

Framing of China Pak Economic Corridor (CPEC) in the Leading Press of Pakistan and China

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Abstract

The study “Framing of China Pak Economic Corridor (CPEC) in the leading press of Pakistan and China” is an attempt to understand that how the press from both countries (Daily Dawn from Pakistan and China Daily from China) has framed the CPEC regarding the issues like Trade development and economy; Regional peace & security; Employment opportunities; Power and energy sector; Gateway to international waters; Corridor to Central Asian Republics (CARs), Response by national stake holders, Response by international stakeholders regarding CPEC. This is examined in three different directions including supportive, non-supportive and neutral stance towards CPEC and related matters. The main hypotheses of the study are that the framing of CPEC in Pakistani newspapers is supportive; the framing of CPEC in Chinese newspapers is supportive; the project will gain supportive response by the international community. For the study, Agenda setting theory is employed focusing on Media Agenda and the theory of framing is used to check the prevailing mainstay of the press of both countries and their tilt. The News and opinion pages of the selected newspapers are analyzed from 1st January 2017 to 31st December 2017. Content analysis is used to investigate the framing of above mentioned issues matters related to CPEC. The results reveal that the coverage of the issues is highly favourable in both newspapers and they positively frame issues regarding CPEC.

Introduction

South Asia has been a centre of world’s attention due to its geographical and demographical features. This area generally and Pakistan specifically comes under spotlight as it started the flagship project of One Belt One Road (OBOR). The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a lead project of “One Belt One Road (OBOR) Initiative” formally announced in April 2015. The multibillion US Dollar project of CPEC offers much needed avenues of economic growth and political stability for Pakistan and the region at large (Rahman & Shurong 2017).

One Belt One Road (OBOR) Initiative is the grand strategy of China to connect Eurasia, South East Asia, South Asia and Africa through roads, railway lines, maritime routes and energy infrastructure. An HSBC research report shows countries along the OBOR account for 64% of the global population and 29% of the World GDP.

Both the governments of Pakistan and China announced a series of project agreements and MOU’s centered on energy development and infrastructure improvement within Pakistan On April 20th, 2015. Pecuniary worth of the total project funding of this China Pakistan Economic Corridor [CPEC] is likely to reach over 46 billion dollars, of which at least 35 billion is committed to the energy sector. It is worthy to mention that if all of these investments turn up, CPEC would equal all the foreign direct investment inflows into the country from 1970 to the present (Miller, 2017).

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Media is indispensable in today's world. Its effects vary from individual to groups and nations to globalization. Mass media's content is the vital source of eventual changes in individuals' as well as community's preferences about foreign policy and relations among nations. On one side, the mass media are the prime channel between community and policymakers. Policymakers consult media content on public opinion; on the other, the media are the people's major source of information on what policymakers are doing. (Soroka, 2003).

This triangulation makes media a strong stakeholder in influencing both the public and the policies. Much work has been done to understand the relation of mass media and the public opinion about the events happening far away from the locale of the reader. Lippmann (1922) said that "the press makes the images of the outer world in the heads of people; they perceive the outer world through press". As Ross (2006) also says, media play a decisive role in international affairs and conflicts because of the people are dependent on mass media to give timely, trustworthy information about distant events.

Hence, in the light of above described phenomenon, it is important and worthy to investigate the role of the press of both the countries in handling the coverage of the CPEC.

Pakistan and China shared nuclear, military as well as economic relations with each other. People of Pakistan and China believed good neighbor is a blessing. Both states share a firm relationship and are an example of amity in Chinese and Islamic civilization. Pakistan and China are sharing a good neighbor and good friend's relationship with each other (Xiaoqiang, 2011).

Pakistan-China friendship year was celebrated in 2011 on the 60th anniversary of their relations. To reinforce the political relationship with full enthusiasm different events were planned and organized by the both states (Pakistan Defence, 2012).

In 21st century strategic relationship arose between China and Pakistan. China enhanced their deliberate relations through economic and public democracy to strengthen the bond between people to people. It also reinforced the Sino-Pak friendship to enhance Pakistan's economy with trade and investment (Niazi, 2006).

There are many ports working in the world according to their dimensions as a link between land and sea. Gwadar port is one of the best ports to receive and deal with container ships because of its natural depth (Tangredi, 2009).

Gwadar port is the important source to enhance direct investment of China in Pakistan in the form Of CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor). Bilateral trade is refining the political, military and economic relations of Pakistan and China. Gwadar port will play an important role in vision 2025 of both states, China as World super power and Pakistan as Asian Tiger (Perveen, 2016).

