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The Role of Media in Shaping Pakistan's Foreign Policy



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Abstract: *This paper examines the relations between foreign policy and the media, with a special emphasis on Pakistan. The study looks at how media coverage affects Pakistan's foreign policy. It examines how the media shapes public opinion, informs legislators, and serves as a forum for policymaking. The study intends to investigate how Pakistani foreign policy is shaped by modern media comprehending larger contexts related to international relations. It makes the argument that more media coverage of foreign affairs affects public opinion, which in turn affects actions made by the government. According to the current study, Pakistan's varied media environment encourages thoughtful discussions on foreign policy, which in turn influences diplomatic tactics both at home and abroad. It conducts in-depth interviews with media professionals and politicians using a qualitative methodology to learn about their opinions on the complex interaction between foreign policy rhetoric and media coverage.*

Key Words: Foreign Policy, Global dynamics, Policymakers, Media coverage, Diplomatic Strategies

Introduction

Within the field of international relations, academics and decision-makers have paid close attention to the media's ability to shape and inform national foreign policy decisions. Through the media, in all of its forms, governments can effectively express their foreign policy goals, sway public opinion, and interact with audiences around the world. This essay explores the complex connection between foreign policy and the media, concentrating on Pakistan in particular. Examined include the media's influence on public opinion, how Pakistan's foreign policy is shaped, and the ramifications for regional and global dynamics. According to Hallin and Mancini (2004), the media is essential for distributing information and influencing public opinion on matters of foreign policy. The significance of media in shaping the discourse surrounding foreign policy in Pakistan, a nation with a thriving media landscape that includes print, radio, television, and internet platforms, cannot be overstated. The Pakistani media landscape offers a forum for a

variety of viewpoints and narratives on global affairs due to its wide range of media channels that cater to various demographic segments (Khan, 2015).

Diplomacy and foreign policy are inextricably interwoven. The principal means by which states communicate with each other, enabling them to have regular and complex relations" is one of the various definitions of diplomacy (Berridge and James, 2003). The emergence of diplomacy as a discipline has enthralled academics, inspiring them to investigate diplomacy from a variety of angles, including relationships between governments and individuals. Public diplomacy, a modern branch of diplomacy that deals with public engagement, seeks to link diplomatic objectives to public interests and communicate foreign policy concerns in order to win the people's comprehension and support (Snow, 2020).

The goal of the current paper is to present a thorough analysis of how modern media affects the formulation and application of foreign policy. A three-dimensional structural method will be used to conduct this research, taking into account the dynamic interactions between the individual, state, and systemic levels. With this method, the influence of media on foreign policy decision-making processes may be understood comprehensively. The function of the media will be examined from two different angles within this analytical framework. First, the role of the media as a major source of information for formulating and implementing foreign policy strategies will be investigated. This viewpoint recognises the significant role the media plays in influencing public opinion, public discourse, and policymakers' awareness of both domestic and global concerns (Srivastava, 2009, p. 3).

Second, the media will be perceived as a setting that influences the process of forming policies as a whole Boumans, (D., Müller, H., & Sauer, S. 2023). When the media covers mega infrastructural and economic development projects it influences economic policy (Qusien, R., & Robbins, D. 2022). In this situation, the media serves as a forum for the public, specialists, government representatives, and diplomats to communicate and have conversations about foreign policy issues. The foreign policy agenda and priorities are shaped by media coverage, discussion, and analysis, which also helps to shape the narrative surrounding these topics (Srivastava, 2009, p. 3). It is crucial to have a firm grasp of the larger framework in which states function and interact within the international system before digging into the analysis of media effects on foreign policy. This entails taking into account elements that influence how governments behave and make decisions in the international sphere, such as power dynamics, international conventions, alliances, and geopolitical concerns.

Furthermore, establishing the parameters of the analysis requires defining foreign policy. A state's strategy, goals, and actions for interacting with other states and international entities are collectively referred to as its foreign policy. In order to further national interests, uphold security, and advance values internationally, it combines diplomatic, economic, military, and cultural components.

Foreign policy and the media have a complicated and dynamic connection. According to Livingston and Eachus (1995), governments frequently use media outlets to convey their foreign policy goals and enlist the public's support for their programmes. This suggests that officials use the media as a vital tool to communicate the goals of their foreign policy. It is often acknowledged that the media shapes the conversation surrounding foreign policy. It is asserted that public opinions and attitudes towards foreign affairs can be greatly influenced by media coverage, which in turn can affect the public's support or disapproval of governmental initiatives. Furthermore, by

presenting situations in specific ways and emphasising particular facets of international relations, media coverage of foreign events can affect the decisions made by policymakers (O'Neill, 2009). Moreover, there is a reciprocal relationship between foreign policy and the media. According to Nacos (2001), media coverage can also affect how governments make decisions by influencing public opinion and putting pressure on decision-makers to act in response to alleged threats or crises. In this sense, the creation and execution of foreign policy can be influenced by media coverage.

