terrorism especially after 9/11. As Prieler (2010) opines that “identity is constructed based on national characteristics, but also on difference from “*Others*” (p. 521).

An extensive search of relevant literature revealed that researchers have addressed how media constructs identities of various groups and nations in newspapers discourse (Mattenschlager & Riedle, 2003; Hutcheson et al, 2004; Kose & Yilmaz, 2012; Dekavalla, 2010; Sahin, 2011; Najjar, 2007; Davis & Sosnovskaya, 2009; Costelloe, 2014). Other studies focus on national identity construction in certain other media for instance TV advertising (Piller, 2001; Prieler, 2010; Drom, 2010), and films (Jansson, 2005) and also in political speeches (De Cillia, Reisigl, & Wodak, 1999; Coe & Neumann, 2011; Li, 2009).

These studies while applying quantitative and qualitative methods analyzed various frames in which certain communities’, national and social identities were comparatively constructed to differentiate between ‘Us’ and ‘Other’.

Mostly past research also focused extensively on framing of Pakistan’s image in international media. (Yousaf, 2015; Iqbal & Zubair, 2014; Sadiq 2016; Zhang & Meadows, 2012; Pervez & Saeed, 2010) Analyzing framing of Pakistani national identity in indigenous media however, is a field that needs attention. Therefore, present study is necessary to gauge the role of indigenous media.

Hypothesis 1: Pakistani newspapers polarize between positive national self and negative other in relation to USA.

Hypothesis 2: Pakistani newspapers polarize between positive national self and negative other in relation to Afghanistan.

Research Question 1: How news stories position Pakistani positive-self in media discourse with regard to USA?

Research Question 2: How news stories comparatively position Pakistani positive-self in media discourse with reference to Afghanistan?

Social identity theory

This study draws upon social identity theory. The basic idea of this theory is that the social category (e.g. nationality, political association, and sports team) into which an individual is categorized, or feels one's belonging to, provides a definition of who he is in terms of defining characteristics of that category. When social identity becomes the salient source of self-perception it develops an in-group and out-group stereotype. The in-groups distinguish themselves from out-groups on the basis of national, religious, gender based, class based and education-based differences (Hogg and Abrams, 1988 cited in Billig, 1995). A nation can yield pleasing stereotypes of themselves and belittling stereotypes of those other nations, with which they compare themselves.

This concept has been further elaborated by Ruth Wodak (2004) in her framework of linguistic analysis and Van Dijk's (2001) discourse analysis as positive-self and negative other representation in the media while constructing national identity.

Method

This study employed content and discourse analysis. The study considers Pakistani print media as universe and selected four mainstream and highly circulated newspapers for analysis, Daily Dawn and The News from English press and Daily *Jang* and Daily *Nawa-i-Waqt* from Urdu press. Time duration selected for the research is defined as post twin tower attack from year 2001 till 2015. The researcher selected this time to analyze the framing of national identity in 21st century and in the contemporary era. This research focuses on the news stories published on the front page, back page, metropolitan pages.

Through systematic sampling technique, the researcher decided to keep an interval of 3 months and selected every 4th month of the alternative year that make up April, August, and December as the sample months. (Wimmer & Dominick, 1999) Then first, second, and third composite week was selected respectively from three selected months to get a spread of data across selected years.

Operationalization of positive self-representation in comparison to USA

Positive self-representation means portraying self as 'good' like Pakistani press portrays Pakistan as an ally of USA in the war against terror. For instance, following Dawn's news story "Pakistani investigators assisted by FBI agents have begun interrogating suspected Al Qaeda and Taliban members arrested during raids involving US law enforcement officers last week. We keep sharing information with FBI agents" senior Interior Ministry official Brigadier *Javed Iqbal Cheema*" (Dawn, December 21, 2001) shows that Pakistan is positively contributing and assisting USA in war against terrorism. On the other hand, news stories highlighting US drone attacks as a threat to Pakistan's sovereignty is conceptualized as constructing USA as Other.

Operationalization of positive self-representation in comparison to Afghanistan

News stories that describe Pakistan's efforts to bring peace in Afghanistan and helping Afghan refugees in Pakistan present a positive self of Pakistan in comparison to Afghanistan. "Pakistan wants sovereign, peaceful, and strong

Afghanistan, Musharraf”. On the other hand, news stories that address the issues of terrorist infiltration from Afghanistan to Pakistan, Afghan forces’ attacks on Pakistani check posts violating international laws construct the negative *other*. “Pak-Afghan border: Firing from Afghan forces on Pakistani check post. Pakistan didn’t respond. (Dawn, August 13, 2003)

For linguistic analysis following strategies proposed by Wodak (2004) are relevant:

1. Referential/Nomination: How are persons named and referred to linguistically?
2. Prediction: What traits, characteristics, qualities, features are attributed to them?
3. Argumentation: By means of what arguments do specific persons to social groups justify or legitimize the inclusion or exclusion of others?
4. Perspectivation: From what perspectives or point of views labels, attributions, or arguments are expressed?
5. Intensification: Are the utterances articulated overtly, intensified or mitigated?