During a visit to Pakistan Chinese Premier Li Keqiang in May 2013, the idea of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was envisioned. CPEC connects Pakistan's Gwadar port with Chinese province of Xinjiang. Corridor will enhance economic infrastructure and power generation plants in Pakistan (Bhattacharjee, 2015). CPEC is considered as the biggest project in Pakistan's history. Sino-Pakistan relations will play a significant role in its success (Ali, 2015).

Statement of Problem

The purpose of the study is to investigate the extent of coverage given to the CPEC by (The Daily Dawn, The China Daily) and how this issue has been given treatment by the selected newspapers from the timeline of JAN 1, 2017 to DEC 31, 2017 by assessing the relevant contents of News and Editorial Pages through Content Analysis.

The objectives of the study are:

1. To find out the extent of coverage given to the CPEC in 2017 by the selected newspapers (The Daily Dawn, The China Daily).
2. To investigate the treatment (framing) given to CPEC in 2017 by the selected newspapers (The Daily Dawn, The China Daily).
3. To find out the difference in extent of coverage and treatment given to the CPEC in 2017 by the selected newspapers (The Daily Dawn, The China Daily).

Literature Review

Pakistan and China signed first mutual trade agreement in 1963. After that Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) were signed in 2006 and later in 2009. Both states shared common interest for the regional peace and stability. Many agreements related to economic cooperation and free trade were signed between China and Pakistan. China is the second largest trading partner of Pakistan after United States of America and it gives a hope to enhance economic development of Pakistan (Javaid & Javaid, 2016).

Pakistan and China are all weather friends and supporters. Both states not only shared terrestrial borders but also a Highway named Karakorum Highway, which is also known as China-Pakistan friendship Highway. Gwadar port and ports of Karachi connects to Karakoram highway through internal route of roads (Ali, 2015).

New proportions were seen between Pakistan and China's friendship after 9/11 incident. Heavy investments were made by Chinese Government to Pakistan for Gwadar port in 2002 and Karakoram Highway reconstruction was also approved in 2008. Whereas, Gwadar port was given to Chinese overseas Port Holdings in 2013 (Small, 2015).

In South Asia China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is a biggest project between two countries to enhance their Political and economic relations through trade. After Completion of this mega project it will be beneficial to China, Middle East and Africa for the trade purposes. CPEC will reduce the distance of route between Middle East oil to the Chinese ports (Abid & Ashfaq, 2015). Pakistan and China inked 51 memorandums of understandings (MOUs) along with CPEC project in April 2015. Metro Bus project and Orange Line track project were also inked in May 2014 between Pakistan and China. Mutual trade in different areas will increase the economic development of both states. Pak-China trade reaches US \$16 billion by 2015 and additional increase of US \$25 billion by 2017 (Nation, 2015).

CPEC imagination based on OBOR (One Belt One Road) which was announced in March 2015. This road connects China with Gwadar Port in Pakistan for the development of energy and economic zones. After successful completion of One Belt One Road project, it will be advantageous for the entire region not only for the Pakistan and China (Hussain, 2017).

On the completion of this mega project CPEC, businessman and stakeholders of China can invest in Pakistan. The Corridor also connects China with Africa, Middle East and America. Another greatest benefit of this project is to explore natural resources of the region through China's technology advancement (Irshad & Xin, 2014).

Theoretical Background

The study uses agenda setting theory in general and the supra-specialty of agenda setting paradigm, which is framing, a theory in itself now, in particular as theoretical base of the thesis. Agenda setting theory was explained by McCombs and Shaw (1972) as the relationship between media and public regarding different issues. They found the media agenda on political issues during election days as well as the way media highlighted issues in front of public through agenda setting.

It described the idea of media's contribution in making public opinion, values and priorities (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). In Agenda setting theory media gate keepers set the agenda about repetition of the news to highlight the specific issue as well as the framing of the news in which way the media present the issue in front of the public.

According to Baran & Davis (2012), the frame analysis theory is founded on the idea that people make understanding of everyday life by using expectations. Reese (2010) identifies frames as persistent socially shared organising principles, which meaningfully build the social world by working symbolically (p.17). Van Gorp (2010) points out that the journalism enterprise carries a vibrant process of construction of meanings and continuously structures social reality by a systematic process in which a journalist entitles with the role of presenting additional interpretations of events and issues in the form of news articles (p.84).

