

**THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF INTERNATIONAL NEWS-  
MAGAZINES REGARDING US OPERATIONS IN PAKISTAN**

**Dr. Nasim Ishaq**

**Dr. Noshina Saleem**

**ABSTRACT**

*The intention of this paper is to examine the news items of The Economist, The Herald and Time about US operations in Pakistan. Qualitative thematic analysis by selecting 113 news items from these news-magazines. Themes are operationalized. The findings revealed four major themes: legitimization of operations, Pakistan double standards, Pakistan as front-line ally, dehumanization of Pakistani political and military officers.*

**Keywords:** *international news-magazines, US operations in Pakistan, thematic analysis.*

## **Introduction**

Media is an essential base which makes information reach to the common. Media hold a very selective mirror. The whole world, in all its enormity and complexity, cannot possibly be represented, so media professionals must make choices. (Baran, 2010). The media-press, radio, cinema and so on---have become the place through which we receive most of our information (entertainment) about the world, so they are primary source for how we see the world (Shaughnessy and Stadler, 2005).

Several researches have empirically documented that where there are clashes or conflicts, there are numerous aspects that regulate how to keep the society informed about the clashes and which kind of information should be permitted to produce and offered in news media and which should be marginalized (Galtung, 1973, Wilfred, 1993; Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005; Saleem and Hannan, 2014; Rasul, 2010; Reese & Lewis, 2009; Rahman, 2007; Siraj, 2012).

Pakistan not only abetted US in her invasion in Afghanistan. But also, Pakistan presented her logistics, intelligence and military sustenance against the Taliban rule and Al-Qaeda network. NATO and allied forces continuously demanded more support and labeled Pakistan as a safe haven for Al-Qaeda network and the Taliban. USA started operations against Pakistan (e.g. drones, attack at Pakistan military troops, Osama assassination etc.) since 2004 till date. The current study intentions to expose how the themes and patterns selected by widely read international news-magazines about US operations in Pakistan from June 2004 to December 2011.

## **Methodology**

Thematic analysis is the method of current study that is one of the qualitative analysis methods for categorizing, examining and projecting themes and concepts within data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). It minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail. However, it also

often goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic (Boyatzis as cited in Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.06).

For qualitative thematic analysis all the news items of *The Economist*, *The Herald* and *Time* that discuss US operations in Pakistan from June 2004 to December 2011 are chosen. The sample of the thematic analysis is selected through purposive sampling and includes all the news items of these international news-magazines that are reporting US operations in Pakistan. 113 news items are selected for Thematic analysis. The vital questions explored in the research include the followings:

1.How are selected international news-magazines adopted prominent themes about the US operations in Pakistan from June 2004 to December 2011?

2. Whether Pakistani news-magazine adopted its own independent themes on the selected issue?

In order to explore the findings of the above-mentioned queries, news items of selected news-magazines related to these issues are under study. Following sorts for thematic analysis are devised:

- All news items which reported US operations in Pakistan
- All news items which related to Taliban network, Al-Qaeda members and Osama bin Laden.
- News items which related to drone attack, physical and collateral damages in response of it.
- All news items which reported US and international response about US operations in Pakistan.

- All news items which reported the role of Pakistani army and ISI regarding US hunt for Taliban alleged hideout in Pakistan as well as in Afghanistan.

The qualitative analysis in this work focused how international reports marginalized certain facets and legitimized few aspects intentionally. The frequently selected slant and themes could make an overall cognition and thinking patterns in readers.

### **Thematic Analysis of coverage**

Themes are basic and often frequently used approaches or ideas explored in a piece of writing. Following are very prominent themes in leading news-magazines at the selected issue:

**Pakistan as front-line ally:** The outstanding words, phrases, adjectives and sentences that appeared in *The Economist*, *The Herald* and *Time* from June 2004-December 2011 that reflected that Pakistan is US front-line ally for example “the Pakistani President "should be treated as the leader of a country who vitally needs our support and whose success is vitally related to American interests” (Abramowitz, et al., 2004), “Musharaf decision to support U.S in her military operations may get tougher yet” (McGirk, 2002). “Pakistan has been an irreplaceable American partner” (The man in, 2004, p. 27). “The White House is convinced that Pakistan's military is dead serious about finding Bin Laden and can be counted on to turn him over to US authorities if he is captured,” (deadly Hunt, 2002). “An American military operation, especially if it went wrong, could weaken the Pakistani leader's already frayed ties to the area” (McGirk, 2002), “Pakistani leaders like army Chief of Staff General Ashfaq Kayani seem to have concluded that using drones to kill terrorists in FATA is generally a good thing” (Ghosh, Thompson, 2009). “Its (Pakistan) airspace and logistical support were essential for the war against the Taliban in Afghanistan in late 2001” (The man in, 2004, p. 27).