It's common knowledge that the media influences the discourse on foreign policy. Mass Media coverage has a significant impact on popular opinions and attitudes about foreign affairs, which in turn affects the public's support or disapproval of governmental initiatives (Schäfer-Hock, C., & Hagen, L. M. 2022). Moreover, media coverage of foreign events can influence policymakers' decisions by highlighting key aspects of international relations and presenting situations in particular ways (O'Neill, 2009; Nawaz, F., & Yousaf, M. 2023). Gilboa's (2005) viewpoint is consistent with the larger body of academic literature regarding the media's impact on public opinion formation and policy decisions. Scholars like Entman (2004), for example, have emphasised the media's agenda-setting power, which affects not just what subjects get attention but also how the public frames and interprets these issues. This framing effect has the power to shape public opinion, which in turn shapes how legislators view the goals and preferences of the general public.

Furthermore, the idea of the "CNN effect," which Robinson (2002) explored, highlights the connection between foreign policy and media coverage. The phenomenon known as the "CNN effect" describes how widespread media coverage of humanitarian crises or wars can put pressure on governments to change their foreign policy positions or intervene as a result of public demand. This demonstrates the direct impact that media representations of global affairs can have on the development and implementation of foreign policy.

Foreign policy strategies are significantly shaped by the interplay between public mood and media coverage, according to Gilboa (2005). This emphasises how crucial it is to comprehend how public perceptions and media narratives can affect the choices made by decision-makers in the field of foreign affairs. Because Pakistan has a unique geopolitical position and a wide range of security challenges, the media plays a critical role in establishing foreign policy narratives in the country. The media environment in Pakistan is diverse, reflecting a broad spectrum of social and political viewpoints. Nisbet and Stohl (2012) draw attention to the diversity of Pakistani media, highlighting the different ideological and ethnic perspectives that are represented by the nation's media outlets. The complicated cultural and political dynamics in Pakistan, where various groups compete for representation and power, are reflected in this diversity.

It is impossible to overstate the impact of the media on Pakistan's foreign policy choices. Through their critical role in influencing public opinion and perceptions about global affairs, media outlets indirectly influence decision-makers. Media organisations have the power to shape public discourse on international relations issues by promoting certain narratives and agendas while marginalising others through their reporting, analysis, and commentary.

Furthermore, the media's impact goes beyond local politics to how other countries view Pakistan. In order to comprehend Pakistan's stance on numerous regional and international issues, foreign governments, officials, and observers frequently rely on media coverage. As a result, Pakistan's foreign policy options and actions may be impacted by media portrayals that influence how the international community views and interacts with Pakistan.

Gaining an understanding of the media's impact on Pakistan's foreign policy is essential to comprehending the larger dynamics of international relations and regional politics. Scholars and analysts can learn more about the underlying motives and factors influencing Pakistan's foreign policy decisions by examining media discourse and how it interacts with policymaking processes. Developing effective strategies for interacting with Pakistan and solving common regional and global concerns requires a detailed understanding of this country.

Because Pakistan's media landscape is diversified and reflects the nation's complex sociological and political dynamics, the media plays a vital influence in crafting foreign policy narratives in Pakistan. Understanding the interactions between the media, public opinion, and foreign policy decision-making processes is crucial since media impact extends beyond internal politics to foreign perceptions of Pakistan (Nisbet & Stohl, [2012](#)).

Research Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: The public's opinions and attitudes towards international relations will change in tandem with increased media coverage of foreign policy issues in Pakistan, impacting the government's ability to formulate and carry out foreign policy decisions.

Hypothesis 2: Pakistan's media environment presents a variety of opinions and narratives that will impact the country's diplomatic policies and interactions on regional and global scales, contributing to a complex foreign policy discourse.

Literature Review

Many academics and thinkers have defined foreign policy, each with their own perspective. In general, foreign policy describes how the central governments of independent states interact with the international community and one another in order to accomplish a variety of aims and purposes (Jaiswal, [2016](#), p.2). It is usually designed to support, defend, and enhance a nation's security, economic well-being, and autonomous worldwide reputation.

Robert Jackson and Georg Sorensen (2013, p. 252) define foreign policy as a nation-state's administration of its exterior interactions and activities, as opposed to its internal policy. National governments undertake international relations with each other, with international organisations, and with non-governmental actors through the formation of goals, strategies, measurements, methodologies, guidelines, directives, understandings, agreements, and other procedures.