Van Dijk’s assumptions of discourse structure are also analyzed in terms of **Lexical items** (choice of words), **Deictic expressions** (Use of pronouns like we and our to describe us or the in-group and use of they and their to describe the out-group), **Alliteration** (Use of words starting with same sound is a rhetorical device). **Propositions** (Polarization by emphasizing *Our* good actions and *their* bad actions and mitigating *Our* bad actions and *their* good actions), **Descriptions** (in terms of specificity and detail. Our good actions are in detail and explicit like their bad actions.). These aspects are analyzed in the selected news items to analyze how Pakistani national identity is constructed in newspaper discourse.

Quantitative analysis

Table 1.1

Positive Self and Negative-Other representation of Pakistan in comparison to USA

Press	English Press	Urdu Press	Total
Positive Self Representation in comparison to USA	48 (39%)	28 (21%)	<i>n</i> = 76 (30%)
Negative other Representation of USA	76 (61%)	103 (79%)	<i>n</i> = 179 (70%)
Total	124 (49%)	131 (51%)	N = 255

$$(\chi^2(1) = 41.604, p < .000)$$

Table 1.1 illustrates the findings of quantitative content analysis of news stories depicting Pakistan’s positive self and USA as negative-*Other* in Pakistani press. Both English and Urdu newspapers constructed USA as negative-*Other* (70%) more than depicting positive self (30%). The findings of Urdu press showed a clear tilt towards *Othering* the USA with almost 179 news stories (79%). On the Other hand, English press constructed Pakistan more positively in comparison to USA in 48 news stories (63%) than Urdu newspapers (37%). Overall, USA has been framed as negative-other that is statistically significant as indicated by the results ($\chi^2(1) = 41.604, p < .000$).

Table 1.2

Pakistan’s positive self and negative-Other representation in comparison to Afghanistan

Press	English Press	Urdu Press	Total
Positive Self Representation in comparison to Afghanistan	25 (52%)	27 (57%)	$n = 52$ (61%)
Negative other Representation of Afghanistan	23 (48%)	20 (43%)	$n = 43$ (39%)
Total	48 (50.5%)	47 (49.5%)	$N = 95$

$$(\chi^2(1) = .853, p = .356)$$

Table 1.2 presents a comparison of English and Urdu press while projecting positive self of Pakistan and Afghanistan as negative *Other*. Press portrayed Pakistan more positively as helpful to bring peace and stability in Afghanistan in 52 news (55%) while constructing Afghanistan as *Other* in 43 news (45%). The statistical analysis reveals that there is no significant association ($\chi^2(1) = .853, p = .356$). Afghanistan has been addressed as a negative-*other* equally to Pakistan’s positive-self representation.

RQ 1: How news stories position Pakistani positive-self in media discourse with regard to US?

The news story selected for analysis relates to indictment of 11 US citizens including three Pakistanis in USA accused of conspiring terrorist activities against India. The headline of the news story was “11 indicted in US for planning Jihad” (Dawn, August 10, 2003). In referential strategy, actors include 11 US citizens including three Pakistani named in the news story [as Masud Ahmad Khan; Khawaja Mehmood Hassan; M, Attique, two unnamed African Americans, two White, and one South Korean. All are US citizens of which two are legal residents.] All the accused are Muslims and pleaded not guilty.

In prediction strategy, the leader of the accused group of people Randal Ismail Royer is described as supporter of [*“Kashmir independence movement”*]. The use of inverted commas for Kashmir Independence Movement suggests it a just cause and people fighting for independence of Kashmir are not terrorists but only [*“freedom fighters” who want an end to Indian control over Kashmir*]. This justifies *our* action. The description of rest of the group members accused of supporting terrorism indicates they are [*associates of Prince George’s Community College in Washington, two immigrants launching high tech careers and one lecturer pursuing a doctorate in science*]. The positive description shows *our* good action and an irony on *their* illogical action of accusing highly educated people to be terrorists.

The argumentation strategy is adopted by quoting neighbors and colleagues calling the accused as [*“quiet, hard-working, studious, and religious”*]. Lexical choices used for *us*, the accused are positive. They are studious because their fellows found them [*“spending their off hours poring through books at book stalls”*]. This is a good action attributed to *our* group. This makes decision of indicting these educated men and associating them with planning terrorism, unjustifiable.

Another important argument is labeling the law as [*“Century old and seldom-used”*] that prosecutors used to indict the accused. Since the law does not have recent relevance therefore, the court decision is presented as questionable and challengeable. The construction of accused in a positive manner presents justification of an illogical action of US as out group/*other* and innocence of accused (including Pakistanis) as in group/*us*. The major themes that surfaced include ‘*we*’ as educated, hard-working, quiet, studious, and good whereas ‘*they*’ are framed as unjust and illogical.

RQ 2: How news stories comparatively position Pakistani positive-self in media discourse with regard to Afghanistan?