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*The Economist* and *Time* articles were leaning towards their national interest and frequently mentioned Pakistan position as front-line ally.

**Pakistan double-standards:** The news items of *The Economist* and *Time* repeatedly treated Pakistan negatively, their news stories marginalized Pakistan's sacrifices for US invasion of Afghanistan "Afghanistan security officials claimed that Pakistan tolerated even encouraged Taliban militancy". Western diplomat comments that "Pakistani government is nostalgic to Taliban". "Pakistani president helped to capture Osama bin Laden but he is not serious enough to root out Taliban and their friends Al-Qaeda members" (McGirk & Ware, 2004). "Pakistan--despite its close alliance with George W. Bush Administration is playing something of a double game" ("on the town", 2004). Pakistani army allowed the networks to flourish for a while, because they supported the Afghan Taliban, ISI allies. But in 2009, pressed by America, it pushed them out of their strongholds of Swat and South Waziristan ("things fall apart", 2011, p.44).

The partisan and biasness of American and Britain based news-magazines towards Pakistan were reflected in their writings: "Intelligence circles do not rule out the possibility of US air strikes in Waziristan if Government fails to control cross-border movement of militants" (Amir, 2006, pp.53-56).

Pakistan may not have entirely given up on the Taliban. Foreign observers believe that some elements of Pakistan's leadership, especially in the military Inter-services Intelligence agency, are pressing for the sacrifice of Mullah Omar in order to save friendly "moderates" among his colleagues, pro-Taliban sentiment is likely to be reinforced by the rise of favour of the Northern Alliance, which Pakistan regards as a

tool of threatening foreign powers, especially Russia and Iran (After the Taliban, 2001, p.17).

**Legitimization of US operations in Pakistan:** impugning the Pakistani government and army to place US wanted organizations in Pakistani soul, identification with malevolent were the chief themes of American and Britain news-magazines. *The Economist* invoked the impression that the Al-Qaeda penetrated in Pakistan for example: “As far as Al-Qaeda is concerned, there are reasons plenty of its operative to make a beeline for Pakistan. Despite the relentless FBI-led manhunt raging across the length and breadth of Pakistan, they are unlikely to find a better place to set up base” (“Ground Zero”, 2004, pp, 14-15), “Some U.S. commanders think it is only a matter of time before the U.S. has to launch its own combat missions inside Pakistan” (“how al-Qaeda got back on the attack”, 2002), zero-sum orientation and pro-American operations in Pakistan were evident in the news items, “The journalist claimed that the Pro-Taliban militants opened recruitment centers in Wana Bazaar” (Abbas, 2006, pp. 50-53). US focused more attention at Pakistan than Afghanistan for targeted missile operations in tribal areas of Pakistan. “Obama not only targeted Al-Qaeda members hide out in Pakistan-Afghan border area but also Pakistani Taliban in the region. Twelve people reportedly killed in a missile fired by U.S. forces in Pakistan at 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2009” (“More troops and”, 2009). “pilotless drones are redefining warfare. But they could be doing more harm than good”, (Thompson, 2009).

*The Economist* and *Time* were frequently blaming Pakistan to support Al-Qaeda and Taliban members, for example: “Al-Qaeda operatives hiding in Pakistan”(“Terror of allies”, 2004), “Worse still, half-backed crackdowns and vociferous reactions from the religious lobby terming these crackdowns as foreign induced rather than home grown have tended to aggravate its intensity”(“Operation eye wash”, 2005), “The journalist claims that the pro-Taliban militants