According to Schleicher, cited by Malhotra ([2014](#), p. 156), foreign policy refers to the deeds and words done by public servants with the intention of influencing the behaviour of people outside the borders of their own state. Broadly speaking, a state's goals, strategies, and actions with regard to its external ties are included in its foreign policy.

Thapa ([2014](#)) quotes Padelford and Lincoln as defining foreign policy as the essential component in the process by which a state converts its generally defined goals and interests into specific plans of action to accomplish those goals and protect its interests. According to Rodee, cited by Dahal (2009:21), foreign policy is the creation and application of a set of guidelines that influence a state's conduct patterns when it negotiates with other governments to safeguard or further its essential interests.

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The network and content of Australia, Belgium, New Zealand, and Switzerland (Sevin and Ingenhoff, 2018) as well as the use of digital technology by the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) to protect Indonesian citizens abroad (Dharossa and Rezasyah, 2020) and to conduct digital public relations (Nugraha and Irwansyah, 2022) are examples of empirical case studies of media for diplomacy that have previously been the subject of similar academic research. Furthermore, a second research on Indonesia's involvement specifically, through the Regional Conference on Digital Diplomacy has been released. According to this study, Indonesia has made an effort to use the Regional Conference on Digital Diplomacy to carry out digital diplomacy. Furthermore, according to Listyowati, Damayanti, and Dewi (2022), this conference is in line with both the application of technology and the contribution of Indonesia's foreign policy.

It is impossible to overstate the impact of the media on Pakistan's foreign policy choices. Through their critical role in influencing public opinion and perceptions about global affairs, media outlets indirectly influence decision-makers. Media organisations have the power to shape public discourse on international relations issues by promoting certain narratives and agendas while marginalising others through their reporting, analysis, and commentary.

Furthermore, the media's impact goes beyond local politics to how other countries view Pakistan. In order to comprehend Pakistan's stance on numerous regional and international issues, foreign governments, officials, and observers frequently rely on media coverage. As a result, Pakistan's foreign policy options and actions may be impacted by media portrayals that influence how the international community views and interacts with Pakistan.

Gaining an understanding of the media's impact on Pakistan's foreign policy is essential to comprehending the larger dynamics of international relations and regional politics. Scholars and analysts can learn more about the underlying motives and factors influencing Pakistan's foreign policy decisions by examining media discourse and how it interacts with policymaking processes. Developing effective strategies for interacting with Pakistan and solving common regional and global concerns requires a detailed understanding of this country.

Because Pakistan's media landscape is diversified and reflects the nation's complex sociological and political dynamics, the media plays a vital influence in crafting foreign policy narratives in Pakistan. Understanding the interactions between the media, public opinion, and foreign policy decision-making processes is crucial since media impact extends beyond internal politics to foreign perceptions of Pakistan (Nisbet & Stohl, 2012).

A significant strategic bilateral in Asian geopolitics is that between China and Pakistan. Within the current superpower hierarchy, China is the most powerful and influential developed nation as well as a formidable communist force. Since gaining its independence in 1947, Pakistan has supported the US entering its bloc. On October 20, 1947, nearly two months after gaining its independence, diplomatic ties were established between the two countries. Since then, Pakistan has received regular military and economic support from the United States, which has served as the main foundation for the two nations' relationship. Due to precarious socioeconomic conditions

in the early years of its independence in 1950, Pakistan searched for an ally or confederate to protect it from Indian supremacy, which was more stable both militarily and economically (Niazi 2006, p. 45).

As a sponsor state, the US exhibited a rather uneasy approach towards Pakistan and was hesitant to reveal its commitments or to pinpoint Pakistan's objectives with regard to India, which incited the masses of Pakistanis to become suspicious of dishonesty. Pakistan, a country that shares borders with other states, would naturally have allies. Policymakers and the media recognised this and moved to build diplomatic ties with the People's Republic of China.

China and Pakistan have strong ties that date back to China's independence since Pakistan has consistently supported China and shown resilience over many years. In response, Pakistan has always been appreciated by the Chinese leadership, who have also consistently backed Pakistan on a variety of important issues. Pakistan A complex history of border disputes, including military clashes between China and India at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and between India and Pakistan at the Line of Control, exists between the two countries. LOC, following the 1965 war between India and Pakistan, the US has continued to show support and allied behaviour towards India, which has encouraged Pakistan and China to carefully consider moving closer together in order to provide each other with geopolitical assistance.

China and Pakistan have long-standing, firmly established, and mutually reliant relationships. Having become independent in less than two years, their historical ties go back several decades, as they are neighbours. China and Pakistan have built a partnership based on confidence and trust since their founding. Mutual interest recognition has been a defining characteristic of their relationship. Pakistan has continuously backed China both domestically and internationally, especially when it comes to matters pertaining to China's sovereignty, such as the Xinjiang and Tibet disputes, among other things. On the other hand, Pakistan's assistance has always been valued by China's leadership, especially during the 1970s when China-US relations were normalised. As a result, Pakistan made a major contribution to reducing tensions and promoting diplomatic ties by helping to close the divide between the West and the US (IPRI fact file, [2011](#)).

According to Baum and Potter ([2008](#)), the news media has a significant influence on almost every aspect of how public opinion and foreign policy interact. Therefore, public opinion, elite preferences, and the mass media as unified yet strategic actors, each driven by its own set of incentives and preferences, must be methodically included in any comprehensive study that aims to integrate the various strands of literature on the relationship between public opinion and foreign policy. Academics are still debating the reasons behind and consequences of popular support for foreign policy, especially those that include war.

This interconnected relationship must be conceptualised as follows in order to synthesise arguments from various scholarly perspectives spanning fifteen distinct literatures: "public policy influences public opinion, decision-makers influence public opinion, public opinion influences the media, public policy influences public opinion, public policy influences the media, and the media influences public policy" (Baum & Potter, [2008](#)). Building on these fundamental ideas, understanding the media's reaction to market forces is essential to understanding the intricate workings of foreign policymaking.

Research Methodology

The approach used in this study is qualitative. To learn about the opinions of participants on the interaction between foreign policy discourse and media coverage, in-depth interviews are held

with a wide range of individuals, including members of the public, policymakers, and media professionals. This approach provides an in-depth understanding of the complex processes by which the media sways public opinion and legislative decisions. Five members of the media and five legislators are chosen to take part in the interviews. The following are the themes of the currently outlined qualitative research methodology:

Exploration of Perspectives: Examining the views of the media professionals and policymakers on the connection between foreign policy rhetoric and media coverage.

Interplay between Media and Foreign Policy: Examining the dynamic relationship that exists between the creation of foreign policy and media narratives.

Mechanisms of Media Influence: Investigating the complex ways in which the media sways public opinion and affects the formulation of public policy.

Participant Diversity: Involving a broad spectrum of participants, such as media professionals and policymakers in order to record a variety of viewpoints and experiences.

Providing comprehensive explanations of the numerous and diverse ways that the media influences public opinion and the formulation of public policy within the context of the discourse on foreign policy.

Data Collection

This study's qualitative methodology offers a thorough grasp of the complicated connection between media coverage and foreign policy debate. The study explores participants' opinions on how the media affects public opinion and policymaking in the context of foreign affairs through in-depth interviews with a wide range of participants, including media professionals and policymakers. This research provides in-depth insights into the ways that media narratives influence opinions and choices pertaining to international relations by examining the complex dynamics at work. In order to ensure that a wide range of viewpoints and experiences are represented in the analysis, a total of five media professionals and five policymakers were interviewed.

The following questions were asked of the diversified participants for the collection of data:

Media Professionals

1. How do you think the media shapes the public's perception of foreign policy issues?
2. Could you give an example of a specific incident where public opinion on a foreign policy issue was influenced by media coverage?
3. What elements, in your opinion, impact how foreign policy stories are presented in the media?

Policymakers

1. What is your opinion of the connection between government decision-making and foreign policy coverage in the media?
2. How much do you think media coverage and public opinion affect the making of foreign policy decisions?
3. How do you interact with media organisations to convey official government stances on global matters?

Analysis and Discussion

Collectively, the media professionals interviewed for this study underlined how important the media is in influencing the public's perception of foreign policy matters. Providing information, analysis, and commentary on international affairs; framing and contextualising complex issues; influencing public perception through story selection and language use; and acting as a mediator between policymakers and the public are just a few of the aspects of this role that they highlighted.

Media Professional

How do you think the Media Shapes the Public's Perception of Foreign Policy Issues?

Participant 1 acknowledged potential biases and difficulties in media coverage while simultaneously expressing belief in the media's critical role in influencing the public's understanding of foreign policy. Participant 2 also underlined how important it is for the media to cover foreign policy in a variety of ways and provide knowledgeable analysis in order to shape public opinion and attitudes. Participant 3 underlined the media's ability to shape narratives and establish agendas, as well as their obligation to offer truthful and impartial reporting. Participant 4 emphasised the media's function as the main information and analysis source on matters of foreign policy, with the goal of offering thorough coverage and promoting dialogue.

