

Over Reliance of Pakistani English Press on Foreign News Wires; a quantitative content analysis of one week coverage of three English dailies of Pakistan

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to find out the percentage of extensive presence of news content taken from foreign news wires in English dailies of Pakistan. The study has been conducted by analyzing international pages of three most widely read English dailies of Pakistan i.e. Dawn, The News and The Nation in terms of replication of the content from the international news wire services. It has been done through quantitative content analysis and in order to find out the extensive use of news content and percentage of similarity, a plagiarism software WCopyfind_2.7 was used. One week publications of three mostly read English newspapers, during the month of May, 2015 were taken as a sample. News stories published on the international pages were only selected. The results indicated that the stories published on international pages of three newspapers were almost similar to the original stories taken from news feed of international news wires, with very minimal contribution of original content by the most highly acclaimed newspaper organizations in the country. The consequences of this overwhelming dependence were the conveyance of only one sided interpretation of the incident, its causes and after effects.

Introduction

International flow of information is clearly one sided. Third world countries are largely dependent on international news wires for gathering news and information of the events happening all around the world. Brainy idea of interest in this inquiry is Sean McBride's report released in 1980 under the title "Many voices, one world". The report stated "negative course of control over information under the worldly concern, that hint to problem of one – way flow of information." This flow (data, substance , media programs, cultural products) is directed mostly from larger to smaller countries, from

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rich to those which are less advanced, from developed to developing countries..." (The MacBride Commission 1980, p.145)

The idea of using software WCopyfind_2.7 has been taken from Arya (2011) used in his research thesis. This paper tries to find out as to what extent Pakistani media relies on international news wires. Overreliance on foreign resources for gathering of news results in representation of only side of the picture eliminating the objectivity of news. Imbalanced flow of information has its own ramifications. News wires cover the events according to their own agendas and policies. What event should be covered and what should not be given any kind of importance; everything is decided by few news wires, such as Reuter, AP, and AFP.

Media stream studies guarantee a solid pattern of uneven and unequal stream of correspondences among nations (Nordenstreng and Varis, 1974), for instance, Boyd-Barrett, composed that " there is an overwhelming stream of traded media items from the US to, say, Asian nations, though there is just an almost no trickle of Asian media items to the US' (Boyd-Barrett, 1977: 117).

Literature Review

The media imperialism theory evolved in the 1960s & 1970s out of the dependency theory. It argues that the west, especially America, controls the information flow of world news. (Barrett ,1977). Schiller was concerned about the negative effects of media consumption. (Schiller, 1976).

Barrett (1977) conducted a study on international communication under the title of "Media Imperialism". He defined it as "the process whereby the ownership, structure, distribution or content of the media in any country are singly or together subject to substantial external pressures from the media interests of any other country or countries without proportionate reciprocation of influence by the country so affected."

According to Hafez (2007), "The transnational networking of media is too weak to strengthen the global political level. Without a pioneering political changes of course, even in the age of globalization, most of the media system in the world risk are becoming trapped in a condition of repressive 'semi-slavery' under authoritarian rule".

Arya, (2011) discussed the reliance of Indian media on international news agencies. The study discovered a large extent to

which the foreign news was prominent in Indian English dailies like, the Times of India, Hindustan Times and the Hindu. The news included in them was taken from a very limited number of news sources like Reuters and A.P. Though the extent to which these newspaper dailies were dependent on the wire services varied from newspaper to newspaper (the Times of India and Hindustan Times were more dependent on them; while the Hindu's reliance was comparatively lesser).

Media is one of the most powerful tools in today's world. The studies on dependence on foreign news agencies concluded that the media especially the newspapers are highly dependent on foreign/global news agencies. Reuters, Associated Press (AP) and Agence France-Presse (AFP) are the top three agencies of the world.

CEO Thomas Curley writes, in the Associated Press history book, *Breaking News*, "You may not know us well, or perhaps haven't even heard of us. We don't publish newspaper or run a TV or radio station; what we do is provide the news to those who are insatiable for information" (as cited in Johnston and Forde, 2010).

As effectively examined earlier, Reuters, Associated Press (AP) and Agence France-Presse (AFP) are the major three offices of the world. They manage the news stream in their domestic markets, as well as all over the world. Nearly all the developing nations are reliant on them for supply of world news. The frameworks in these news offices are exceptionally productive in news assembling and additionally presentation of new. This has given them an edge to combine their business sector positions..

Political economy hypothesis gives stronger grounds to dependence of daily papers on news wires. The dissection of patterns in the recent years have demonstrated that news offices shed columnists; include less unique investigative reporting; and look to syndicated news, advertising firms, and news organizations for an expanding measure of news substance (Mcchesney, 2003; Davies, 2008; Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2004–2008; Edwards & Newbury, 2007; Mackinnon, 2006; Reeds & Colbourne, 2000; Schiller, 1989). Political economy further recommends that this increasing reliance on news offices is a thoughtful choice of business news associations. In which little or no attention is paid to the effect that it may have on assorted news quality, Roy Greenslade (2009).(as cited in Johnston, J &Forde, S,2010).

The analysis of the Dependency Theory intends to comprehend the part of news organizations in the global appropriation of news substance. Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen (2002) examined it from an office perspective, for example, Reuters were huge in certain British settlements amid the 1930's, in advancing British exchange engages. The hypothesis advocates that pioneer countries that were included in North American industrialist venture had become dependent on western news organizations. In light of this fact, these organizations provide basic connection between developing and the developed economies, and for comparing their worthy framework.(ibid)

Earlier studies have shown that universal news is generally composed by Western news organizations. A study by Davis (2008) arguments that the discoveries by Reuters, AP, AFP and Bloomberg were and still are the real news organizations utilized by major daily papers for content and pictures. The increasing trend of utilization of international news offices is straightforwardly joined with the money related circumstances of daily paper organizations. The supply of news from international news organizations releases them of their need to contact outside reporters. Despite the fact that it is simpler and less expensive for these daily papers to print outside news, it additionally implies that the force of the Western news offices has gotten to be stronger and persuasive. Furthermore, the news which was introduced appeared to be from the West and was mostly about the West with numerous parts of the world explicitly overlooked.

Theoretical framework

Dependency theory

Developing nations are considered to be dependent upon the West for international news gathering. In turn, this dependency for acquisition of news is said to have led to the adoption of Western news values and subsequent cultural imperialism in the South Asia and South East Asia. News dependency is said to be neocolonial in that information flows through "vertical" channels (from North to South) and within distinct spheres of communication hegemony (Meyer,1989).Pakistan being a developing nation lacks financial and economic resources to support its expenses needed for economic independence and exercise of free will.

We need to examine the perennial problems of Pakistan's economic dependence on the foreign aid. Pakistan is faced with the harsh reality i.e., if the civilian governments have to continue working, ongoing public sector policies and projects are to continue,

civil and armed forces are to be paid salaries and the weapons are to be maintained then foreign aid is an urgent necessity at present.

In the absence of strong economic foundations and lack of infrastructure for independent news gathering at the international level, dependence on foreign news sources remains the only option left. The situation can be further understood by the fact that Pakistan does not own a single international news agency. Hence, resulting in an over dependence on global news agencies for international news and thereby accepting their version of the news stories.

Methodology

Quantitative Content analysis has been used. In order to analyze the percentage of dependency detection software WCopyfind_2.7 was selected to perform the comparison between the publications' stories of the newspaper and the agencies' news. One week coverage of three widely read newspapers of Pakistan (The News, The Nation, Daily Dawn) was taken. Stories published on international, world and foreign pages of these newspapers were selected from their online resources and original news stories were gathered from the news feed of news wires. The sample size was one week that started from 09/05/15 to 15/05/15. Unit of analysis was news stories which were selected randomly. Total number of stories selected was 30, which were equally distributed among three newspapers.

Hypothesis

It is stated that Pakistani English press completely rely on international newswires and replicates the original reports of news wires.

Research question

- What is the percentage of replication of stories in Pakistani Newspapers?
- Which newspaper amongst the three has greater percentage of similarity?

Percentage of Similarity of news in daily Dawn 15/05/15-09/05/15

No	News	Date	News wire	Similarity	Total
1	Three Baltic nations seek permanent presence of NATO troops	15/05/15	Reuter	100%	100%

2	Copies of famous artworks replace ads on Tehran billboards	14/05/15	AP	75%	100%
3	Vatican recognizes state of Palestine in new treaty	14/05/15	AP	87%	100%
4	India learns to 'fail fast' as tech start-up culture takes root	13/05/15	Reuter	84%	100%
5	A look at nations involved in Saudi-led air strikes on Yemen	12/05/15	AP	89%	100%
6	Macedonian police raid town's Albanian quarter; 22 killed	11/05/15	Reuter	100%	100%
7	Rebels storm besieged regime loyalists in Syria	11/05/15	AFP	84%	100%
8	China negotiating with Djibouti for military base	10/05/15	Reuter	93%	100%
9	Turkish PM denies plan to intervene in Syria	10/05/15	AFP	78%	100%
10	Flights to besieged Afghan city cancelled as Taliban, army clash	9/05/15	AFP	90%	100%
				88.0%	100%

Percentage of Similarity of news in daily Dawn 15/05/15-09/05/15

Interpretation

The table and the graph represents near complete replication of news content which is 88% over all from the original stories taken from news feed of international news agencies. Table also indicates that Daily Dawn equally rely on three news agencies from gathering of news stories that are Reuter, AP & AFP.