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have opened up recruitment centers in Wana Bazaar”(“Enduring failure”, 2006) , “some of the highest ranking Taliban, many of whom in Pakistani and Americans list of wanted, have been moving in and out of these areas with apparent ease”(“Stage of siege”, 2006), “The bottom line is that the Taliban can do what they want in the tribal areas because the [Pakistani] army is not going to come after them” (“The Truth About”, 2007), “the politics of Pakistan are Byzantine and double-dealing in ways no spy novelist could conjure” (Halperin, 2005, p. 44), “Elements in the Pakistani military have long viewed militants and extremists as useful proxies” (Baker, 2011). “Pakistan is also one of U.S biggest worries”, “as an American ally, Pakistan is an embarrassment” (The man in the middle, 2004), “Taliban came from their safe heavens, border villages of Pakistan and killed aid workers and coalition forces” (Stewart, 2008). “If Taliban Chief Mullah Omer found hiding in the country, U.S. will hold unilateral attack at Pakistan” (Farooq, 2011, p.44). “Unilateral operation in Pakistan without her sanction can be planned by U.S” (Iraq and Afghanistan, 2008). “As far as, Al-Qaeda is concerned there are reasons a plenty for its operatives to make a bee line for Pakistan” (Ground Zero, 2004, p.14). “Americans say they act alone in Pakistan because the ISI fails to co-operate” (stuck with you, 2011, p.46). “Its (Pakistan’s) security forces cannot be trusted” (Single or quits, 2011, p.15). “Al-Qaeda enjoyed shelter in Pakistan” (McCain, 2008). “Al-Qaeda is known to be recruiting and seeking allies among Pakistani militant” (An ever-shifting web, 2002). *Time* wrote that Obama said: “Taliban and Al-Qaeda enjoyed shelter in Pakistan. It’s time to strengthen local Pakistani tribes to fight with terrorists and convince them that it’s their war also’. He uttered that unilateral action against Pakistan has become mandatory and there will be nowhere they can run and hide” (McCain, 2008). *Time* pointed out that: “it’s time to focus more on Pakistan as Taliban came from their safe heavens, border villages of Pakistan and killed aid workers and coalition forces.

Death toll of coalition forces were multiplied days by day” (Stewart, 2008). *The Economist* wrote: “Taliban has arrived in Afghanistan’s native village from Pakistan” (“the troubling”, 2010, p. 33). “Pakistan’s President Pervaiz Musharaf, whose, own regime has helped to sustain the Taliban, has sided with America against Taliban” (“Seeing the world anew”, 2001).

### **Dehumanization of Pakistan Government and army**

*The Economist* wrote that Mr. Mehsud in an interview declared that he was proud to be involved in Lahore terrorist activities. If U.S. did not stop drone strikes in South Waziristan, he would continuously lead terrorist tactics across Pakistan. This newsmagazine claimed that Pakistan army is unable to stop him. This newsmagazine wrote that “U.S. should accelerate military operations inside Pakistan and demolish the safe haven of terrorists” (“The war on”, 2009. “When the local population complains about the threats to the militants then military helicopters come there but there are asylums placed under the straight gawk of government” (“Wrong choices”, 2006, p.15).

Britain based news-magazine frequently dehumanized Pakistan army “hold its(Pakistan) nose”, “press it”:

Its (Pakistan) security forces cannot be trusted. Even so, America must hold its nose and engage with Pakistan and press it to act against the Taliban. Thanks to the "surge of 30,000 troops, which Mr. Obama reluctantly endorsed in 2009. The extra forces, under General David Petraeus, America's most successful serving commander, have helped to dampen the insurgency (“Single or quits”, 2011, p.15).

*Time* in its writings propagated that Pakistan is a fragile state and Taliban may threaten nuclear armed Pakistan:



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In 2001, there were fears that the war in Afghanistan would destabilize Pakistan. (The Pashtun ethnic group, which makes up a large part of the Taliban insurgency, straddles the border between the two countries.) Those fears are now reality; the Pakistani Taliban threatens nuclear-armed Pakistan's viability as a state even more than its cousins jeopardize Afghanistan's (Alex, 2009, pp 24-29).

*Time* and *The Economist* often blamed Pakistan that ISI and Pakistan army ignored Taliban movement in Pakistan. *Time* engraved that Pakistani army and Taliban were still friends of each other. Members of Taliban and al-Qaeda network did whatever they wanted in tribal areas of Pakistan because Pakistan army was not going to come after them. America's killing of Osama Bin Laden on May 2nd brought with it a rare chance to ease the Pakistani army's unhealthy grip on the country's domestic and foreign affairs. Bin Laden had skulked in a military town so close to the capital, Islamabad, or that Americans nipped in to kill him without meeting the least resistance— (“Humiliation of”, 2011, p.49).

*Time* charged against Pakistan that she was not serious and sincere with U.S. and coalition forces, *Time* described: “Though Pakistan is front line ally but her army and intelligence agencies are not serious to capture or kill Taliban. It’s the basic reason that Taliban remain engaged in terrorist tricks” (Gibbs, 2007). As far as, Al-Qaeda is concerned there are reasons a plenty for its operatives to make a bee line for Pakistan. Despite the relentless FBI led manhunt ranging across the length and breadth of Pakistan. They are unlikely to find a better place to set up base. Yes, we ally of U.S. in the war on terrorism but we are not about to abandon our home-grown militancy lest they are needed in Kashmir (Ground Zero, 2004, p.14).