Participant 5 emphasised the significance of truthful reporting and giving the audience background, acknowledging the media's ability to shape public opinion and support well-informed discussions on global issues.

Could you give an Example of a Specific Incident where Public Opinion on a Foreign Policy Issue was Influenced by Media Coverage?

Focusing on particular cases and the larger effects of media framing, the media professionals, Participants 1 through 5, offered their perspectives on how media coverage affects public opinion on foreign policy problems.

Participant 1 emphasised the impact of sensationalised headlines and biased reporting on public sentiment, highlighting how widespread media coverage of the tensions between Pakistan and India shaped public perceptions and attitudes towards the government's handling of the situation.

Participant 2 reported multiple incidents where public opinion on foreign policy matters was greatly impacted by media coverage, particularly when it came to political unrest and human rights abuses in the area. While acknowledging that media framing has the power to affect viewer interpretation, they also agreed that the media shapes public conversation.

Participant 3 gave an example of how a diplomatic situation between Pakistan and a neighbouring country was covered extensively by the media, showing how several viewpoints were offered and how the story was structured to appeal to the public. They discussed how ongoing coverage influenced public opinion and raised awareness of the foreign policy problem.

Participant 4 gave an example of a particular situation in which public opinion was significantly shaped by media coverage. The example concerned increased public concern and scrutiny of government actions as a result of media coverage of diplomatic tensions between Pakistan and Iran. They talked about how the framing of stories by the media affected public opinion and increased public pressure on decision-makers.

Participant 5 reiterated the idea that public opinion on foreign policy matters is greatly influenced by media coverage, using the coverage of tensions between Pakistan and India as an example. They stressed how widespread coverage—including real-time updates and expert commentary—plays a crucial role in influencing the public's ideas and perceptions of the situation, especially when it comes to sensationalised headlines and biased reporting.

What Elements, in your Opinion, Impact how Foreign Policy Stories are Presented in the Media?

The five participants, who were journalists by profession, said that a variety of factors affect how foreign policy narratives are framed in the media. First off, media ownership and editorial policies have a big say in this. The interests and viewpoints of owners or sponsors are frequently reflected in coverage, which shapes how foreign policy topics are framed.

Secondly, the backgrounds, prejudices, and professional networks of journalists also have an impact on the framing of foreign policy narratives. When reporting on foreign issues, one depends on personal experiences, relationships within government or diplomatic circles, and information availability. Furthermore, the construction of foreign policy narratives can be influenced by the larger socio-political environment, which encompasses geopolitical dynamics, public emotion, and government agendas.

Media outlets may minimise or ignore different viewpoints in favour of promoting certain narratives that better serve national objectives or the general public opinion.

Finally, the constant flow of news and technological developments fuels the need for attention-grabbing headlines and the quick spread of information. This may result in the structuring of foreign policy narratives to prioritise conflict or sensationalism over careful analysis.

Table 1

Perception of the Role of Media in Shaping Public Understanding of Foreign Policy Issues.

Participant Perception of Media's Role	
1	Emphasized media's significant role, acknowledged biases and challenges, highlighted importance of accurate reporting
2	Emphasized media's influence on public perception, highlighted various forms of coverage and expert commentary
3	Emphasized media's power in framing narratives, setting agendas, and providing accurate and balanced coverage
4	Highlighted media's role as a primary source of information and analysis, aiming for comprehensive coverage
5	Recognized media's potential to influence public opinion, emphasized importance of accurate reporting and context

Table 2

Participant Views on the Impact of Public Opinion Influenced by Media Coverage on Foreign Policy Decisions.

Participant	Specific Instance of Media Influence on Public Opinion
1	Extensive media coverage of tensions between Pakistan and a neighboring country, emphasizing biased reporting
2	Media coverage influencing public opinion on human rights violations and political tensions in the region
3	Extensive media coverage of a diplomatic crisis between Pakistan and a neighboring country, shaping public perceptions
4	Media coverage leading to heightened public concern and scrutiny of government actions regarding diplomatic tensions
5	Media coverage surrounding tensions between Pakistan and India, emphasizing live updates and expert opinions

Table 3

Participant Strategies for Engaging with Media Outlets to Communicate Government Positions on International Issues.

Participant	Strategy
1	Acknowledges potential biases and challenges in media coverage. Emphasizes the importance of considering multiple sources of information beyond media narratives. Highlights the influential role of media in shaping public opinion and government actions.
2	Emphasizes the significant role played by media coverage in shaping public perceptions of foreign policy issues. Highlights various factors considered by policymakers in the relationship between media coverage and government decision-making.
3	Recognizes the complex relationship between media coverage and government decision-making. Emphasizes the importance of engaging with the media to effectively communicate objectives and decisions.
4	Acknowledges the significant influence wielded by the media. Emphasizes the importance of engaging with media outlets to convey government viewpoints and policy stances on foreign affairs.
5	Highlights the significant influence of media coverage on public perceptions of foreign policy and government decision-making. Emphasizes the importance of considering media coverage alongside other factors.