The concept of framing in the media content has been defined in broad context as the process of organising news article (story) to communicate (convey) a particular understanding (perception) of the event concerned (Entman, 1993; scheufele, 1999, Reese, 2007). Reese (2001) describes about the dynamic process of framing, he wrote that the frames used in media "are organising principles, which are shared socially and continual over time, they symbolically labour to build the frame of social realm. (p.11)

Mostly acknowledged definition of framing is delivered by Entman (1993) which describes that the framing is "selection of some aspects of a perceived reality and to make it more prominent in the content of communication in such manner that it reflects a special problem definition, moral evaluation, causal interpretation or/and recommendation for treatment (p.52). Some scholars also focused on the definitions of framing that are more narrative specific or according to their interpretations. For instance, Tankard, Hendrickson, Silberman, Bliss, and Ghanem (1991) understood the concept of media framing as the main idea working behind the news stories, which supplies a context and recommends what the issue is by the use of emphasis, selection, elaboration and exclusion (p.277). Gamson (1992) suggest that like a story line, a frame is an organising idea. Iyengar (1991), Entman (1993), and Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007) are off the view that the framing has been in use to define and construct the issues by highlighting some salient features of a social reality which the particular audience already understand. In their view, the frames utilize to communicate news events or issues in an easily understandable way to the public. Particularly in the words of Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007), the framing is "sorts of presentations that communicators and media practitioners use to communicate more complex issue in such manner that makes them understandable to the general audience (p.12). Lugalambi (2006) studied news framing in his research and argues that the selective determination of the exclusion and inclusion of the content, journalist permits some frames to appear on the cost of others, in this way supporting the framing dominance that results in ultimate help of status quo. Brewer and Kimberly (2010) embark on their part on the mission of classifying frames in media nothing that partisan-frames, for example are often sponsored and constructed by players in a given circumstances with the intention to move the opinion of people in a way in line with pre supposed policy outcomes or position held (p.139). Moreover, some other frames media practising are anecdotal or episodic, abstract or theme frames, issue or substance frames often applied in the way of policy proposals, or game or strategy frames that are usually presented in political manipulation (p.160). Describing the media framing at early stage of classifying them, Iyenger (1991) elaborates, "For episodically frame the news event is to focus on the isolated cases or events, where to frame it thematically is to forward events and issues within their broader way context (p.2). Nelson and Wiley (2001) distinguish on their part between different types of framing in-use in media such as issue, collective

action, decision, news and audience framing. They further explain that the discourse-specific frames are “issue frames” usually deployed to deal with political discourse whereas the study of social movements, protests and general collective actions is concerned with “collective action frames”. Whilst application of “decision frames” is mainly concerned with the interpretations for understanding some particular texts, they argue, “News framing can be understood in form of endogenous and exogenous. They further forward the observation that the former are the results of the often an outcome of the fashion in which the contemporary media industry operates at procedural and institutional level, whilst the later are often applied internally on the content of news and attached with the production and structural elements of the news content. Finally, the measurable outcome of the process of framing in terms of individual perceptions is the “issue frames” (p.246). Valkenburg et al. (1999) studied impact of framing on readers’ perceptions and the capability to remember the information presented before in the story, their observation was that “the media have the ability not only to tell people what issue to think about but also how to think about them”. Lugalambi (2006) concludes, “A frame is significant as it can decide whether an audience understand, notice and remember the issue as well as how an audience consider and determine to reply on the given issue (p.131).

To determine the media agenda about framing of CPEC (China Pakistan Economic Corridor) in the light of above discussion, two English leading newspapers are analyzed i.e. Daily Dawn from Pakistan and China Daily from China.

The main hypothesis and research question of the study is:

Hypothesis: The print media of both the countries frame the CPEC positively.

Further sub-hypotheses are linked with categories and are discussed in analysis chapter.

RQ.1-To what extent selected newspapers gave coverage on CPEC and related issues?

Methodology

The study is a content analysis methodologically. As a technique of research, Berger (2011) explains content analysis as, “the systematic description and classification of content of communication in accordance with certain often pre determined categories” (p.205). He figured out that the same technique might be applied in both the quantitative as well as qualitative studies (Ibid). In accordance with the views shared by Wimmer & Dominick (2006), he points out the main steps a researcher should follow, are like adopting a systematic coding system and having ensured measureable scoring units (p.209-211). Bertrand & Huges (2005) describes it as method developed to research in the content of mass media in the framework of social science, and adopting a linear view of communication content. In traditional context, Paisley (1964) states that in the process of content analysis, communication message is recorded using objective and systematic system of rules of categorisation, into the form of data that can be further compared and summarised. Content analysis is inferential and descriptive process. Whereas the descriptive form of content analysis is exploratory in nature, the inferential type analysis is for the generalisation of the findings over the whole population. It can say that it is actually the linkage between events and environments. Berelson (1952) describes the content analysis as “a technique in research for the systematic, objective and quantitative explanation of the communication’s manifest content.”