At another point *Time* its distrust at ISI and Pakistani administration by writing: “Still, Musharaf is halfway there. After Sept.11, he earned kudos from Washington for helping catch

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more than 450 Al-Qaeda suspects. ISI despites of its many denials of helping the militants, still flexes some power over the group's chief (McGirk, 2003, p.20).

*The Economist* portrayed very biased attitude towards Pakistani intelligence services and many reports condemned ISI, by charging that: "ISI provided 1,000 motorbikes to Haqqani network to remain busy in Kabul suicide attacks and killing U.S. forces in Kabul" ("Kayani's gambit", 2010, p.81). It also mentioned: "Pakistan can no longer afford to limit its fight against extremists to the north-west. They are embedded in Punjab and links between them and government in the tribal areas are erasing the distinction between militants and government. The state is willing to tolerate and that which it is fighting ("into the heartland", 2010, p.22).

*The Herald* wrote that many Taliban leaders and high-profile Al-Qaeda members moved easily in Pakistan border areas (Aamir and Mughal, 2006).

*The Economist* highly supported 'U.S. military operations in Pakistan' by saying that Al-Qaeda and Taliban are living in "South Waziristan safe heaven" but Pakistan is reluctant to start full scale operations against them. "U.S. forces time and again to assault them to get rid of them" ("Friends like", 2008).

The use of drones in Pakistani tribal areas were considered as preferable option in *The Economist* for killing Taliban and Al-Qaeda members by narrating that there is an inclination to conclude that: "little has been attained in the past ten years apart from the killing of Osama Bin Laden (in Pakistan) and the restraint of al-Qaeda", "it's because of U.S. drone attacks in Pakistan" ("On the brink", 2010, p.32).

*The Economist* was highly critical about the role played by Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) of Pakistan during US operations in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. This newsmagazine blamed ISI, "covert support to Taliban", "playing double game", enjoy the status of 'invisible soldiers'.

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This newsmagazine also wrote about Asif Ali Zardari, “dodgy past”, “not the master of hunt” (both sides against-, 2008). This newsmagazine also maintained: “According to official figures Pakistani military killed 300 Taliban in Waziristan. Against Taliban; however, Pakistan is playing a murkier sort of game” (“Taliban welcome”, 2005, p. 30).

*The Economist* negatively presented Pakistan armed forces image as “the Americans say they act alone in Pakistan because the ISI fails to co-operate” (“stuck with you”, 2011, p.46). *The Economist* supportively published U.S. president’s request as Mr. Obama offered Pakistan that he would triple non-military aid to Pakistan whereas demanded ‘do more’ to control Pakistan-Afghan border. If government does not respond positively than he (Mr. Obama) was recurring an earlier threat to do unilateral operation in Pakistan without her sanctions (“Iraq and Afghanistan”, 2008).

America is thought to have embroiled Pakistan in military operations which has caused the surge in terrorism; or because many Pakistanis, including senior army officers, genuinely believe that bombardment are being carried out by America in order to destabilize Pakistan, after which it will grab its nuclear weapons.

*The Herald* critically addressed Pakistan’s foreign office’s stance at Afghanistan issues and also reflected its displeased tone about Taliban and its alleged link with Kashmir cause under the umbrella of intelligence agencies. ISI has many ‘rouge officers’ that inclined towards the jihad philosophy. *The Herald* further vitally pinned point Pakistan military relationship with Jihadi organizations. “Pakistan military establishment is left with little choice but to concede that its 27 years old jihad has come to an end” (Khan, 2001). This newsmagazine focused critically at Pakistan Afghan policy and actively participated in political debate and Pakistan’s role as ‘front line state’:

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Indeed, it's very tough Pakistan to choose when President George Bush declared, 'others in the region with us or against us. Pakistan may think about it and take some other option. As Taliban were not willing to hand over Osama Bin Laden to U.S. Pakistan can manage to convince Taliban with the help of Saudi Arabia for some alternative option instead of facing U.S. enmity. Pakistan intelligent agencies may explore Osama hideout and capture him to avoid 'U.S. military operation in Afghanistan', poorest country of the world. Though Pakistan repeatedly condemns U.S. air strikes at Afghanistan but provide her logistic support, intelligence services and air bases. Pakistan Afghan policy filled with holes, President Musharaf said to U.S., Northern Alliance in Afghanistan administration is unacceptable for Pakistan as their rigid anti-Pakistan and pro-India tilt that hurt Pakistan's interest in the region. (Bakhtiar, 2002, p.43).

*The Herald* bluntly criticized President decision to play her act as "U.S. ally".

