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**PORTRAYAL OF PAK-US RELATIONS AMIDST OSAMA BIN LADEN'S  
KILLING: THE CONTENT ANALYSIS OF SELECTED NEWSPAPERS**

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**ABSTRACT**

The article illustrates the Pak-US relations in the context of the killing of Osama Bin Laden (OBL), covered in four leading newspapers of England and US; “The Telegraph”, “The Guardian”, “The New York Times” and “The Washington Post”, from the period of three months i.e. April-June, 2011. The study is conducted based on Operation Neptune Spear. The research study is theoretically linked with the propaganda model of Herman and Chomsky, and the Shoemaker and Reeve’s theory of the content effect, particularly the impact of foreign policy, which is a driving tool, influencing the nature and treatment of reporting on Pak-US relations. The relations between Pakistan and USA are of great importance, with reference to OBL. The Pak-US relations were quite aggravated and hostile in pre-OBL period but post-OBL period worsened these relations. Interestingly, the policies of these newspapers were dependent on the foreign policy of their countries. It was explored that the news coverage was found favourable as and when the relations between Pakistan and the USA were cordial and smooth. Similarly, these relations turned into negative and unfavourable positions, when the relations were strained and deteriorating and endorsed various studies that the Western mainstream media tried to be more nationalistic in projecting official stance while covering foreign coverage, instead of adhering to universal cannon of journalism i.e. objectivity, fairness and neutrality etc. Overall 219 news items of these four

selected newspapers regarding Pak-US relations in the context of pre-OBL and post-OBL's killing operation were undertaken for analysis. The negative slant was found higher as compared to the positive and neutral. Besides, the ratio of news items, with unfavourable frames was found higher in post-OBL operation in comparison of pre-era of the coverage related to Pak-US relations in the leading British and American newspapers.

**Key words: Osama Bin Laden, Pakistan-USA Relations and Operation Neptune Spear**

## INTRODUCTION

After the independence in 1947, the visit of Liaqat Ali Khan, Prime Minister of Pakistan to the United States of America initiated the relation into the positive direction. It was mainly due to Pakistan's support to the American bloc vis-a-vis the USSR bloc and of India's unwelcoming response to America. John Foster Dulles, Eisenhower's secretary of state was in favour of Pakistan, but the decade of 1960s proved harmful for the bilateral relations because of President John F. Kennedy's concern for India and his support for New Delhi in the Sino-Indian war of 1962. In 1965, the United States cut-off its military assistance during Pak-Indo war, particularly to Pakistan. The relations became deteriorated by the series of perfidy and US neutral stance in Pakistan's war with India in 1965 and 1971 [1].

The éclat of Islamic revolution in 1979, emerged as a critical juncture in the development of anti-Americanism for Pakistanis as the violent mob in sympathy with Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini, set a fire

the American embassy and attacked US government buildings throughout the country. United States conflict with Libya intensified anti-American attitude as according to the polling, the 68% were in favour of Libya. Americans were pro-Israel, as per the claims of Pakistan's. Anti-Americanism proved a handy prop for the Islamist in attacking the government of Pakistan in 1980s. Anti-American attitude intensified among non-Islamist when the US aid was curtailed. According to polling data the non-Islamists wanted to be in US-allies and sought for military and economic assistance. Anti-Americanism was manipulated by the ruling class to get aid from America [2].

United States freedom and democracy were protested by Asians during the era of cold war. American culture was disdained by various intellectuals and politicians several times, when American culture was compared in individuality or with other European culture. The American culture of *Bay Watch*, blue jeans, and CocaCola was omnipresent, and it engendered even the

French elites. On the other hand, American capitalism was always taken with qualms. Racist behaviour of American troops in Asia evoked criticism. The attack on the US government facilities in Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Pakistan, or Taiwan was the outcome of American foreign policy. There was largely rationality and logic in the negative attitude for the America and Anti-Americanism outside the communist world, but was misconceived [3].

Till the end of cold war, different perceptions were attributed towards America and its policies, but the main crux remained consistent. The democratic idea of US was attracted by the Asians. The US was still deemed as the land of opportunity, and its scientific methods were enthralled by Asians. On the other flank, the policies of US were not perceived by few. Some criticized the principles of US government. Americans believed that democracy and strong economy was the reason of their triumph as the flimsy economy became the reason of disintegration of Soviet Union. The rest of the world feared American power and its mission of spreading democracy and free market economies across the countries of the world. According to Chinese foreign affairs analysts, US was interested in expanding American hegemony than

democracy in different countries of the world [4].

The impact of 9/11 attack on New York and Washington by Al-Qaeda can be seen on Asia enormously. In the early days of attack the devastation and American distress assembled the world's sympathy but later according to surveys America overacted on this attack and did a lot about the war on terror. In Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, and the Philippines-as in Europe-polling data showed that 76 percent thought it was good for Americans to feel vulnerable, and 60 percent contended that US policy had provoked the attacks. According to them the rift between the poor and rich countries is due to American policies [5].

The 9/11 may have proved sympathetic and *schadenfreude* for the rest of the world, but for China it proved a golden opportunity to ameliorate its relations. The invasion of Iraq in 2003 by the US proved negative for America as it dropped the favourable attitude of most of the Asian countries. According to polls 72 percent of Pakistanis and 74 percent of Indonesians predicted the fear of American attack on their countries. Favourable views of the United States in Indonesia dropped from 61 percent in 2002 to 15 percent in 2003 [6].

When the focus of America shifted to Middle East, the positive views about America were still in large number in Asia where the change into negative from positive was less in comparison of rest of the world and where the image of America was rapidly deteriorating. According to Pankaj Mishra anti Americanism was less among more than 100 million Muslims of India [7]. The Guardian in its publication of April 11, 2011 identified and highlighted the two reasons i.e. issue of Raymond Davis and exclusion of Pakistani government from the process of Afghan peace deal for the worsening of relations between the two countries. Besides, closure of NATO supply route and rift between CIA and ISI on the issue of Raymond Davis, violation of sovereignty of Pakistan by the US in her assault of navy seals on OBL hideout in Abbottabad were the other factors which culminated in mounting mistrusts between the two countries. Succinctly, it can be concluded that the US-Pak relations were at the lowest ebb during the three months, before and after Operation Neptune Spear.

It is significant to mention here that reporters and editors of mainstream print and electronic media of the US always try to secure American foreign policy interests while reporting international events. The research findings of Atheide (1976), Gans

(1979), Gitlin (1980), Paletz & Entman, (1981), Hackett (1984), Yu and Riffe, (1988), Chang's (1990) and other studies namely Entman (1993), Merrill, (1995), Perlmutter, (1998), Herman and Chomsky (2000) and Dorogi (2001), Z. Peng (2004) endorse this perception that the coverage of international conflict has been found consistent with the interests and policy laid down by White House and Pentagon. Similarly, other well-known researchers Shoemaker & Reese (1991) also argue that the influence of the US policy has been found profoundly on the news and editorial contents of international events and conflicts. Besides, it has also been identified by another researcher, Chang (1989) that change in treatment of the coverage by the US mainstream newspapers takes place in response to the shift in foreign policy of White House.

This paper analyses all sort of news items, articles and editorials which briefs on cordial or un-cordial relations between both the countries, the published items in the four newspapers about visits of the US Secretary of State, other State Department Officials, Senators, Special envoy for South Asia negotiations with high ups of Pakistan on bilateral issues etc., stories relating to Kerry Lugar Bill, issue of Raymond Davis and the statements of the US officials on Operation Neptune Spear

and cooperation of the political government, Pakistan as an ally of the US, issue of sovereignty and diplomatic immunity etc.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study primarily focuses on the nature of reporting of the Pak-US relation with special reference to OBL, Operation Neptune Spear in both the leading newspapers of UK and USA. The relations between Pakistan and USA are of great importance in the back ground of OBL. The research study is theoretically linked with the propaganda model of Herman and Chomsky, and the Shoemaker and Reeve's theory of content effect and particularly emphasis on the factor of government policy that influence news content in American media in the global perspective. The study is primarily based on method of content analysis of the coverage and image of Pakistan with special reference to OBL, in the four leading newspapers, two each from UK (The Telegraph & The Guardian) and from The US (The New York Times & The Washington Post) in both the qualitatively and quantitatively manner for the period of one month each pre/post period of Operation Neptune Spear in Pakistan. All types of the news items related to the issue as well as the articles and the editorials have been analysed during the specified period.

The current research is delimited to the Newspaper of UK and US, respectively; "The Guardian", "The Telegraph", "Washington Post" and "New York Times". The population for the study was news stories, articles, features, editorials and letters to the editor related to Pakistan in connection of OBL published in the four selected newspapers. The four-selected mainstream leading newspapers are considered highly circulated, well reputed and prestigious papers of their respective country. It can be said conveniently that intelligentsia, high ups of civil and military bureaucracy, policy makers and newsmen in United States, United Kingdom and Pakistan also read these newspapers for critical insight of the scenario of the global issues.

The research questions of this study are: (1) what is the quantity of coverage about Pak-US relations in the Telegraph, Guardian, the New York Times and the Washington Post differ between the pre and post-period of Operation Neptune Spear? (2) what are the frames and slants used in the selected unit of analysis appeared in the selected newspapers regarding coverage of Pakistan-US relations in perspective of OBL's killing operation differ during the specific period of the study? Moreover, the hypotheses of the study are: (H1) the coverage of Pak-US

relations would receive more negative slants as compared to the cumulative ratio of Positive slants in the four selected newspapers. (H2) Pak-US relations would likely to receive more unfavourable coverage in post OBL operation as compared to pre-era in the four newspapers. Furthermore, for the analysis, the variables-subject/topic of the contents, Slant, Frames, and sources of the published contents were chosen as a yardstick of this research study.

Length of the unit-news story, article, and editorial etc., of analysis in the four mainstream newspapers was decided based on the total number of paragraph(s) of the selected publication. It was determined whether the published item was filed by foreign correspondent, Pakistani reporter, joint contribution of Pakistani and foreign correspondents and other sources like news agency or electronic media monitoring report(s) etc. Each paragraph of the selected publication was coded as one of three main slants categories- positive, negative and neutral-by considering the likelihood of their cultivation of positive, negative or neutral impression regarding the portrayal of Pak-US relations with special reference to Operation Neptune Spear during the specific period of three month i.e. April-

June 2011 in the four leading newspapers of UK & the United States.

In case, the relations of Pakistan with the United States have been discussed and analysed to give the sense that bilateral relations were cordial, smooth or improving, Pakistan as a reliable and trustworthy partner, abider of international agreements and treaties, believe in the sanctity and sovereignty of other states, in these context, such paragraph have been described as positive slant. If the paragraph about diplomatic, political and economic relations of Pakistan with the United States gives sense that Pakistan is blamed for breaching bilateral agreements, as untrustworthy partner, interfering in the internal affairs of the neighbouring countries, depicted as double gamer, and support terrorism in other countries, such paragraph without any ambiguity have been coded as negative slant. The sentences of each published paragraph, which do not clearly mention emphasis on either positive or negative aspects of image of Pakistan regarding her coverage, then it has been coded as neutral slant

### **FRAMING THE STORY**

The published news stories, articles, features and editorials which cultivate positive picture about the relations of Pakistan with the US in the context issues of bilateral interests have been framed as a

favourable item. The published story, which depict Pakistan as untrustworthy partner, double gamer and her political leadership and military establishment are overall projected as not sincere with the US strategy against the war on terror have been framed as unfavourable or foe. The

published news story, article, feature or editorial which does not clearly emphasis on either positive or negative aspects of image of Pakistan regarding her relations with US, has been framed as neutral story.

**Table 1: Cumulative Cross Tabulation Distribution of the Topic in the Selected Newspapers**

S. No.	ID of the Newspapers	Coverage of Pak- US Relations	
		Number	Percentage
1	The Telegraph	3	8.8%
2	The Guardian	8	23.5%
3	The New York Times	15	44.1%
4	The Washington Post	8	23.5%
Total		34	100%

According to table, there were total 34 news items which covered the Pak-US relation in the selected newspapers i.e., “The Telegraph”, “Guardian”, “New York Times” and “Washington Post”. Out of these 34 the maximum number of news about Pak-US relation is covered by New

York Times that is 15 (44.1%). The coverage of Pak-US relation was of same ratio in Washington Post and Guardian that is 23.5%. Telegraph gave the least coverage of 3 (8.8%) among these selected newspapers.

**Table 2: Cross Tabulation Coverage of the Contents about Pak-US Relations**

Name	No. of News	Articles/ Features	Editorials	Letter to Editors	Grand Total
The Telegraph	3 (10%)	0	0	0	3
The Guardian	8 (27%)	0	0	0	8
The New York Times	13 (43%)	2 (67%)	0	0	15
The Washington Post	6 (20%)	1 (33%)	0	1	8
Total	30 (100%)	3 (100%)	0	1	34

Table # 2 divulges, that there was total 34 news content out of which 30 were news items. There were 03 articles and 01 letter to editors. The number of news was 13 in New York Times, whereas in The

Guardian and Washington Post, the number of news was 08 and 06 respectively. So, it is clear from the table that major portion of news content was comprised of news items.

**Table 3: Coverage of Pak-US Relations in pre and post OBL Operation**

S. No.	Month/Year	Total Coverage	
		Number	Percentage
1	April, 2011	4	11.8%
2	May, 2011	25	73.5%
3	June, 2011	5	14.7%
Total		34	100%

According to table # 3, in the month of May the maximum number of coverage

was given to Pak-US relation. It should be kept in mind that May is the month of

OBL killing. So, in May the coverage was at its peak, whereas in the months of April and June the coverage was 4 and 5 respectively. In the month of May this coverage was at its boom. The total

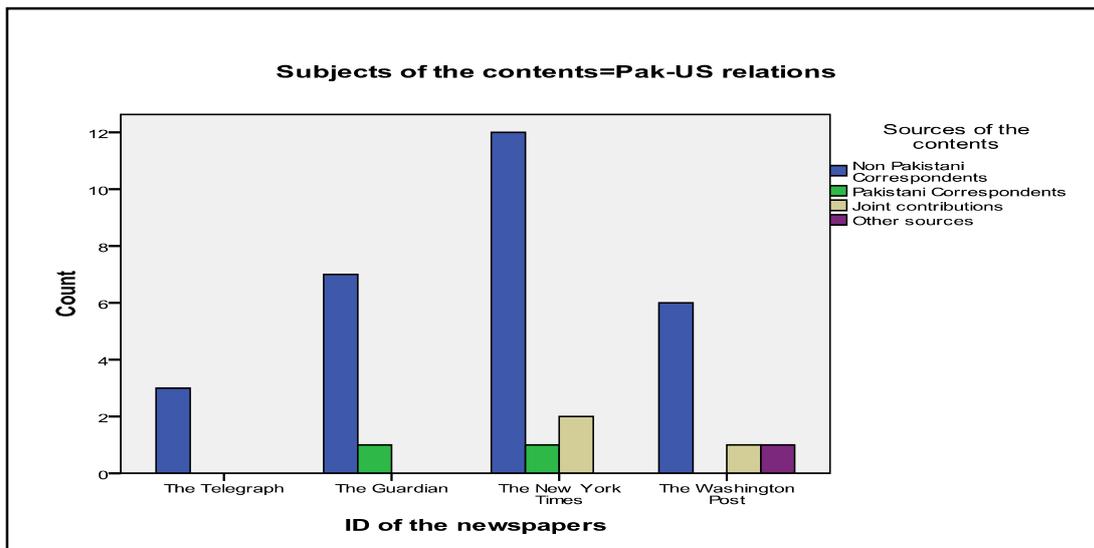
number of coverage was 34 in the selected four newspapers. The table answers to the questionnaire that the coverage is greater in post Bin Laden period.

**Table 4: Distribution of Subject of the Contents Considering the Sources**

Sources	Pak-US Relations	
	Number	Percentage
Non-Pakistani Correspondents	28	82.4%
Pakistani Correspondents	2	5.9%
Joint Contributions	3	8.8%
Other Sources	1	2.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table depicts that out of total of 34 the maximum number of news about Pak-US relation was received by Non-Pakistani Correspondents. The coverage of Pak-US relation by NPC was 28 (82.4%). While

picture in the minds of the readers that most of the items were published with by-line of American and British correspondents. The result communicates that The Telegraph and The Guardian



sources of Pakistani correspondents and joint contributions in context of Pak-US relation was 2 (5.9%) and 3 (8.8%) respectively. Moreover, 2.9% (1) news were received by other sources.

This bar graph regarding the distribution of various sources of published contents on Pak-US relations vividly establishes a

ranked first and second with regards to most number of contents were by-lined by non-Pakistani correspondents with the total ratio of cent percent, 03 out of 03 and 87.5, 07 out of 08 published contents about Pak-US relations. Similarly, the ratio of foreign correspondents in New York Times and Washington Post on the issue

was 12 (80%) out of 15 and 06 (75%) out of total 08 published items in the three

months period respectively.