The universe for the present study is the news items, editorials and columns published in the ‘Dawn’ and ‘The China daily’ daily English language newspapers from Pakistan and China, from 1st January to 31st December 2017. The population for the concerned study is the news, editorials and columns of the two above described newspapers within selected time-period containing the

word ‘CPEC’ or China Pakistan Economic Corridor and the categories explained below. The sample of the study has not drawn from the population as the overall frequency of the editorials and columns of all the four newspapers within time span of one year is 207 articles. Hence, it is decided to study all the articles and therefore the study shaped itself as a census.

The Unit of analysis of this study is News (Front, Back pages) and Editorial pages of the selected press.

Following categories are made to investigate the Framing of CPEC in leading press of Pakistan and China from 1st Jan 2017 to 31st December 2017.

- A. Trade development and economy
- B. Energy and Power Sector
- C. Corridor to Central Asian Republic (CARs)
- D. Employment opportunities
- E. Peace and Security of the region
- F. Response by National stakeholders
- G. Response by International stakeholders
- H. Gateway to International Waters

These categories were examined in three directions/Slant: Positive, Negative and Neutral.

Data Analysis and Results

The data was entered on the basis on defined eight categories and analyzed using SPSS. The table 1.0 shows that out of total 207 News and Editorials of Daily Dawn and Daily China 65.2% (including 29% news and 36.2% editorials) was from Daily Dawn whereas remaining 34.8% (including 16.9% news and 17.9% editorials) was from China Daily. Whereas, Daily China reported 85.9%, 11.9% and 2.2% news and editorials as positive, negative and neutral respectively. In Comparison, China Daily reported 100% news and editorials positively.

TABLE 1

News Paper	News%	Editorial%	Total%	Directions		
				Positive%	Negative%	Neutral%
Daily Dawn	29	36.2	65.2	85.9	11.9	2.2
China Daily	16.9	17.9	34.8	100	0	0

Table 2.0 illustrates the directions of news and editorials published collectively by Daily Dawn and China Daily. The total reporting of category one “Trade Development and Economy” was 29% among eight categories with reference to CPEC whereas 25.1%, 3.4% and 0.5% reported positively, negatively and neutral respectively. The category 2 “Energy and power sector” was reported 17.4% among total news whereas 15% reported positively and 2.4% negatively.

The category three “corridors to central Asian states” was framed 12.6% whereas 12.1% was reported positively and 0.5% negatively. Moreover, category four was reported 7.7% among total data from which 7.2% was positively reported but 0.5% was negatively reported. The category five was reported 16.4% from which 15.5% was positively reported but 1.0% was negatively reported. Additionally, category six was framed 3.4% from which 2.4% was positively reported, 0.5% each as negatively and neutrally. The category seven was reported 7.2% among eight categories whereas total 7.2% was reported positively. Likewise, category eight was reported 6.3% whereas total news and editorial on the category were framed positively.

TABLE 2

Category	News%	Editorial%	Total%	Directions		
				Positive%	Negative%	Neutral%
Trade development and Economy	14	15.0	29	25.1	3.4	0.5
Energy and Power Sector	8.2	9.2	17.4	15.0	2.4	0
Corridor to Central Asian Republics (CARs)	4.8	7.7	12.6	12.1	0	0.5
Employment Opportunities	2.9	4.8	7.7	7.2	0.5	0
Regional peace and Security	9.2	7.2	16.4	15.5	1.0	0
Response by National Stakeholders	1.0	2.4	3.4	2.4	0.5	0.5
Response by International stakeholders	3.4	3.9	7.2	7.2	0	0
Gateway to international waters	2.4	3.9	6.3	6.3	0	0

The table 3.0 depicts the directions of reporting in framing eight identified issues related to CPEC by Pakistani and Chinese newspapers. The interpretation of eight hypotheses proposed are as under:

Hypothesis 1: Print media of Pakistan and China has framed “Trade Development and Economy” of Pakistan positively with reference to CPEC development.

In view of the results presented in table 3.0 the hypotheses one is accepted as both Chinese and Pakistani leading newspapers reported the trade development and economy with reference to CPEC positively.

Hypothesis 2: Print media of Pakistan and China has framed “Energy and Power Sector” of Pakistan positively with reference to CPEC development.

In the light of the results illustrated in table 3.0 the hypotheses two is accepted as both Chinese and Pakistani leading newspapers framed energy and power sector issues positively with reference to CPEC positively.