The media's impact on public opinion, particular cases when media coverage affected public opinion, and elements affecting how foreign policy narratives are framed in the media are all summarised in these tables based on participant perspectives.

Policymakers

What is your Opinion of the Connection between Government Decision-making and Foreign Policy Coverage in the Media?

Participant 1, a 15-year veteran bureaucrat, offers a nuanced viewpoint on the connection between government decision-making in foreign policy and media coverage. They acknowledge the media's powerful influence on public opinion and its potential to affect governmental actions. But there

are also worries raised concerning media bias and sensationalism, which warns against oversimplifying complicated subjects. Participant 1 highlights how crucial it is that decision-makers take into account a variety of information sources outside of media narratives. Furthermore, they emphasise the strategic role that government communication and media involvement play in influencing public views and successfully communicating policy agendas.

The second participant, who has twenty years of experience, stated that politicians recognise the important role that media coverage has in influencing public opinion and are cognizant of its potential impact. However, a number of elements, including worries about national security, diplomatic considerations, and strategic objectives, influence government decision-making. While media coverage can shape political discourse and public opinion, it is acknowledged that this is only one of many factors that decision-makers consider when deciding on foreign policy. In the end, it is agreed that there is a complicated and varied relationship between media coverage and government decision-making, with officials weighing numerous criteria to identify the most appropriate course of action.

Senior policy maker Participant 3 described how government decision-making and media coverage of foreign policy are known to have a complicated relationship. Although the media is vital in educating the public about government choices and activities in foreign policy, the government's agenda and priorities may not always coincide with the media's own. While unfavourable media coverage can lead to public scepticism or opposition, positive media coverage has the ability to increase popular support for government programmes. However, sensationalism, selective reporting, and editorial biases can affect how foreign policy concerns are portrayed, misguiding the public in the process.

It is crucial for policymakers to interact with the media in order to properly convey their goals and choices. However, it is imperative to continue to be aware of the ways in which media narratives may impact public opinion and to make certain that the public is provided with correct information.

The fourth participant, an ambassador for over a decade, stated that officials acknowledge the media's substantial impact in moulding public perceptions and encouraging discourse. As such, chances to interact with media sources are aggressively pursued, using them as forums to communicate our government's positions and policy positions on issues related to international relations. However, it is crucial to recognise that media coverage is only one aspect of the many variables that influence our ability to make decisions. Although media discourse offers important insights into public attitudes and reactions to foreign policy initiatives, other factors such as diplomatic imperatives, national security interests, international agreements, and expert assessments also play a significant role in shaping our policy decisions. Consequently, even though the media's contribution to clarifying public opinion is appreciated, it does not alone determine our decisions about public policy.

With seven years of expertise in policymaking, Participant Number Five emphasises how important media coverage is in shaping public opinion about foreign policy and governmental decision-making. They emphasise the significance of taking media coverage into account when making decisions in addition to other considerations, acknowledging the media's role in reflecting public opinion. They also stress how important it is for politicians to actively interact with the media in order to communicate government viewpoints and uphold transparency, highlighting the media's critical role in influencing public opinion on foreign policy matters.

How much do you think Media Coverage and Public Opinion Affect the making of Foreign Policy Decisions?

Participant 1 believes that public opinion plays a significant role in the decisions taken by policymakers on foreign policy. The public's perception of foreign issues is greatly influenced by media coverage, and politicians should consider public opinion when formulating policies. But striking a balance between national interests, strategic concerns, and popular opinion is thought to be crucial.

Participant 2 thought that media coverage can affect public opinion and influence foreign policy decisions, but it is not the only one. Policymakers rely on a variety of sources, such as professional analysis, diplomatic considerations, and national security objectives, to inform their judgements.

However, it is acknowledged that public support is crucial for the successful execution of foreign policy.

According to Participant 3, politicians may be under pressure to prioritise particular foreign policy concerns or take particular stances due to public opinion shaped by media narratives. But legislators also have an obligation to inform the public and contextualise media coverage, particularly when it comes to intricate foreign matters. In the end, careful consideration of a range of variables, including public opinion, should inform foreign policy judgements.

Participant 4 makes the case that public view of foreign policy issues can be shaped by media coverage and that public perception can then affect how politicians make decisions. Policymakers should, however, critically evaluate media narratives and take into account a variety of information sources when developing foreign policy.

Public opinion is significant, but it must be weighed against long-term national interests and strategic considerations.

Participant 5 said that when it comes to formulating and carrying out foreign policy, public opinion, shaped by media coverage, can present policymakers with both possibilities and obstacles. Policymakers must take into account the intricacies of international relations and the long-term ramifications of actions, even while it is imperative that they respond to public emotion. While media influence should be recognised, it shouldn't always be the deciding factor for determining foreign policy.

How do you engage with Media Outlets to Communicate Government Positions on International Issues?

Policymaker Participant 1 highlighted the critical role that the media plays in influencing the public's perception of foreign policy. They underlined the significance of taking into account a variety of information sources outside of media narratives and highlighted potential biases and difficulties in media coverage. The first participant emphasised the media's powerful ability to shape public opinion and its possible influence on governmental decisions. They also underlined the strategic importance of media participation and government communication in effectively communicating policy agendas.

Another policymaker, participant 2, agreed that media coverage had a big impact on how the public views foreign policy concerns. They highlighted how the media shapes public opinion and can have an impact on how decisions are made by the government. Participant 2 acknowledged the complexity of the relationship between media coverage and government decision-making,

pointing out the different aspects that policymakers take into account, such as strategic goals, diplomatic considerations, and worries about national security.

Senior policy maker Participant 3 acknowledged the intricate connection between government decision-making and media coverage of foreign policy. They recognised that the public has to be informed about government activities and decisions pertaining to international affairs by the media. Participant 3 emphasised that the public's perceptions of government policies can be influenced by both positive and negative media coverage. This underscores the significance of interacting with the media to effectively communicate goals and decisions while guaranteeing the dissemination of accurate information to the public.

The fourth participant, an accomplished ambassador, recognised the important role that the media plays in influencing public discourse and storylines. They underlined the need to use media outlets as venues to communicate government opinions and foreign policy positions. Participant 4 acknowledged that a variety of factors, such as international agreements, diplomatic imperatives, national security priorities, and expert judgements, influence policy decisions. One such component is media coverage.

A five-year-old participant, a policymaker, emphasised how important media coverage is in shaping public opinion about foreign policy and governmental decision-making. They underlined the media's critical role in influencing public debate on foreign policy issues and stressed the significance of taking media coverage into account alongside other considerations in decision-making processes. Participant 5 also emphasised how crucial it is for legislators to actively interact with the media in order to communicate government viewpoints and uphold transparency.

Table 1

Participant Views on the Relationship between Media Coverage and Government Decision-Making.

Participant Perspective	
1	Acknowledges the crucial role of media in shaping public understanding of foreign policy. Recognizes potential biases and challenges in media coverage. Emphasizes the importance of considering multiple sources of information beyond media narratives. Highlights the influential role of media in shaping public opinion and its potential impact on government actions.
2	Acknowledges the significant role played by media coverage in shaping public perceptions of foreign policy issues. Recognizes the complexities of the relationship between media coverage and government decision-making. Emphasizes various factors considered by policymakers, including national security concerns, diplomatic considerations, and strategic interests.
3	Recognizes the complex relationship between media coverage of foreign policy and government decision-making. Acknowledges the media's crucial role in informing the public about government actions and decisions regarding international affairs. Highlights the potential for both positive and negative media coverage to influence public perceptions of government policies. Emphasizes the importance of engaging with the media to effectively communicate objectives and decisions while ensuring the conveyance of accurate information to the public.
4	Acknowledges the significant influence wielded by the media in shaping narratives and fostering public dialogue. Emphasizes the importance of engaging with media outlets as platforms to convey government viewpoints and policy stances on foreign affairs. Recognizes media coverage as one facet among many factors that inform policy determinations, including diplomatic imperatives, national security priorities, international agreements, and expert assessments.
5	Highlights the significant influence of media coverage on public perceptions of foreign policy and government decision-making. Emphasizes the importance of considering media coverage alongside other factors in decision-making processes. Stresses the importance of policymakers actively engaging with the media to convey government perspectives and maintain transparency.

Table 2

Participant Views on the Impact of Public Opinion Influenced by Media Coverage on Foreign Policy Decisions.