Percentage of Similarity of news in The News 15/05/15-09/05/15

No	News	Date	News wire	Similarity	Total
1	US, Gulf States to deepen military ties: White House	15/05/15	AFP	100%	100%
2	Burundi president ousted, says army	14/05/15	AP	75%	100%
3	Hundreds of Russian soldiers killed in Ukraine	13/05/15	AFP	87%	100%
4	Germany gives huge amount of phone, text data to US	13/05/15	AFP	78%	100%
5	Cameron unveils new cabinet	12/05/15	AFP	94%	100%
6	Philippines, Japan to hold naval exercise	11/05/15	AP	86%	100%
7	Syrian troops battle to free trapped forces	10/05/15	AFP	91%	100%
8	China pursuing huge South China Sea land reclamation	10/05/15	AFP	78%	100%
9	Thailand calls for Malaysia, Myanmar help in halting trafficking	9/05/15	AFP	100%	100%
10	Turkey denies 'new deal' with S Arabia	9/05/15	AFP	89%	100%
				87.8%	100%

Percentage of Similarity of news in The News

Interpretation

The results of The News are also not very different. It represents 88% similarity of content in its news stories of international news pages. Which means that The News also replicates stories with the same ratio as of Dawn? But the main difference between the two newspapers is that Dawn relies on three news wires whereas The News only relies on two news wires. Not a single news story in The News had been taken from Reuter.

Percentage of Similarity of news in The Nation 15/05/15-09/05/15

NO	News	Date	News wire	similarity	Total
1	Indonesia urged to stop military 'virginity tests'	15/05/15	AFP	88%	100%
2	Aid flows in Yemen as ceasefire takes hold	14/05/15	AFP	100%	100%
3	France's Hollande meets Fidel Castro and urges end to Cuba embargo	13/05/15	AFP	86%	100%
4	Court acquits Jayalalithaa in graft case	12/05/15	Reuter	86%	100%
5	Kerry, Putin to meet in Sochi to discuss Iran, Syria, Ukraine	12/05/15	Reuter	75%	100%
6	Michelle Obama 'knocked back' by race perceptions	12/05/15	AFP	88%	100%
7	Castro at Vatican thanks pope for mediating thaw with US	11/05/15	AFP	93%	100%
8	Saudi-led coalition launches wave of air strikes on Yemen	10/05/15	AFP/REUTER	65%	100%
9	Russia stages huge military parade	10/05/15	REUTER	81%	100%
10	34 dead in IS assault on east Syria city	9/05/15	AFP	85%	100%
				84.7%	100%

Percentage of Similarity of news in The Nation 15/05/15-09/05/15

Interpretation

The similarity percentage is little bit low in the case of The Nation. Although it is 84% which is also near to complete replication but it is lower than Dawn & The News

Conclusion

The results proved the hypothesis that the selected three Pakistani English newspapers completely rely on foreign news wires for gathering of news contents published on their international pages and they replicate the news stories to a great extent. There is more or less no difference of copied content among the three newspapers. While using WCopyfind_2.7 which compares original and copied news stories side by side, the researcher found out that the material which is not copied from the original resources are just the minor details. The overreliance and replication of news stories creates a debate of imbalanced information flow, one sided news flow and to a large extent gives rise to the theory of media imperialism. Media imperialism has its ramifications simply from biased coverage to using news wires as propaganda tool. The top newspapers in Pakistan had their dependency to this high level due to various reasons like lack of financial resources, lack of competent manpower and owing to lack of access to the places of coverage. The press in Pakistan has constraints and limitations like vested interests and corruption as well as political motives and financial gains which hinder in the independence and free status of the press.

Other reason for depending on global media and news agencies like AFP, Reuter, AP, Los Angeles Times and Guardian news service, is that from the beginning, we as nation, lacked objectivity in our own activities. The same is the case for media, no clear vision and mission statements or standards operating procedures have been defined by any of the newspaper and the result is that they lack orientation and objectivity

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