TABLE 3

Category	News%	Editorial%	Total%	Directions Daily China			Directions Daily Dawn		
				+ve %	-ve %	NI%	+ve %	-ve %	NI%
Trade development and Economy	14	15.0	29	100	0	0	80.5	17.1	2.4
Energy and Power Sector	8.2	9.2	17.4	100	0	0	79.2	20.8	0
Corridor to Central Asian Republics (CARs)	4.8	7.7	12.6	100	0	0	91.7	0	8.3
Employment Opportunities	2.9	4.8	7.7	100	0	0	88.9	11.1	0
Regional peace and Security	9.2	7.2	16.4	100	0	0	91.7	8.3	0
Response by National Stakeholders	1.0	2.4	3.4	100	0	0	71.4	14.3	14.3
Response by International stakeholders	3.4	3.9	7.2	100	0	0	100	0	0
Gateway to international waters	2.4	3.9	6.3	100	0	0	100	0	0

Hypothesis 3: Print media of Pakistan and China has framed “Corridor to Central Asian Republics” of Pakistan positively with reference to CPEC development.

The hypotheses mentioned above is accepted for this study as issue of corridor to central Asian states with respect to CPEC had been framed positively by both Pakistani and Chinese press.

Hypothesis 4: Print media of Pakistan and China has framed “Employment Opportunities” of Pakistan positively with reference to CPEC development.

The hypothesis is accepted in the light of results illustrated in table 3.0 as issue of employment opportunities with reference to CPEC project has been reported positively by both Pakistani and Chinese press media.

Hypothesis 5: Print media of Pakistan and China has framed “Regional Peace and Security” of Pakistan positively with reference to CPEC development.

As depicted in table 3.0 the hypothesis is accepted as issue of regional peace and security had been framed positively by Pakistani and Chinese press media in the context of CPEC.

Hypothesis 6: Print media of Pakistan and China has framed “Responses by national shareholders” of Pakistan positively with reference to CPEC development.

The hypothesis stated above is accepted for the study in the light of results presented in table 3.0 as both Pakistani and Chinese leading press reported responses of national stakeholders positively.

Hypothesis 7: Print media of Pakistan and China has framed “Response by international stakeholders” of Pakistan positively with reference to CPEC development.

The hypothesis proposed for the study is accepted in view of the results presented in table 3.0 as the issue of response by international stakeholders had been reported positively by leading press of China and Pakistan.

Hypothesis 8: Print media of Pakistan and China has framed “Gateway to international waters” of Pakistan positively with reference to CPEC development.

In the light of table 3.0 the aforesaid hypothesis is accepted as the issue of gateway to international waters has been reported positively by Daily Dawn of Pakistan as well as by China Daily of China respectively.

Conclusion

The results indicate that all the eight issues related to CPEC have been reported positively by both Daily Dawn of Pakistan and China Daily of China respectively. Whereas, only a negligible quantity of news and editorials reported the issues negatively or neutrally. Hence, the study approved the main hypothesis as well as all the eight sub hypotheses based on data analysis which shows that leading press of Pakistan is playing a vital role in success of CPEC by positively reporting the issues e.g. economy, security, employment etc.

To answer the research question, the extent and mode of coverage generally is not equal. The Daily Dawn shared the sixty five point two percent (65.2 %) of the total coverage of the issue where the China Daily shared only thirty four point eight percent (34.8 %) of the total coverage. On the next level, there is a significance difference in the amount of coverage of issues and dimensions of the CPEC in both newspapers. The prominent issues ranked by the extent of the coverage are trade development and economy, energy and power sector and regional peace and security. They have got the twenty nine percent (29 %), seventeen point four percent (17.4%) and sixteen point four percent (16.4%) share of the coverage respectively. There is a difference in the framing of the issues as well between the Daily Dawn and the China Daily. The China Daily framed all the eight issues positively whereas the Daily Dawn frames the employment opportunity, the interest of national stake holder, the energy and power sector and the collective trade development and economy negatively as (11.1%), (8.3%), (20.8%) and (17.1%) respectively which shows that to a meager amount although, the reservations are there.

Recommendations

This study is a reference for further investigations into the CPEC and media as the phenomenon is very broad in nature and scope. The researcher recommends furthering investigating the press of hostile countries to this project as USA and India regarding their coverage of the CPEC to profoundly understand the issues. The researcher takes the liberty of floating the idea of conducting a comparative study of vernacular and elite press framing of the CPEC in Pakistan to understand the issue of employment opportunity, trade development and economy and the interest of national stake holders. These studies can help in an inclusive understanding and to help media persons in formulate better media policies covering CPEC.

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