Participant	Perspective
1	Considers public opinion as an important factor in foreign policy decisions. Recognizes the significant role played by media coverage in shaping public perception of international issues. Emphasizes the need to balance public opinion with strategic considerations and national interests.
2	Believes that public opinion influenced by media coverage can impact foreign policy decisions, but it is not the sole determining factor. Emphasizes reliance on various sources, including expert analysis, diplomatic considerations, and national security interests, in guiding decisions. Recognizes the importance of public support for effective implementation of foreign policies.
3	States that public opinion, influenced by media narratives, can exert pressure on policymakers to prioritize certain foreign policy issues or adopt specific approaches. Emphasizes the responsibility of policymakers to educate the public and provide context to media coverage.
4	Argues that media coverage can shape public perception of foreign policy issues, influencing policymakers' decision-making processes. Emphasizes the importance of critically assessing media narratives and considering multiple sources of information when formulating foreign policies.
5	Observes that public opinion, influenced by media coverage, can create both opportunities and challenges for policymakers in foreign policy formulation and implementation. Emphasizes the need to consider the complexities of international relations and the long-term implications of decisions.

Table 3

Participant Strategies for Engaging with Media Outlets to Communicate Government Positions on International Issues.

Participant	Strategy
1	Acknowledges potential biases and challenges in media coverage. Emphasizes the importance of considering multiple sources of information beyond media narratives. Highlights the influential role of media in shaping public opinion and government actions.
2	Emphasizes the significant role played by media coverage in shaping public perceptions of foreign policy issues. Highlights various factors considered by policymakers in the relationship between media coverage and government decision-making.
3	Recognizes the complex relationship between media coverage and government decision-making. Emphasizes the importance of engaging with the media to effectively communicate objectives and decisions.
4	Acknowledges the significant influence wielded by the media. Emphasizes the importance of engaging with media outlets to convey government viewpoints and policy stances on foreign affairs.
5	Highlights the significant influence of media coverage on public perceptions of foreign policy and government decision-making. Emphasizes the importance of considering media coverage alongside other factors.

Recommendations

For Media Professionals

The Media's Influence on How the Public Understands Foreign Policy Issues:

- Stress the value of truthful and impartial coverage of these topics.

- Steer clear of hyperbole and biased reporting to provide the people with a more nuanced picture.
- Present complicated topics in a thorough way, taking into account a variety of viewpoints and data sources.
- Serve as an intermediary between the general public and policymakers, promoting knowledgeable conversations and exchanges of ideas regarding global issues.

Particular Cases of Media Influence on Public Opinion

- Examine historical examples when public opinion on foreign policy matters was greatly impacted by media coverage.
- Analyse how public perception and attitudes towards government activities are affected by media framing.
- Emphasise the importance of ethical and responsible journalism in influencing public opinion on global issues.

Factors Affecting How Foreign Policy Narratives Are Framed

- Examine how media ownership and editorial policies affect how foreign policy narratives are framed.
- Examine how the backgrounds, prejudices, and professional networks of journalists influence the coverage of the media.
- Analyse the ways in which government agendas, public mood, and larger socio-political circumstances influence media framing.
- Address the difficulties in sustaining high-quality journalism brought about by technology improvements and the round-the-clock news cycle.

For Policymakers

The Link Between Government Decision-Making and Media Coverage

- Acknowledge the media's power in influencing public opinion on matters of foreign policy.
- Recognise possible biases and difficulties in media coverage while taking into account a variety of information sources.
- Stress the strategic importance of media participation and government communication in effectively communicating policy agendas.

The Influence of Media Coverage on Public Opinion and Foreign Policy Decisions

- Strike a balance between national objectives and strategic concerns while influencing public opinion through media coverage.
- When making decisions, consult a variety of sources, such as professional analysis, diplomatic concerns, and national security interests.
- Recognise the significance of public backing for the successful execution of foreign policies while guaranteeing a comprehensive examination of diverse elements.

Actively Communicate Government Positions with Media Outlets

- Actively communicate government policy positions and points of view on global topics with media outlets.

- Acknowledge the media's considerable power and look for ways to use them as communication channels.
- Maintain openness in official correspondence while taking into account the intricacies of press attention and public opinion.

Conclusion

To sum up, this study focused on Pakistan while examining the intricate interaction between media, public opinion, and foreign policy. Several definitions of foreign policy were included in the literature review, highlighting the significance of this concept in deciding a nation's foreign policy and how it safeguards its interests. The focus on the media's impact on Pakistan's foreign policy decisions illustrated how media outlets mould popular perceptions and opinions, which subsequently have an indirect effect on decision-makers. A debate on the media's impact on how other countries view Pakistan also emphasised the media's importance in international relations. To properly understand Pakistan's foreign policy decisions and their wider implications, one must have a thorough understanding of the complex interactions between the media, public opinion, and procedures used to make foreign policy decisions. Ultimately, this research highlights the significance of having a comprehensive understanding of how the media shapes foreign policy for effective navigation of the intricate world of international relations.

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