This news story relates to an attack on Pakistani checkpoint on the western border with Afghanistan published in Dawn on August 14, 2003. The news story cites four incidents: [*attack of Afghan militia on Pakistani check point in Mohmand district, Afghan tribesmen opened fire on Pakistani border patrolling party in Qamardin Karan in Balochistan, abducted 3 Pakistani border force personnel, and Pakistan’s deployment of troops on its border with Afghanistan to stop the infiltration from Afghanistan into Pakistani territory.*]

In this news story, Afghan militia is described as actors. The action was [*firing rockets and mortar shells by Afghan militia*] bad. The patient were described as Pakistani security personnel. As referential strategy Afghan militia has been referred to as an attacker that has fired rockets and mortar shells at Pakistani check post. Other nominations are Pakistani troops, suspected Taliban and Al Qaeda extremists, Afghan tribesmen, three-way commission of Afghanistan, US, and Pakistan, Pakistani border forces’ personnel.

Lexical choices are mostly negative including [*suspected Taliban, soared and strained relations, block infiltration, incursion, volatile region, and extremists*] while referring to Afghanistan. The prediction in the text is that Afghan infiltrators are *suspected Taliban and Al-Qaeda extremists*. The text has utilized negative

words to describe Afghanistan as *Other* including *attacker, abductor, suspected, and infiltrators*.

Propositions about negative other: [*Afghan militia attacked Pakistani check post. Afghan tribesmen attacked Pakistani mission in Kabul and abducted 3 Pakistani border forces personnel. They call setting up check posts on the border as Pakistani incursion into Afghan territory.*] In all these negative propositions, Afghan militia and tribesmen are offensive and taking illegal, illogical, and harmful measures against Pakistan.

Propositions about positive self was [*Pakistani troops did not return fire*]. It implies that good act is attributed to self that Pakistan didn't retaliate and constructs Pakistan's image of a pacifying country. So far description was concerned their bad actions are described in greater detail. [*They fired rockets and mortar shells. They are firing at our check posts. They crossed into Pakistan. They attacked Pakistani Mission in Kabul. They abducted 3 Pakistani border force personal. They opened fire at our patrolling party.*] Pronouns like "We" and "Our" are used four times to describe us as in-group and as victims.

In all these descriptions, their negative actions are explicit. It implies Afghanistan's violations of international laws and diplomatic norms. They allege Pakistan of incursion deep into Afghan territory. Pakistan strongly denied this charge and allowed a three way commission of Afghanistan, US, and Pakistan to visit and examine if Pakistan has violated the rules and agreements. As intensification strategy their good action is mitigated by placing it in the last two sentences of the news story where Afghan border officials assured the efforts to release Pakistani abducted men from Afghan tribesmen. Argumentation implies that since Afghan militia infiltrated for conducting terrorists activities in Pakistan therefore, Pakistan closed its border with Afghanistan and deployed troops to stop infiltration that shows Pakistan's constructive role in war against terrorism and positive contribution to regional peace.

Discussion and Conclusion

National identity includes ways of conceiving '*we/us, the nation*', and promoting national harmony while conceiving '*them, the - foreigners*', as other from whom '*we*' identify '*ourselves*' as different (Billig, 1995). Based on this assumption this study analyzed how Pakistani positive national self-image is framed in comparison to "*other*" countries including USA and Afghanistan in Pakistani newspapers to promote national harmony and unity.

The results indicated that Pakistani press positioned Pakistan's positive self-identity in the news stories related to USA and Afghanistan in the context of war on terror after 9/11. Henri Tajfel (1981 cited in Huddy, 2001) also emphasizes that there can be no '*us*' without a '*them*'. What '*we*' are", indicates who '*we*' are not. Pakistani press utilized transformative strategy of identity construction aiming at changing identity by telling that we are not a terrorist country rather we are victims of terrorism. The press portrayed Pakistan as a peaceful country which supports US war on terror as a key ally. This relates to the concept of '*ethnocentrism*' that is defined as "each group's nourishment of its own pride and vanity, boasting of itself superiority, exalting their own theologies and looking

with contempt on outsiders". Pakistan has been described as a supporter of global peace in the press while mentioning its contribution towards war on terror. News stories kept praising the Pakistani government and army's efforts to combat terrorism.

Secondly, the members create in-group stereotypes values and while doing so, our actions are proved as good actions. Pakistan's contribution to facilitate Afghanistan's peace talks among all factions were praised in the press to position Pakistan's positive self while censuring infiltration of terrorists from Afghanistan into Pakistan and drone attacks constructing US and Afghanistan as negative other. The rhetoric of united self against a common enemy that attacks Pakistan and challenges its sovereignty has been widely used by government and army officials in news stories to promote national unity. Therefore, this research supports the assumptions of social identity theory and Wodak's strategies of national identity construction while substantiating role of Pakistani press in promoting national unity and solidarity and transforming the negative perceptions about Pakistan into positive as peaceful country.

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