

# Yemen Crisis and Media Coverage

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We live in the era of globalization, when every citizen of the world is open to information and crisis of information at the same point in time. Mass media which includes traditional media and social and new media as well, is the only main source of information for 7 billion people of the world.

Media is not only a source of information but it also any person or organization can gain a positive or negative impact through the coverage of media.

It also shape the opinion of the society towards a certain issue political or social , before we use to know only one side of the story the one the government use to give , now a days we have different aspects and perspective to the same story or crisis whether through private media in the same country or international media.

This paper is to show how media shape the public opinion towards a crisis by the space of coverage and which side of the story it represents. We examined how the Pakistani media and gulf media dealt with the Yamane crisis.

We observed two of the most leading newspapers in Pakistan and the gulf news in the United Arab Emirates.

In this research we are mainly concerned about the print media and its impact on readers' perspective. Since media covers communication channels that transmit, shape or promote messages, it plays a major role in the societies. Marshall McLuhan propounded that media affects the society not only by the content delivered through it, but also by its own characteristics. These characteristics engage an audience and influence it. McLuhan also mentioned that media is *languages*, with their own structures and systems of grammar, which we can study and analyze. Also, the effects of media come from the way they continually shape and re-shape the way individuals, societies, and cultures perceive and understand the world.

With the increase of technology and huge flow of information from different resources with questionable creditability in most of them, the reader depends on the media he trusts more and when this media keep on reflecting certain image, he accepts it as the truth and builds his beliefs and perception around that image.

## Media and its impact on readers in a crisis situation

When a crisis raises, media is the key player to influence the way a reader reacts to that crisis, according to this media's agenda. Since media are the main sources of information that we receive about the world, a planned input regarding how to face the crisis; how to drive the public opinion towards the crisis; by how much coverage and what is the frame or pattern it is presented in, as well as the length of time for which it has been covered with the prime importance i.e. from 28 March 15, to 15 April 15, will be covered.

## Yemen crisis background

**The National, a UAE newspaper, published a time line on April 15 which summarized the Yemen crisis from the beginning till the day of air strike on the Houthis.**

(<http://www.thenational.ae/yemen-in-crisis-a-timeline>)

Yemen was one of the countries that witnessed Arab Spring protests from 2011. Ali Abdullah Saleh had ruled the country since 1990 — and, before unification, he had been in power in north Yemen since 1978.

### 2011

As protests swept across the country, the GCC backed a transitional plan for the country, which saw Mr Saleh removed from power.

### 2012

- Mr Saleh's long-time deputy Abdrabu Mansur Hadi took over as interim president.
- Mr Hadi's time as president had some successes but also some new challenges. He sought to balance the demands from different parts of Yemeni society. In particular, Mr Hadi tried to keep the southern movement Hiraq — which wants extra powers for the south and has even talked of secession — from splitting the country.
- Mr Hadi also faced the threat of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, thought to be one of the most dangerous branches of Al Qaeda. AQAP, as the group is known, has tried to bring down airliners and was implicated in the attack on the *Charlie Hebdo* magazine in Paris in January.

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For the United States, the fight against AQAP is a key part of its interest in Yemen and Mr Hadi worked with the US to allow drone strikes across parts of Yemen.

#### 2014

- Yemen and Mr Hadi faced a new challenge. The Houthis rebels, also known as Ansarullah, have fought an on-off war with the central government, from their stronghold in the far north-west of Yemen, bordering Saudi Arabia. Battles have been fought since around 2003, with no conclusive victory on either side.
- The Houthis began to move out of their northern stronghold and make military advances towards the capital, Sanaa. The Houthis use the language of national revolution and say they are protecting the rights of all Yemenis. But many inside and outside of the country are suspicious of their motives. Critics of the Houthis, in particular the Gulf states, say they receive money, training and weapons from Iran. They are also being backed by Ali Abdullah Saleh and the army divisions loyal to him.
- In September, the Houthis swept into Sanaa, forced the prime minister to resign and called for a new unity government.

#### 2015

- In January, the Houthis shelled the presidential palace in Sanaa and placed Mr Hadi under house arrest. Days later, the Houthis announced they had dissolved Yemen's parliament and were assuming control of Yemen's government. Demonstrations took place across the south of Yemen, declaring themselves free of control by Sanaa and refusing to accept the authority of the Houthis.
- At the end of February, Mr Hadi escaped house arrest in Sanaa and fled to the southern capital of Aden. He declared that he was still the country's legitimate president and resumed governing. In response, warplanes allied to the Houthi rebels bombed Mr Hadi's headquarters in Aden. The militant group began to march south.

Within days, the Houthis had taken Taz, the country's second largest city, and seized Al Anad military base, just outside Aden. Al Anad is significant as the airbase where US military personnel were stationed. All US personnel were quickly evacuated.

The Houthis began their assault on Aden and Mr Hadi called for external intervention, asking both the United Nations and the Arab League for immediate assistance.

- On March 25th, Mr Hadi was reported to have left the country, as the Houthi rebels bore down on Aden. At midnight that day, Saudi Arabia, working with 9 other allies, announced they had began airstrikes on Houthi positions in the capital Sanaa.

**Analysis** about media coverage during a crisis, this research has selected the Yemeni crisis as case study to understand how the print media in two similar cultures i.e. of UAE and Pakistan, views and presents this crisis.

To proceed, Pakistani and Emirati newspapers were analysed which represented both countries in order to determine to what level they covered that situation. As the media in both counties reflect their cultures and represent the news convincingly to win public approval while affecting their opinion on the crisis, simultaneously.

All the news published in the four newspapers during 21 days, starting from 26 of March the air strike till 15 of April, which represented the climax of the crisis, were collected.

Different aspects to unify the analysis between the newspapers were selected. The first aspect was the placement of the news on the front page; the second one was the type of information chosen by the newspaper; the third was the language and the terminology used to put out the Yemen crisis.

This research has examined the placement of the news during the span of Yemen crisis, with the intention to see the tone of the news i.e. is it positive in a way that it is supporting the stance of the government, and the size of the news.

PLACEMENT	AL-BAYAN	AL-ITTIHAD	THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE	THE NEWS
UPPER HALF	15 News stories	21 News Stories	20 News Stories	26 News Stories
LOWER HALF	9 News stories	1 News Story	18 News Stories	7 News Item
SIDELINES	None	None	8 News items	5 News pieces
SIZE OF NEWS	24 more the 2 inches	22 more than 2 inches	39 more than 2 inches and 7 less than 2 inches	33 more than 2 inches. 5 is less than 2 inches
NEWS WITH PIC	19 pictures	19 pictures	13 UH and 4 LH	13 Pictures
NO. OF NEWS	24 news stories	22 news stories	46 News Stories	38 News Stories

After analyzing the four newspapers, we found out certain facts that the Pakistani newspapers published 84 news stories, to cover the Yemen crisis, in their first page, while the two Emirati newspapers published 46 news stories on their front page.

Although both countries represent the same culture i.e., Islamic culture as is depicted in the space they give to this crisis in their media, but also they must protect their own interests and their relationships with their allies.

If we look at both countries, we will find that in their article they reflect upon the importance of this air strike to gain back the legitimate elected government so, both took the negative approach towards the al-Houthi to the extent that the Emirati newspapers named them terrorists.

At the same time both countries' media adopted a positive approach towards all the countries that joined the air strike like Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Pakistan.

If we take a closer look, we will find that each country's media safeguards its own interests. While the Emirati newspapers in more than one article, accused Iran of helping the Houthis, we find that Pakistani newspapers remain neutral towards Iran.

**In 27/3/2015 Al Bayan newspaper heading was that the air strike tipped the scales, the first thing we observed in the first article after the air strike is the source Al Bayan, capitals correspondents)**

It was of prime important to demonstrate that the source comes from different capitals as the article which were published at the top of the front page were divided into two parts: the first part was about the unity forces of Saudi Arabia and 7 other countries participating in the air strike, and how King Salman appreciated the role of UAE and the GCC countries in supporting Yemen gain back the legitimate government.

While the second part has focused the achievements of the first air strike.

From the first article they put the audience in front of their eyes through mixing the language between giving information and persuaded the audience that this war is supported by the Arab countries to protect the region.

In the same page, another article was written directly under the first one with a headline quoted from Nawaz Sharif, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, 'any threat to Saudi safety shall evoke a strong response from Pakistan'. This article is very important

since it reflects the international approval and support for the strike as this article of ALBAYAN also mentions the formation of joint forces between the Arab countries to fight in Yemen, and many European countries support this.

Al-Ittihad newspaper in the same day the front page on the whole upper part of the front page was one article mainly about the phone call between Sheik Mohamed bin Zayed and King Salman about the situation in Yemen. On the same day Al-Ittihad, the Emirati newspaper, covered dedicated top front page for the coverage of a phone call between Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed and King Salman about the situation in Yemen.

The importance of this strike to protect the region and the international support was emphasized during the conversation. The language of this article was more neutral than the article published in the Al Bayan newspaper. Also, there is editor's opinion which reinforces the newspaper's ideology supporting the air strike.

Similarly, the Pakistani English newspapers also covered the Yemen Crisis on the front pages at upper half: for instance, the same day THE NEWS, covered the Yemen issue with the top most importance, by giving prime placement on the front page upper half of the paper with more than 2 inches of the space as well.

The News published the headline "Pakistan to defend Saudi Arabia", on the top left half of the newspaper, the source to the news being the senior correspondent of the organization. The Second news, also on the front page, was sourced by different agencies primarily of Saudi origin and quoted like "Saudi jets pound Yemen". It is worth mentioning that the tone of both the news items was negative towards Houthis and neutral to positive towards Saudis and their allies.

The Express Tribune published the issue on the front page on the whole upper half, phrasing "Amid warning Pakistan signals readiness to join Saudi alliance", sourced by their own senior correspondent.

On the other hand, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April we found in Al Bayan newspaper on the first page the lower part and article about the interference of Iran in the support of Houthis and the former president Ali Abdullah Saleh, in this article that continued on pages 29-31, there was a negative attitude towards Iran and all the language used was biased to the Iranian interference.

Most of the information quoted from the Saudi foreign minister on how Iran exports revolutions and he condemned the interference of Iran not only in Yemen, but in the whole region.

The rest of the article was an overview and the achievement of the common forces and how much they have achieved in their war with the Houthis, which of course took a positive tone in this part.

This article shown the different perspective between the media in Pakistan and the UAE, as the Pakistani media always opts for a neutral respond towards Iran.

Same day, Alittihad newspaper article which was on the lower part was continued on pages 24, 25 had three main point: the

heading described how the air strike destroyed Houthi troops in various Yemeni cities, while the subheading was reassuring to the reader; it underscored the importance of coordination between Egypt and Saudi Arabia for the unity of the Arab nations, and finally the threat of the Saudi foreign minister against Iran. Therefore, Al-Ittihad assigned huge space on that day on page 24 which covered a large article about the Iranian interference (or invasion?) in Yemen, in the region and the threat of war if needed. Another article, which of course was very positive about the Arab unity, and the success they achieved in Yemen. Both articles emphasized the strong position of Saudi Arabia and how they have the right to defend its region, not only against rebels, but also against the Iranian expansion in the region.

On the first of April, when the Saudi attack was at the peak and Iran was in the news with the statements and support to Yemen, The News covered the crisis on the upper left half of the newspaper, sourced from regional news agencies and quoted Saudi official statement as "Rebels rock Yemen stability with Iran's help: Saudi Arabia"

Whereas The Express Tribune on the whole upper half of the newspaper covered the Pakistan high level delegation's visit to Saudi Arabia as: "Yemen imbroglio: Pakistan mulls limited mission for Saudi security". The story was covered by two senior correspondents of the newspaper. Along with that another news story on the lower left half of the front page was covered by portraying Saudi stance towards the crisis, the headline read like this "Riyadh vows to bring stability to Yemen", the story was taken from the agencies.

**Our last day as a sample for the media dealing with the crisis is 15<sup>th</sup> of April on that day articles from Al Bayan** were very positive reflecting the gulf diplomacy achievement in promoting stability in Yemen; showcasing the achievement of the Emirati air forces in hitting Houthi sites, and highlighting the Egyptian gulf joint forces' cooperation .

The Al-Ittihad newspaper wrote a similar heading that day, as both newspapers proved how the joint forces regained stability in Yemen and how successful Saudi coalition and yemeni houthis war had been against Houthis and Ali Abdullah Saleh, the former president of Yemen.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of April, The News had the top story on the upper left half of the front page titled "UN imposes arms embargo on Yemen's Houthi rebels", the story was obtained from agencies.

At the lower left half of the front page, The News published their own correspondent's exclusive interview story in which Saudi minister hoped that Pakistan will send the required troops to fight Houthis, the headline was phrased as "Saudi minister hopes Pakistan will send army to fight Houthis".

### Important Who's of the Crisis

The important who's of Yemen crisis being reported in newspapers are; Yemen's UN recognized Govt., Al Houthi's, Yemen's elected president, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Gulf cooperation countries (GCC), UAE, Pakistan, US, Iraq, Jordon, Morocco, Sudan, Egypt, Arab League, UN, Yemen citizens.

Newspapers	Sources	No. of News Stories on Front Page	Positively Depicted Who's	Negatively Depicted Who's	Neutrally Mentioned Who's
The News & Express Tribune	Correspondents, Agencies	38 & 46	- Pakistan - Yemen Govt. - Saudi Arabia - GCC - Arab League - UN - US - Egypt - Jordan - Turkey - Arab League - Egypt - UN Sec Gen Ban Ki Mon - KSA - Jordan	- Houthi rebels -	- Iran - Iraqi authorities - Morocco - Sudan - Russia
AL abayan & Alittihad	Albayan „correspondent ,agencies ABU DHABI- agencies ,correspondents	24 & 22	- Pakistan - Yemen Govt. - Saudi Arabia - GCC - Arab League - UN - US - Egypt -France - Jordan -Morocco	Houthi Iran	None

PS: As one of the important WHO, UAE was mentioned negatively post comments of their Foreign Ministry about Pakistan's parliament's resolution to not send the troops to fight Houthis.

### Conclusion

The undertaken study has endeavoured to analyse the different dimensions of media coverage of the Yemen crisis in two similar cultures, namely Pakistan and UAE. The paper has reviewed how the different actors involved in this crisis played their role and how they perceived the Yemen crises. As the present era is called the era of mass and electronic media, every thing that happens in one corner of the world, immediately spreads all over the world within seconds, only because of the electronic media and advanced technology. The whole world has turned into a global village as Marshall McLuhan contended. Today, the flow of information is so high, even it is nearly impossible to control it. The difference lies in the coverage and presentation of the information while keeping in view the culture, audience, and importance of the news.

The paper has thoroughly reviewed the Yemen crises and analysed its media coverage in the two countries i.e. Pakistan and Yemen. To understand how the print media specifically the newspapers of Pakistan and UAE covered the crisis it is necessary to understand the ideology of specific media groups, their affiliation and mindset about specific issue. By reviewing the news, one can understand the mindset of the specific media group, their ideology and affiliation. The aspects of how the same news is covered by different media groups; what language is used; and where the news has been placed in the newspaper have been explored in this study. All these questions have helped in analyzing the culture, mindset of the media groups of Pakistan and UAE. For the culture of a country is mirrored in the portrayal of news in its media – print or electronic.

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