**Table 5: Cumulative Distribution of Subjects of the Pak-US Relations by Slant**

Name	Positive N (%)	Negative N (%)	Neutral N (%)	Total
The Telegraph	1 (5.8)	9 (53)	7 (41.2)	17
The Guardian	8 (15.3)	21 (40.4)	23 (44.3)	52
The New York Times	41 (39.1)	45 (42.8)	19 (18.1)	105
The Washington Post	23 (51.1)	14 (31.1)	8 (17.8)	45
Total	73 (33.3)	89 (40.6)	57 (26.1)	219

The table # 5 expounds that there were total 219 paragraphs in the selected newspapers with the different ratio of positive, neutral and negative slants. In these four selected newspapers the maximum number of paragraph is taken by New York Times that is 105. The number of paragraphs in Telegraph, Guardian and Washington Post was 17, 52 and 45 respectively. It is vivid by the table that the maximum number of positive slant was 41 (39%). Washington Post ranked second with the 23 (51%) of positive slant. While Telegraph gave the least positive slant that is 01 (5.8%). The total number of positive slant was 73 (33.3%). The highest number

of negative slant was 45 (42.8%). The Telegraph published the least negative coverage of Pak-US relation that is 9 (53%). The total number of negative slants among these four selected newspapers is 89 (40.6%). It can be perceived by the table that stance of The Guardian was more neutral than rest of three newspapers. The neutral number of slants was 23 (44.3%). While in Telegraph, New York Times and Washington Post the number of neutral slants was 07, 19 and 08 respectively. The total number of neutral slants among the four selected newspapers was 57 (26%).

**Table 6: Particularize Framing Cross Tabulation of Subjects of the Pak-US Relations**

Name	Favourable (%)	Unfavourable (%)	Neutral (%)	Total
The Telegraph	0 0.0%	2 10.5%	1 33.3%	3
The Guardian	1 6.7%	2 7.4%	5 35.7%	8
The New York Times	9 26.5%	6 9.0%	0 0.0%	15
The Washington Post	5 17.9%	3 9.1%	0 0.0%	8
Total	15 17.9%	13 8.9%	6 10.2%	34

The table # 6 denotes that the total number of favourable items is 15 (17.9%) in these newspapers. The maximum number of favourable content is 09 (26.5%) in New

York Times. While the number of favourable items in The Guardian and Washington Post is 01 and 05 respectively. The maximum number of unfavourable

content was published in New York Times that is 06 (9%). The total number of unfavourable content is 13 (8.9%). The ratio of unfavourable is same in The Telegraph and The Guardian that is 02 (10.5%). While in Washington Post the number of unfavourable content was 03 (9.1%). The total number of neutral content in these four newspapers was 06 (10.2%). It is pertinent to mention here that Pak-US relation were less severe and somewhat stable in pre-OBL period but post-OBL period witnessed the widening of this hostile gulf. So, it can be seen by this table that number of favourable content was much greater in pre-OBL period but post-OBL scenario proved to be hard nut in context of Pak-US relation.

#### **ANALYZING THE PORTRAYAL OF PAK-US RELATIONS**

The first hypothesis predicted that the coverage of Pak-US relations would receive negative slants, as compared to the cumulative ratio of positive slants in the selected newspapers. The prediction came true as it the ratio of negative slant (40.6%) was found greater as compared to positive slant which was calculated 33.3% out of 219 total paragraphs. Hence the hypothesis is supported. The second hypothesis stated that Pak-US relations would likely receive more unfavourable coverage in post-OBL operation as

compared to pre-era in the selected newspapers. The hypothesis was too supported as the ratio of the coverage with unfavourable frame was explored 09 (69.2%) while the ratio of unfavourable frames was calculated 02 (15.4%). Hence the hypothesis was accepted. Both the US newspapers described Pak-US relations in the light of principles of foreign policy laid down by Obama administration. If the relations in the view of the US policy makers were on the way of improvement, the analysis of contents clearly gives an impression that the US newspapers started to publish the stories in relatively softer and favourable tone. Otherwise, the Pakistani establishment, particularly the top leadership of the military and ISI were bitterly criticized and held responsible regarding mistrust and for deterioration of the relations between the two countries i.e. Pakistan and the United States. Positively speaking, the New York Times in its publication of May 20, 2011 emphasized that government of Pakistan has been provided an aid of 33 billion dollars as a reward for her cooperation as an ally in war against terrorism since 9/11.

The New York Times in its publication of May 15, 2011 paid tribute to Richard Holbrooke in fabulous words for his services in building the relations with Pakistani establishment and people. See

the following excerpt of the article in the New York Times which highlights the analysis of Mr. Holbrook regarding the pivotal position of Pakistan instead of Afghanistan or India to achieve the desired objectives of the US in the region against war on terror:

*“As for Pakistan, Holbrooke told me . . . Afghanistan was a sideshow. ‘A stable Afghanistan is not essential; a stable Pakistan is essential. . . He believed that a crucial step to reducing radicalism in Pakistan was to ease the Kashmir dispute with India, and he favoured more pressure on India to achieve that.’”*

In the same publication, the New York Times by quoting Mr. John Kerry also threw light on the stance of Obama administration that the US did not distrust her front ally in connection of Abbottabad operation as well as the US has no plan of attack against the nuclear assets of Pakistan. See the following extract of the published story in the New York Times on May 15, 2011 which throws light on the pivotal significance of Pakistan regarding the closure of NATO Supply route and its implication on Pak-US relations.

*“The United States uses Pakistan as a key supply route for U.S. troops in Afghanistan, and Pakistan's assistance is viewed as crucial to a potential negotiated end to the war there. . . A continued downward spiral in U.S.-Pakistan ties, Kerry said, “is a very dangerous road for everybody - dangerous for Pakistan, dangerous for our interests, dangerous for the people of this country and for the region.”*

Just within three days, the New York Times in its publication of May 18, 2011 adopted different tone for Pakistan by criticizing her for the double game strategy and described that the US policy makers were irritated and fed up with the double game of her so-called ally. The newspaper blamed Pakistani government for supporting the proxy forces which resulted in the losses of American soldiers on the soil of Afghanistan. Moreover, the US newspapers used unfavourable tone while describing the role of Pakistan in the issues of Raymond Davis in the context of worsening relations between CIA & ISI, OBL hideout in Abbottabad, drones attack and closure of NATO supply route. The newspaper did not publish a single sentence against Mr. Davis who killed two Pakistanis in broad day light.

The Guardian in its publication of April 11, 2011 identified and highlighted the two reasons i.e. issue of Raymond Davis and exclusion of Pakistani government from the process of Afghan peace deal for the worsening relations between Pakistan and the US. Similarly, the New York Times in its publications of April 03 and 12 about the issue of Raymond Davis and its implications on the working relationship between CIA & ISI bitterly accused the top spy agency of Pakistan for 47 days detention of Davis and framed it illegal

and supported the diplomatic immunity policy statement of Obama administration regarding Raymond Davis. The newspaper further put blame on ISI for keeping Mr. Davis in the jail and even bracketed ISI as a state within the state. The New York Times in its published story appeared on April 12, 2011 negatively discussed the role of ISI and raised objection that why ISI questioned Mr. Davis despite having diplomatic immunity and her role in influencing the foreign policy. Earlier, the Newspaper in its publication of April 3, 2011 depicted ISI in negative aspect while portraying her status as an unaccountable organization in the country. See the following self-explanatory extract of the published story in the New York Times about the negative image of ISI:

*“The Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate is often described as a state within a state, given its unfettered powers and general lack of accountability and transparency. It has influenced the country's domestic and foreign policy for decades and continues to do so, leaving a weak civilian government no choice but to play second.”*

Succinctly, it is concluded on the grounds of analysis of the published contents in both the US newspapers that the top spy agency, ISI was held the only responsible organization for the worsening of diplomatic, military and political relations between Pakistan and the United States on the issue of detention of Mr. Raymond

Davis. Nonetheless, it would be more relevant and significant to present the impartial analysis of David Ignatius at the end, which he shared in his article of May 13, 2011 published in the Washington Post. It held both the US and Pakistan responsible for not achieving desired results in war on terror. See the following self-explanatory extract of the article of David Ignatius:

*“Washington has been passing the same message, through two administrations: The Pakistani military promises action but hedges its bets; the United States pledges cooperation but acts unilaterally.”*

#### CONCLUSION

In the nut shell it can be summed-up conveniently that the selected newspapers projected and supported the foreign policy of the US administration while covering Pak-US relations. In the light of quantitative and qualitative analysis of the published contents about portrayal of Pakistan with special reference to Operation Neptune Spear in connection of OBL killing, it is a plain sailing task to conclude that Pakistan was dominantly depicted in unfavourable manners. The Pak-US relations were less severe and benign in pre-OBL period, but Operation Neptune Spear proved formidable for the bilateral relations. The foreign policy of United States has a great impact on the coverage of these leading newspapers which have a nationalistic approach. The

foreign policy of US can easily be apprehended in the coverage of these four newspapers. It is concluded conveniently that the coverage of these newspapers altered and shifted with the alteration of the foreign policy of the US regarding Pakistan.

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