Pakistan's foreign policy regarding 'U.S. military operations in Pakistan' is blur as it neither fully admitted that these military operations/ drones are being planned with the consent of ISI and Pakistani government nor appropriately denied such allegations against them. One of the U.S. observer said if Pakistan is not taking full responsibility to clean up area with Taliban and Al-Qaeda member then U.S. drone strikes would continue to hit the targets. Many Pakistani politicians insisted that drone attacks were planned after the consent of Pakistani military and intelligence authorities. Whereas Government said it's unjustified.

On the issue of U.S. operation against Osama in Pakistan, *The Herald* critically evaluated the lack of civil pressure on Pakistani intelligences agencies to investigate about the unusual house behind the cabbage farm where Osama lived, their failure in detecting Al-Qaeda chief (Farooq, 2011, p. 44).

The Pakistani newsmagazine appreciated Pakistan's bold reaction when U.S. indicted ISI for having link with Haqqani network just after an assault at U.S. embassy in Kabul. U.S. military high profile officers blamed that Pakistan provided safe heaven to terrorist's groups and Pakistan was involve in proxy wars in Afghanistan against U.S. led coalition forces. But Pakistan swiftly denied the charges and countered the charges by saying that these groups were nourished by U.S. herself and used in proxy war against USSR. Both military and political high profiles arranged meeting to consider the consequences of split between Pakistan and U.S. (Abbas, Javaid and Khan, 2011, p.24).

### **Findings and Conclusion**

The Qualitative analysis directed that geo-political status, sole Muslim country with nuclear power and destabilized political and economic situations are the factors that build Pakistan as a confused state in its foreign policies regarding her relationship with the United States and other developed countries. Pakistan played a major part in protecting U.S. interest in South Asia during USSR invasion in Afghanistan but in return faced cold attitude of sole super power U.S. Pakistan enjoyed good relationship with Taliban regime after severe struggle but after 1998 U.S. again wanted to use Pakistan against Taliban for her own interest but Pakistan refused. Though at 9/11, Bush asked Musharaf 'with us or with terrorist' Pakistan, though reluctantly but become a front-line state and toed U.S. policy in the region.

U.S. deadly air strike in Bajaur Agency to hit suspected Taliban accelerates restlessness and anger in tribes. But Pakistan took the sole responsibility of air strikes. Whereas peace negotiations are in process between Pakistan and Taliban. Pakistani forces released many Taliban prisoners as a good will gesture, so the timing of attack confused the local people. The peace dialogue also postponed (Amir, 2006, p.54).

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The differences between Pakistani strategies and U.S. led coalition forces about Taliban and Al-Qaeda members widened and misunderstanding multiplied between two countries. Many in Pakistan believe NATO forces backing northern alliance and some Al-Qaeda members for attacks at chitral scouts. Pakistani political leaders and military officers said that it was not possible to attack from Afghanistan without any NATO logistic support. Locals blamed the invaders, wore Afghan Army Uniform and NATO planes movement observed unusual during the attack (Dastageer, 2011, p.29). *The Herald* mentioned that for successful operations against Al-Qaeda members, Afghan Taliban and Pakistani Taliban, all parties Pakistan, Afghanistan and U.S. should trust on each other (Siddiqi, 2008).

Peace is as mandatory as energy. Thousands of men killed in Afghanistan and Pakistan and beyond, political and social instability has become the rule across large tactics of our much-trumpeted energy corridor. The existing discord and bloodshed should be discouraged. The first and foremost measure required is strengthening regional unity and discarding all differences for the prosperity of the region. It's the time to practice zero-sum orientation instead of win-win orientation (reversing a zero-sum game, 2011, p. 14).

*The Economist* and *Time* frequently adopted the themes of legitimization of operations, dehumanization of enemy, relate enemy with disease and sub-human creatures as well as labeled enemy as double-faced used to reinforce the masses interest that armed operations and demolishing of enemy is the best option. Whereas, *The Herald* repeatedly highlighted the miseries of civilians due to operation. It also criticized its government to become front line ally of US. Media is an influential gadget that publicizes information and influenced the views of people. Media should play its role to diffuse the tension and conflict by playing its role as mediator to

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arrange meetings for all groups involved in conflict. Media should act as a catalyst to make the world safer place to live.

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## **About the Author (s)**

\* **Dr. Nasim Ishaq** is an Assistant Professor with Govt. Fatima Jinnah College for Women,  
Lahore, Pakistan.

\*\* **Dr. Noshina Saleem** is an Assistant Professor with the Institute of Communication Studies,  
University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan.