

How We Know What We Know about Pakistan: New York Times news production, 1954–71

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Abstract

This article explores public knowledge creation by examining how the *New York Times* produced Pakistan news between 1954 and 1971, the formative period of United States of America (USA)–Pakistan relations. These years encapsulate not only the heyday of cooperation between the two governments, but also the American public's first major introduction to the South Asian country by the increasingly intrepid news media. A leader in shaping that introduction was the *New York Times*. While most studies of the American media focus on measuring the effect of news exposure and content on public opinion, this article focuses on the theoretically underexplored aspect of news production: foreign news gathering. With a lens on South Asia, it shows that foreign news gathering involves the straddling of on-the-ground political and logistical constraints that generate an atmosphere of high uncertainty. By exploring the limitations on news gathering faced by America's leading newspaper's foreign correspondents in Pakistan in the 1950s and 1960s, this article identifies an important historical source of the ambiguity characterizing USA–Pakistan relations. The findings are based on recently released archival material that offers rare insight into the news-production process.

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Introduction

Few relationships have been as critical to international security in the post-2001 era as that between the United States of America (USA) and Pakistan. Few have been as ambiguous. The current state of USA–Pakistan relations is widely viewed as ‘soap opera-esque’,¹ filled with a blistering mix of ‘perpetual mutual torment’² and decades of ‘magnificent delusions’.³ Underlying the ambiguity are competing historical narratives about the ‘staunchness’ of Pakistan’s alliance with the USA.⁴ These narratives are an artefact of multiple, often overlapping, sources of public knowledge—from official government statements to private conversations. Between the official and the private streams of information are the news media.

This article explores the broader question of how public knowledge is created with an examination of how the *New York Times* (‘the *NYT*’) produced Pakistan news during the formative period of USA–Pakistan relations: the years between 1954 and 1971. These years encapsulate not only the heyday of cooperation between the two governments,⁵ but also the American public’s first major introduction to the South Asian country by the increasingly intrepid news media. A leader in shaping that introduction was the *NYT*.

Public knowledge refers to the information that exists in the public domain and is accessible to most.⁶ Newspapers, especially one as prominent as the *NYT*, directly and deliberately shape public knowledge. Some have argued for limiting the impact of public knowledge on the news-reporting process in order to free it from what Patterson (2013) calls ‘information corruption’.⁷ The usual tools of news gathering may be insufficient for providing reliable information

¹ S. Islam, ‘View from abroad: deeply flawed US–Pakistan relations’, *Dawn*, 9 May 2014, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1105364/view-from-abroad-deeply-flawed-us-pakistan-relations>, [accessed 1 September 2017].

² D. S. Markey, *No Exit from Pakistan: America’s Tortured Relationship with Islamabad*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2013, p. 1.

³ H. Haqqani, *Magnificent Delusions: Pakistan, the United States, and an Epic History of Misunderstanding*, Public Affairs, New York, 2013.

⁴ Author’s interview with Zafar Jaspal (Director, Quaid-i-Azam University School of Politics and International Relations), Islamabad, Pakistan, 25 December 2014.

⁵ Haqqani, *Magnificent Delusions*.

⁶ G. Johanson, ‘Information, knowledge and research’, *Journal of Information Science*, vol. 23, no. 2, 1997, pp. 103–9.

⁷ T. E. Patterson, *Informing the News: The Need for Knowledge-Based Journalism*, Vintage Books, New York, 2013, p. 8.

when the journalists' insights are conditioned by the widespread beliefs in the public sphere. Stephens (2014) argues that journalists must exercise their judgement and wisdom in order to bolster the readers' understanding of the world.⁸

Most studies of the American media focus on measuring the effects of news exposure and content on public opinion.⁹ Significant attention has also been paid to considering newspapers as a business.¹⁰ The focus of this article is on the theoretically underexplored yet fundamental aspect of news production: foreign news gathering. Foreign news gathering refers to the fieldwork conducted by foreign correspondents to collect and disseminate the news from abroad. With a lens on South Asia, this article shows that foreign news gathering is neither a technical data-collection process nor merely a romantic endeavour. It involves the straddling of significant political and logistical constraints that generate an atmosphere of high uncertainty. By exploring the limitations on news gathering faced by America's leading newspaper's foreign correspondents in Pakistan in the 1950s and 1960s, this article also identifies an important historical source of the ambiguity characterizing USA–Pakistan relations.

The evidence presented in this article comes from the letters, cables, and confidential memoranda exchanged between *NYT* foreign

⁸ M. Stephens, *Beyond News: The Future of Journalism*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2014, p. xxvi.

⁹ M. Levendusky, *How Partisan Media Polarize America*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2013; S. Iyengar, *Media Politics: A Citizen's Guide*, W.W. Norton and Company, New York, 2011; N. J. Stroud, *Niche News: The Politics of News Choice*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2011; D. C. Mutz and B. Reeves, 'The new videomalaise: effects of televised incivility on political trust', *American Political Science Review*, vol. 99, no. 1, February 2005, pp. 1–15; for an overview of the less recent literature, see K. Arceneaux and M. Johnson, *Changing Minds or Changing Channels? Partisan News in an Age of Choice*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2013, pp. 16–29. For a recent study of Pakistani media, see Y. Biberman, S. Gul, and F. Ocakli, 'Channeling Islam: religious narratives on Pakistani television and their influence on Pakistani youth', *Asian Affairs: An American Review*, vol. 43, no. 3, 2016, pp. 78–97.

¹⁰ B. Cloud, *The Business of Newspapers on the Western Frontier*, University of Nevada Press, Reno, 1992; G. J. Baldasty, *E.W. Scripps and the Business of Newspapers*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1999; P. Bakker, 'Free daily newspapers—business models and strategies', *International Journal on Media Management*, vol. 4, no. 3, 2002, pp. 180–7; S. M. Mings and P. B. White, 'Profiting from online news: the search for viable business models', in *Internet Publishing and Beyond: The Economics of Digital Information and Intellectual Property*, B. Kahin and H. R. Varian (eds), MIT Press, Cambridge, 2000, pp. 62–96; J. Herbert and N. Thurman, 'Paid content strategies for news websites: an empirical study of british newspapers' online business models', *Journalism Practice*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2007, pp. 208–26.

correspondents in Pakistan and news editors in New York between the years 1963 and 1971. The material comes from the recently released New York Times Foreign Desk Records. The archival evidence is supplemented with interviews; declassified government documents; and fieldwork in Pakistan, India (including Kashmir), and Bangladesh.

Norms, perceptions, and the fog of news

‘All action takes place, so to speak, in a kind of twilight, which like a fog or moonlight, often tends to make things seem grotesque and larger than they really are,’ Carl von Clausewitz famously observed of war. A similar observation may be made of news gathering, especially in a foreign context. Foreign correspondents pursue news stories in an environment that is, to varying degrees, uncertain and unfamiliar. What they discover, like the objects in a fog, are products of both material reality and imagination. The literature has long grappled with the tension between observing and imagining the news—between objectivity and subjectivity. Underlying the question of whether the news is a function of impartial, rules-based reporting of facts or inter-subjective interpretation are two distinctive approaches. The latter formulation may be conceived as the domain of *constructivism*, while the former may be referred to as *institutionalism*.

The institutionalist approach to news gathering emphasizes the role of rules and procedures developed and congealed over time. American journalism has drastically evolved since the penny press revolution of the 1830s, prior to which newspapers were either commercial or political, with the latter financed by political parties or politicians. The business model of the less expensive ‘penny papers’, which were sold on the street, relied on wide circulation and advertising, rather than subscription fees and subsidies from political parties. Their relative political independence and news reporting served primarily to attract more readers, rather than to advance professional journalism. By shifting the newspaper’s attention from covering ‘the affairs of an elite’ to attracting ‘an increasingly varied, urban, and middle-class society’, the penny press established the modern idea of news.¹¹

¹¹ M. Schudson, *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers*, Basic Books, New York, 1978, pp. 22–3.

The notion that news reporting must be objective has been widely attributed to the establishment of the Associated Press in 1846. However, the Associated Press practised neutral reporting out of necessity, as it gathered news for politically diverse newspapers. It was the *NYT* that, by the end of the nineteenth century, acquired a reputation for consciously and most successfully seeking objectivity. The newspaper was founded in 1851 and rapidly grew into a powerful, globally recognized journalistic institution. Gay Talese (1969) described its influence on public opinion and global reach in his classic account of the newspaper:

... each day, barring labor strikes or hydrogen bombs, it [the *NYT* newspaper] would appear in 11,464 cities around the nation and in all the capitals of the world, fifty copies going to the White House, thirty-nine copies to Moscow, a few smuggled into Peking, and a thick Sunday edition flown each weekend to a foreign minister in Taiwan, for which he would each time pay \$16.40. He would pay this because, with thousands of other isolated men in all corners of the earth, he required *The Times* as necessary proof of the world's existence, a barometer of its pressure, an assessor of its sanity.¹²

The First World War and its aftermath also contributed to the institutionalization of American journalism. The journalists' experience with propaganda and public relations fostered cynicism—the view that ‘facts themselves, or what they had taken to be facts, could not be trusted’.¹³ One response was the development of new genres of subjective reporting, such as the political column. The other was institutionalization—the replacement of ‘simple faith in facts with allegiance to rules and procedures created for a world in which even facts were in question’.¹⁴ What emerged was ‘a corporate bureaucracy’,¹⁵ accompanied by division of labour, specialization of function, and increased complexity. Further reinforcing the institutionalization of journalism was the journalistic creed, with a set of conventions that ostensibly ‘perform for the reporter the function that rules of evidence do for the scientists’.¹⁶

¹² G. Talese, *The Kingdom and the Power*, New American Library, New York, 1969, p. 72.

¹³ Schudson, *Discovering the News*, p. 7.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ D. C. Hallin, *The ‘Uncensored War’: The Media and Vietnam*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1986, p. 7.

¹⁶ L. V. Sigal, *Reporters and Officials: The Organization and Politics of Newsmaking*, D.C. Heath and Company, Lexington, 1973, p. 3.

The constructivist approach challenges the institutionalist faith in rules-based objectivity. It conceptualizes news as an artefact of socially learned beliefs about society. Human behaviour is less a function of material reality than the social values that assign meaning to both the observed and unobserved phenomena.¹⁷ These values are essentially theories about how the world works or should work and, therefore, shape how events are interpreted. Our understanding of what is news-worthy is based on our conception of what is not news-worthy—that which is too ordinary to report.

Social construction plays a particularly important role in journalism because of the lack of universally shared criteria for distinguishing between news and non-news. Constructivists argue that news gathering ultimately hinges on the correspondent's 'opinion' of what news is, and what is news-worthy.¹⁸ A successful reporter has 'antennae, so to speak, that have become sensitive to what the trade regards as news, but he cannot describe it in terms that are discriminating and non-tautological'.¹⁹ What the trade regards as news, according to the constructivist perspective, is 'socially constructed, elaborated in the interaction of the news-making players with one another'.²⁰

While the ideas of what news is and what news-worthiness means are indeed socially constructed, the scope for interpretation has certainly narrowed with the bureaucratization and standardization of news production. Politics has also played a key role in shaping both the social construction and the institutionalization of news. The journalistic quest for objectivity has been, to a large extent, also a quest for professional autonomy. Hallin (1986) notes that American journalism of the second half of the twentieth century has developed a strong hostility toward the wielders of political power while, at the same time, gained unprecedented access to the government: 'Structurally the American news media are both highly autonomous from direct political control and, through the routines of the news-gathering process, deeply intertwined in the actual operation of government.'²¹

¹⁷ D. Berkowitz, *Social Meanings of News*, SAGE Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA, 1997, p. xii.

¹⁸ M. Mayer, *Making News*, Doubleday and Company, Garden City, NY, 1987, p. 20.

¹⁹ B. C. Cohen, *The Press and Foreign Policy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1963, p. 54.

²⁰ Schudson, *Discovering the News*, p. 16, emphasis in original.

²¹ Hallin, *The 'Uncensored War'*, p. 8.

The term ‘Fourth Estate’ has been popularly used as a shorthand for the news media, connoting its role as a major institution of representative democracy.²² As journalist Walter Lippman emphasized, democracy requires a ‘steady supply of trustworthy and relevant news’.²³ Still, Hallin (1986) argues that journalists employ different understandings of objectivity depending on whether the story they cover is deemed consensual, controversial, or deviant in the existing power structure. The sphere of deviance contains the political actors and views deemed unworthy of consideration by the political mainstream of the society and, consequently, journalistic neutrality does not apply there. A typical example of deviance in the USA context is communism. By abandoning neutrality in the domain of deviance, journalists reinforce ‘the limits of acceptable political conflict’.²⁴

The institutional and constructivist approaches to journalism are particularly useful for understanding the ‘strategic level’ of news gathering—the level at which news objectives are defined and resources for meeting them are allocated (by editors). Still missing is a framework accounting for the inescapable ‘tactical’ elements of news gathering: the on-the-ground constraints shaping the process. The next section develops such a framework.

A structural approach to news gathering

This section develops a theoretical approach to news gathering by supplementing the strategic factors already identified in the literature—perceptions and norms—with the tactical constraints correspondents face while in the field. It identifies two structural factors that constrain news gathering on the ground. The emphasis on structure does not imply a complete absence of agency, but rather illuminates the main factors constraining agents. This article identifies the structural factors constraining the agency of foreign correspondents and, consequently, the effects of institutional norms and individual perceptions. These factors are best seen not as ‘independent variables’, but as mechanisms driving the

²² J. Schultz, *Reviving the Fourth Estate: Democracy, Accountability and the Media*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998, p. 48.

²³ W. Lippmann, *Liberty and the News*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2008 [1920], p. 6.

²⁴ Hallin, *The ‘Uncensored War’*, p. 117.

news-gathering *process*.²⁵ Isolating the mechanisms sheds light on a phenomenon that may otherwise seem chaotic or idiosyncratic. It does not make it possible to predict the news, but it does allow us better to understand how the news is collected.

The first mechanism is *logistical*. Logistics refers to the correspondents' movement and maintenance. Operating on foreign ground is usually tougher than on one's own, and some foreign territories are more physically and psychologically demanding than others. Travellers to Pakistan in the 1950s and 1960s were often forewarned: 'Karachi is not Paris.'²⁶ There is also a critical spatial component to news gathering. The correspondent is required to step outside of his or her office and cover as much physical ground as possible. The *NYT* editors frequently reminded their correspondents that 'Karachi is not Pakistan' (i.e. they ought to cover more than just the capital) and to include in their reports 'some of the basic problems of your territory and something about the people, their lives and their attitudes'.²⁷ The capacity to do this is structured by the logistical mechanism of news gathering.

The second mechanism is *political*, and it contains both a 'supply' and a 'demand' component. On the supply side is the prevailing political climate in the host country. This climate is shaped by the country's regime type—be it democratic or authoritarian—as well as the nature of its relationship with other countries, most notably the foreign correspondent's home base. Authoritarian regimes, such as the one faced by *NYT* correspondents in Pakistan in the 1950s and 1960s, are characterized by low transparency, high censorship, and

²⁵ My goal is not to account for variation in news-gathering outcomes, but rather to explicate the main mechanisms driving the process. The mechanisms certainly influence the outcomes, but they do not determine them. The causes, or 'independent variables', of news-gathering outcomes are typically the 'news-worthy' events themselves. The institutionalist and constructivist approaches tackle the question of why some events are deemed news-worthy and how their transmission influences public opinion, but they do not theoretically illuminate how the ostensibly news-worthy events actually become (or fail to become) the news. The latter is the goal of this article.

²⁶ J. Nevard, 'As others see us: "wretched" Karachi', *New York Times*, 24 November 1963, in *New York Times Company Records: Foreign Desk Records, 1948–1993*, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, Box 70, Folder 5, 'Jacques Nevard—Foreign Desk—1964'.

²⁷ Letter from Emanuel R. Freedman to Jacques Nevard, 21 November 1963, *New York Times Company Records: Foreign Desk Records, 1948–1993*, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, Box 70, Folder 4, 'Jacques Nevard—Foreign Desk—1959–1960'.

widespread propaganda, which significantly affect the news-gathering process. On the demand side are the preferences and demands of the editors and readers. Whether and how their story will be published and read are inescapable professional considerations of journalists. The task of making Pakistan intelligible and interesting to the American audience fell primarily on foreign correspondents.

The next sections provide an in-depth examination of how logistical and political constraints significantly structured the news-gathering process for *NYT* correspondents in Pakistan during the formative period of USA–Pakistan relations (1954–71). First, a background section provides an overview of the major historical events shaping the relationship between the two countries. The subsequent empirical analysis is divided into three time periods: 1950s, 1960s, and 1969–71. There is marked variation in the foreign correspondents' on-the-ground experience across these periods. In the 1950s, while Pakistan was actively courting the USA for economic and military aid and the *NYT* was just setting up in the country, logistical constraints dominated. In the 1960s, with Pakistan under military rule and more seasoned correspondents on the ground, it was the political constraints that most actively shaped the news-gathering process—so much so that the newspaper failed to anticipate a war erupting between Pakistan and India in 1965. In 1969–71, Pakistan was on the precipice of a civil war and another war with India. The *NYT* foreign correspondents foresaw neither, due to both political and logistical limitations to their work. *NYT* Foreign News Editor Emanuel R. Freedman (who held the position for nearly two decades) emphasized that the task of the *NYT* foreign correspondent was to 'cover important situations as they are developing as well as when they burst into fireworks' so that the public is not 'caught by surprise when the crises arise'.²⁸ Neither the institutionalist nor the constructivist accounts adequately explain why the *NYT* and its readers were caught off guard when major crises erupted in South Asia. The ensuing sections show how taking into account the logistical and political constraints to news gathering helps us better to understand how the American public came to know Pakistan during the formative years of USA–Pakistan relations.

²⁸ Letter from Emanuel R. Freedman to Dan Harrison, 16 March 1964, *New York Times Company Records: Foreign Desk Records, 1948–1993*, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, Box 125, Folder 1, 'Editorial Policy International News—1952–1978'.

Historical context of *New York Times* news gathering in Pakistan

The early work of the *NYT* foreign correspondents in Pakistan was far less objective than the institutionalist ideal while, at the same time, far less subjective than the constructivist expectation. It was deeply affected by the country's political climate and the state of USA–Pakistan relations. Most consequential was the divergence between the existing state of the relationship and that which was desired by the Pakistani leadership. The wider the expectations gap, the more difficult was the work, and life, of the correspondents. The Pakistani leadership sought to build a more profitable alliance with the USA. Rather than wooing the Americans by enabling deeper and more favourable news coverage, it manipulated the ground experience of key USA representatives, among whom were *NYT* correspondents, in Pakistan to signal displeasure. This was coupled with the continued insistence that the newspaper base a correspondent in the country.

Pakistan pursued an alliance with the USA soon after gaining independence in 1947. The nation's founding father, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, requested \$2 billion in military and civilian aid, but the request was rejected in the aftermath of Pakistan's first war with India in 1947–48.²⁹ It was then-army chief Ayub Khan who succeeded in establishing the USA–Pakistan military pact in 1954 by stressing his country's strategic location and role in the global fight against communism. Throughout the Cold War, the USA public opinion was generally more sympathetic to Pakistan's rival—India—because of its status as a democracy. India also attracted significantly more USA national news coverage than did Pakistan (see [Figure 1](#)), until the late 1980s (even during most of the Soviet war in Afghanistan, in which Pakistan played a key role). The *NYT* followed—or, to some extent, led—the national pattern in Pakistan news coverage in the 1950s through 1970s (see [Figure 2](#)). Starting in the late 1980s, however, it parted ways with the national trends by continuing to pay closer attention to India than to Pakistan.³⁰

²⁹ S. Nawaz, *Crossed Swords: Pakistan, Its Army, and the Wars Within*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2008, p. 94.

³⁰ These data were attained through ProQuest. For [Figure 2](#), the search focused on USA national newspapers and the document type was centred on articles, front-page/cover stories, and news. For the *New York Times* search ([Figure 3](#)), the above criteria applied and the search centred on the ProQuest Historical Newspapers: New York Times with Index database.

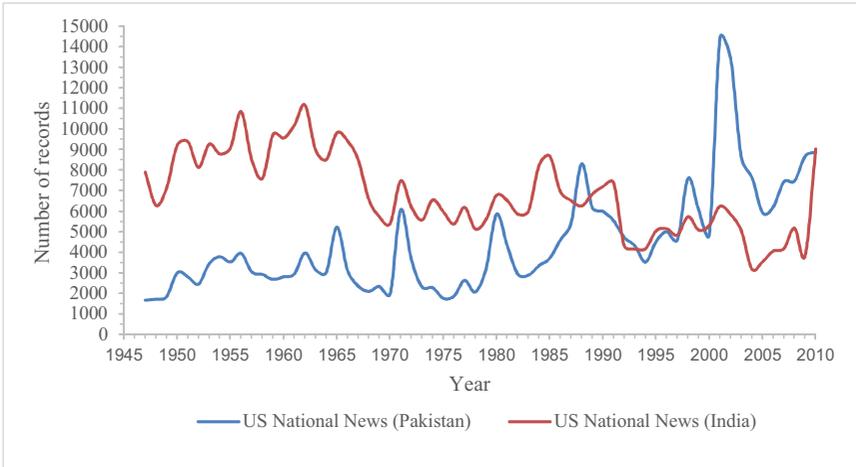


Figure 1. (Colour online) References to India and Pakistan in United States of America national news

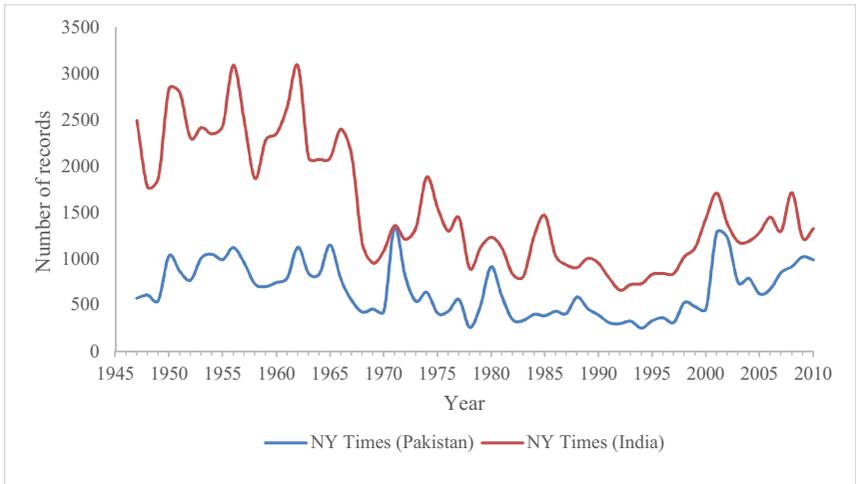


Figure 2. (Colour online) References to India and Pakistan in the *New York Times*

Pakistan’s oscillation between democracy and dictatorship made USA alliance with the country a tougher sell to the American public.³¹ Consequently, rather than appealing to the Americans on the basis of shared values, Ayub (and his successors) played the geostrategic

³¹ At the same time, India’s neutralism and unwillingness to engage in the Cold War frustrated USA officials.

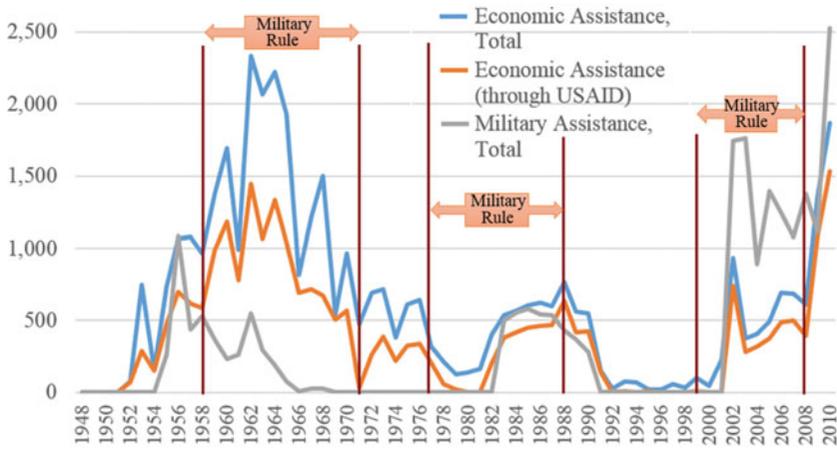


Figure 3. (Colour online) United States of America assistance to Pakistan, 1948–2010. Note: All figures are in US\$ (millions). Figures are adjusted for inflation and presented in 2009 constant dollars. *Source:* Wren Elhai, Center for Global Development (2011), data presented in ‘Sixty years of US aid to Pakistan’, *The Guardian*, 11 July 2011, <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2011/jul/11/us-aid-to-pakistan#data>, [accessed 1 September 2017].

card while attributing the less savoury Pakistani policies to Indian aggression. He forewarned the Americans that “Pakistan must not be taken for granted.” Anything less than (a sufficient amount of) aid which would enable it to defend itself would be “futile and a waste of time.” Moreover, it would expose Pakistan to communist and Indian pressure and “accentuate its internal difficulties”.³²

Ayub seized power following a military coup in 1958 and imposed martial law; in 1969, he was briefly replaced by another general, and another round of martial law. In its professed quest for democracy and freedom around the world, the USA turned a blind eye to the authoritarian tendencies of its allies. Historically, USA aid to Pakistan has been significantly larger during the country’s three periods of military rule (1958–71, 1977–88, and 1999–2008) than when a civilian government was in power. Figure 3 displays the trend in USA economic and military assistance to Pakistan. It was most substantial in the 1950s and 1960s, until the start in 2001 of the USA War on Terror, in which Pakistan has played a prominent role. Between the years 1954 and 1971, Pakistan received more military aid than when it was directly involved in America’s proxy war against the Soviet Union

³² Nawaz, *Crossed Swords*, p. 112.

in Afghanistan in 1979–89. However, the funding did little to clear the fog of news for the *NYT* correspondents in Pakistan.

A reporter's paradise? Pakistan news gathering in the 1950s

In the early 1950s, the *NYT* was new to Pakistan, Karachi was courting Washington for military and economic aid, and civilian rule made Pakistan's political climate more relaxed and open. The serious constraints to news-gathering *NYT* correspondents faced were mainly logistical, rather than political, in nature.

Pakistan was initially covered by Michael James. Born in Paris, James attended Princeton University before enlisting in the Army Air Corps soon after Pearl Harbor. His previous assignment involved covering the Korean War. His reporting was scant, as James was battling 'inexcusable procrastination' and various illnesses, including malaria and what the local doctors called 'sand-fly fever'. His logistical impairments influenced the quality of the news coming out of Pakistan. For example, in the summer of 1952, James identified several news possibilities originating out of the country: (1) a war over Kashmir; (2) Pakistan becoming a leader of the Muslim world; and (3) the entire country collapsing.³³ None of these reflected the reality. It would be more than a decade before Pakistan engaged in another war over Kashmir. Neither did Pakistan ever collapse nor become a leader of the Muslim world. By November 1952, the *NYT* ended James's assignment, citing the correspondent's 'unsatisfactory job'.³⁴

A foreign desk memorandum captures what the newspaper expected of its foreign correspondents:

Wherever it is feasible a highlight typifying a relevant aspect of that country's life should be incorporated high in the story concerned.

Sometimes a statistic—an average monthly wage—immediately pinpoints the economic status of that country. In an appropriate story a brief reference to essential customs will bring to life for an American reader just how people in a foreign country live.

³³ Letter from Michael James to Turner Catledge, 1 July 1952, *New York Times Company Records: Foreign Desk Records, 1948–1993*, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, Box 54, Folder 8, 'James, Michael: Foreign Desk, 1951–1958'.

³⁴ Memorandum for McCraw, Bernstein, and Jordan from Emanuel R. Freedman, 7 November 1952, Box 54, Folder 8, 'James, Michael: Foreign Desk, 1951–1958'.

Perhaps an anecdote, preferably witty, will set the tone for a piece and fetch a reader's interest.

Of course—this we have been doing for some time—some analogy with an American situation will clarify a point.³⁵

Jack Callahan was responsible for covering Pakistan after James. But his work was also deemed unsatisfactory. The correspondent was not spending enough time outside of his office. For example, his 'Pakistan would take key anti-Soviet role' (28 May 1954), was based on a statement by a nameless 'responsible government official' and superficial observations of public behaviours. Callahan was recalled from Pakistan after a serious mistake in one of his stories was caught only after it appeared in print. 'If we cannot rely on the correspondent to summarise a document accurately, it is almost time to give up,' Freedman bemoaned.³⁶

Freedman held the foreign news editor position between 1948 and 1965. Having started his career at *The Times* as a copyreader on the foreign desk and then running the desk at the London bureau (1945–48), Freedman's reputation as '[r]eliable, solid, no bad habits'³⁷ quickly earned him the foreign news editor job. He managed roughly 50 foreign correspondents. Before dismissing Callahan, Freedman consulted with Abe M. Rosenthal, a foreign correspondent with experience in India and Pakistan. Rosenthal pointed out that the main impediments faced by Callahan in Pakistan did not stem from a particularly difficult political climate. He observed that, while Callahan 'understands the situation in Pakistan', he is not 'a good or even fairly good' writer. 'I don't have to tell you that there is nothing esoteric or mysterious about constructing a story,' Rosenthal elaborated. 'But from what I have seen a reporter either learns how to do it fairly quickly or he never learns. He [Callahan] cannot relax at a typewriter; he attacks a story as if it were his enemy. Insecurity fills him.'³⁸

³⁵ Memorandum from Nathaniel M. Gerstenzang for Emanuel R. Freedman, 20 June 1956, *New York Times Company Records: Foreign Desk Records, 1948–1993*, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, Box 125, Folder 2, 'Editorial Policy International News—1952–1978'.

³⁶ Letter from Emanuel R. Freedman to Abe M. Rosenthal, 28 December 1955, Box 79, Folder 2, 'Rosenthal, Abe M.: Foreign Desk, 1956'.

³⁷ Talese, *The Kingdom and the Power*, p. 119.

³⁸ Personal letter from Abe M. Rosenthal to Emanuel R. Freedman, 4 January 1956, Box 79, Folder 2, 'Rosenthal, Abe M.: Foreign Desk, 1956'.

Rosenthal's own opinion of Pakistan was that it was 'a reporter's paradise'. The 1950s were the most open Pakistan had been or would be to American journalists for decades to come. Rosenthal was particularly impressed with the ease with which he made contacts. The country appeared 'wide open to American correspondents, especially New York Times men. It was not only that I was able to see everybody on short notice. It was that they talked frankly and fully'.³⁹ Rosenthal compared his experience in Pakistan with that in India, 'where every interview is a fencing match and sometimes you leave an office feeling sure you know less than when you walked in'.⁴⁰

Pakistan may not have been a 'paradise' for reporters—it certainly required some effort. Hindered by the logistics of opening and staffing a Pakistan bureau, the *NYT* missed an opportunity to provide the American public an informed introduction to the country.

A sideshow to the main event: Pakistan news gathering in the 1960s

During the 1960s, with an authoritarian military regime preoccupied with being taken for granted by the USA,⁴¹ Pakistan was very far from a reporter's paradise. 'At the moment I'm deeper in red tape, official and commercial, than I've ever been before,' *NYT* foreign correspondent Jacques Nevard reported to Freedman. 'While an end to it is in sight, it's elusive and gives a distinct impression of moving farther away from time to time.'⁴² The year was 1963, and Nevard had just spent his first ten days in Pakistan. The Pakistani leadership had finally been granted its request of *NYT* staffing the country, and Nevard was irked by the officials' seeming unwillingness to do 'anything to make it any

³⁹ Rosenthal's remarks are supported by the quality of his reporting. For example, in 'Pakistan faces threat to unity' (14 April 1957), the correspondent bases his observations on a wide range of voices—from political leaders to ordinary citizens.

⁴⁰ Personal letter from Abe M. Rosenthal to Emanuel R. Freedman, 4 January 1956.

⁴¹ M. F. H. Beg, 'Mistrust in the American Pakistan alliance', unused manuscript, 15 April 1963, *New York Times Company Records: Foreign Desk Records, 1948–1993*, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, Box 146, Folder 2, 'Pakistan Stringers, Foreign Desk, 1953–1962'.

⁴² Letter from Jacques Nevard to Emanuel R. Freedman, 2 October 1963, *New York Times Company Records: Foreign Desk Records, 1948–1993*, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, Box 70, Folder 4, 'Jacques Nevard—Foreign Desk—1959–1960'.

easier' for him 'to establish a residence-cum-office here and get to work'.⁴³

Nevard was born in 1925, in New York City. Having not completed college, he was a self-styled 'history buff'. He preferred to be stationed in Western Europe, but was open to other locations, so long as his wife—'an enthusiastic voyageur'—and three young children could accompany him. When applying for a position at the *NYT*, Nevard requested three foreign assignments of three years each; in nine years, his oldest child would be entering college. He thought of the experience abroad as preparation for a long-term career at *The Times*. Nevard had previously spent two years in the United Kingdom and France in military service, and a *NYT* evaluator described his interest in becoming a *NYT* foreign correspondent as 'intense'.⁴⁴ Prior to his assignment in Karachi, Nevard was stationed in Hong Kong.

To Nevard, the main impediments were not logistical, but political. As he explained to his foreign editor:

Believe me, Karachi is no shock to anyone who has spent any time at all in Southeast Asia—if anything, it's a more pleasant place than many I've spent time in, and much more pleasant than I had prepared myself to expect. The weather is hot (but nowhere as uncomfortable as many places I've worked in the past three years) and there is a steady breeze from the Arabian Sea that makes for pleasant coolness wherever there is shade.⁴⁵

One cause of Nevard's fewer logistical constraints was the assistance of a *NYT* stringer, Nanji. Nanji's assistance to Nevard included significant legwork, keeping files in order, and talking over stories and story ideas. When Nevard was away, Nanji spent three or more hours a day at his office. The *NYT* did not, however, adequately compensate Nanji. Lelyveld observed that Nanji's 'financial distress . . . seems real enough', and was the result of *NYT* 'paying him poorly, considering what he was doing'.⁴⁶ Yet, it appears Nanji found the work he was doing for *NYT* at least somewhat satisfying: he had declined an offer from *Time*, which paid more than *NYT*.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ *New York Times Company Records: Foreign Desk Records, 1948–1993*, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, Box 70, Folder 5, 'Nevard, Jacques: Foreign Desk, 1964'.

⁴⁵ Letter from Nevard to Freedman, 2 October 1963.

⁴⁶ Letter from Joseph Lelyveld to Seymour Topping, 21 July 1967, *New York Times Company Records: Foreign Desk Records, 1948–1993*, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, Box 61, Folder 2, 'Lelyveld, Joseph, Foreign Desk, 1967'.

Though long-awaited by Pakistani officials, Nevard's arrival coincided with increasing anxieties in Pakistan over the extant nature of USA–Pakistan relations. Washington had given some aid to Pakistan's main rival, India, following China's invasion in 1962. A *NYT* Rawalpindi-based stringer warned the newspaper before Nevard's arrival that the correspondent 'would be profoundly shocked to find that things are not going too well for them with their "staunch ally"'. He explained that the 'bitterness' was caused by 'the feeling that the building up of India's war potential without a Kashmir settlement would cause a military imbalance with Pakistan'.⁴⁷ India and Pakistan's contest over the status of Kashmir had previously led to the 1947–48 war between the two countries.⁴⁸

The editor's response to Nevard's first letter from Pakistan shows a push for more active, but rules-based, engagement. Freedman communicated his expectation that Nevard overcome the logistical and political obstacles and cover the news in Pakistan 'with the same professional standards and norms' as in Washington.⁴⁹ As the longest-serving foreign news editor, Freedman played a key role in institutionalizing the no-nonsense culture at *The Times*. Talese (1969) described Freedman as 'an arm of *The Times*, an instrument of the institution, a rock in its foundation'.⁵⁰ Freedman's reply to Nevard was characteristically firm but encouraging:

Frankly, Jacques, I feel that in areas such as yours it is often necessary to adjust to many of the daily difficulties in the expectation that they will be solved in time—and start bearing down on the job in hand. Now that you have been on the scene for a month, let me suggest in all friendliness that the time has come to readjust your priorities in favor of a regular flow of meaningful copy from Karachi and elsewhere. Let's go.⁵¹

Freedman's attitude toward red tape and censorship in foreign countries is well captured in his letter to a foreign correspondent in Moscow, where the situation was even more difficult: 'please don't let the specter of censorship inhibit you too much. I sometimes

⁴⁷ Beg, 'Mistrust in the American Pakistan alliance'.

⁴⁸ At the time, the second India–Pakistan war was only two years away.

⁴⁹ Cohen, *The Press and Foreign Policy*, p. 97.

⁵⁰ Talese, *The Kingdom and the Power*, p. 119.

⁵¹ Letter from Emanuel R. Freedman to Jacques Nevard, 23 October 1963, *New York Times Company Records: Foreign Desk Records, 1948–1993*, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, Box 70, Folder 4, 'Jacques Nevard—Foreign Desk—1959–1960'.

wonder whether even the censors wouldn't like to see more lively and entertaining copy.⁵²

The editors' demand for 'more lively' news coverage was continuously reinforced through numerous correspondences, which structured the correspondents' professional considerations. As Clifton Daniel, managing editor of *NYT* (1964–69), reminded Nevard:

Your first job is to sell your story to the editor in New York. You have to convince him that it is important or interesting and that there are good reasons for printing your piece instead of the dozens of others that are offered to him every evening. The story must itself give its own *raison d'être*. You can't expect the editor or the reader to understand the significance of every piece of copy unless the copy itself states or indicates what its significance is. ... you have to explain everything.⁵³

The type of instructions *NYT* editors gave to foreign correspondents in Pakistan were not particularly unique to the country, or the region. For example, Clifton Daniel also reminded a foreign correspondent in Brazil:

The New York Times is not a trade paper for college professors, foreign ministers, manufacturers, trade unionists or any other specialized group. It is a newspaper of general circulation intended for the general reader, and every reader is a layman. He may not be a layman when it comes to business, but he is when it comes to art. He may not be a layman when it comes to music, but he is when it comes to politics.⁵⁴

The editors' demand for livelier coverage led Nevard to prepare an article with particularly attention-grabbing language. It described Karachi as 'probably the most unloved big city in the world'.⁵⁵ The piece immediately drew the ire of informed *NYT* readers, who described Nevard's characterization of Karachi as wildly inaccurate. For example, the president of the State University of New York Agricultural and Technical University wrote to the editor:

⁵² Letter from Emanuel R. Freedman to William Jorden, 11 February 1957, *New York Times Company Records: Foreign Desk Records, 1948–1993*, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, Box 125, Folder 2, 'Editorial Policy International News—1952–1978'.

⁵³ Letter from Clifton Daniel to Jacques Nevard, 1967, *New York Times Company Records: Foreign Desk Records, 1948–1993*, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, Box 70, Folder 1, 'Jacques Nevard—Foreign Desk—1959–1960'.

⁵⁴ Letter from Clifton Daniel to Juan de Onis, 8 November 1963, *New York Times Company Records: Foreign Desk Records, 1948–1993*, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, Box 125, Folder 1, 'Editorial Policy International News—1952–1978'.

⁵⁵ Nevard, 'As others see us'.

Pakistan certainly faces formidable problems in her efforts to improve the living standards of her people. This is particularly true in East Pakistan where more than fifty million people are crowded into a land only a little larger than the State of New York. Pakistan needs the help of the rest of the World and inaccurate reporting cannot help, particularly when the debate on Foreign Aid is at such a critical stage in the United States Congress.⁵⁶

Another reader, a resident of Pakistan, wrote a scathing critique of Nevard's piece to the editors:

Your esteemed representative appears only to see the worst side of the country and none of the bright things, or the generous hospitality of the people among Karachi's 2.5 million souls . . . Your Nevard does not see a million things that make Karachi so pleasant, he only see's [*sic*] the dirt while residing in the gilded comfort BECAUSE HE ONLY LOOKS FOR THE DIRT AND NOT THE NICE THINGS. . . . Anywhere in Pakistan, I could show you the kindness offered to Americans and speak of greetings and gifts brought unexpectedly on our holidays—because we are foreign and far from home . . . and because the Karachi-ites want us to feel at home.⁵⁷

The editor's response to the above letter shows the high degree of confidence Nevard enjoyed in New York. Rosenthal wrote:

I think he [Nevard] is an honest and decent newspaperman doing his best to understand a new and difficult country. I'm sure you will agree that it is a reporter's obligation to write about those things he considers important even if they do not shed particular glory on the country in which he is stationed.⁵⁸

After his first year in Pakistan, Nevard developed scepticism about the quality of news coming out of the country. He advised 'extreme caution' when using material that came from the stringers.

Nevard explained that the stringers were 'being subjected to constantly increasing pressure from the Pakistan government'.⁵⁹ At

⁵⁶ Letter from Albert E. French (President of State University of New York Agricultural and Technical University) to Editor of the New York Times, 15 December 1963, *New York Times Company Records: Foreign Desk Records, 1948–1993*, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, Box 70, Folder 4, 'Nevard, Jacques: Foreign Desk, 1959–1960'.

⁵⁷ Letter from Camille Mirepoix to A.M. Rosenthal, 4 May 1964, *New York Times Company Records: Foreign Desk Records, 1948–1993*, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, Box 70, Folder 5, 'Nevard, Jacques: Foreign Desk, 1964'.

⁵⁸ Letter from A.M. Rosenthal to Camille Mirepoix, 8 May 1964, 'Nevard, Jacques: Foreign Desk, 1964'.

⁵⁹ Letter from Jacques M. Nevard to Emmanuel R. Freedman, 29 September 1964, *New York Times Company Records: Foreign Desk Records, 1948–1993*, Manuscripts and

the same time, the stringers were critical to the operation because the press conferences held by Pakistani officials were typically open only to Pakistani reporters, and native Urdu speakers were required for the ‘speaking chores’.⁶⁰ The *NYT* foreign desk was, at the time, very conscious about the foreign-language deficit among its correspondents: ‘We are badly in need of better language facilities. Our correspondents list facilities in many languages, but in reality they are deficient even in basic tongues.’⁶¹

The wire service for news on Pakistan was also unreliable. Nevard observed that the Associated Press (AP) did not staff Pakistan, ‘Except on the rare occasion when a staffer comes over from India, anything that is transmitted from Pakistan under an AP logo is actually put out by an employee of one of the Pakistani “news” agencies; actually a government propaganda agency’.⁶² The United Press International (UPI) had a young American correspondent in Pakistan until 1964, but ‘like other foreign wire services, had to sell to one of the Pakistani “news” agencies (see above for description of these), UPI pulled their American out’.⁶³ Finally, Reuters, Nevard observed, from time to time carried a bogus dateline. One example is Reuters’ popular Dacca-datelined story describing scenes of carnage and estimating the number of individuals killed. The Reuters correspondent was based in Karachi and the news agency ‘did not then and still does not have a Dacca stringer. That story was written in Karachi by the Reuter [*sic*] correspondent before he went to Dacca’.⁶⁴

Nevard observed that it was not only the journalists who experienced pressure from the government authorities. The country was not a typical tourist destination for Americans, and consequently many of the Americans who visited Pakistan were USA government employees. Nevard noted that even those who visited Pakistan under the aegis of the USA government ‘provide a field day for all kinds of local civil servants’.⁶⁵

Archives Division, The New York Public Library, Box 70, Folder 5, ‘Nevard, Jacques: Foreign Desk, 1964’.

⁶⁰ Letter from Nevard to Freedman, 2 October 1963.

⁶¹ ‘Foreign News Coverage’, 26 February 1965, *New York Times Company Records: Foreign Desk Records, 1948–1993*, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, Box 125, Folder 1, ‘Editorial Policy International News—1952–1978’.

⁶² Letter from Jacques M. Nevard to Emmanuel R. Freedman, 29 September 1964.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Letter from Nevard to Freedman, 2 October 1963.

Owing to the political constraints on his work, by the summer of 1964, Nevard gave up on covering the country. 'I feel Pakistan is just a part of the India story; that it is a sideshow to the main event,' he wrote to Freedman. 'My personal opinion is that Pakistan simply does not generate enough news to warrant full time coverage by a resident correspondent.'⁶⁶ He advised that the newspaper rely on correspondents from India to 'make swings into Pakistan as news warrants'.⁶⁷ Unbeknownst to Nevard, Pakistan was about to generate a lot of news. Ayub had begun preparing a covert infiltration of India-controlled Kashmir, which was to lead to the second India–Pakistan war.⁶⁸ Nevard's misjudgement of the situation in Pakistan was a direct result of the political constraints he faced on the ground.

The *NYT* followed Nevard's advice of closing the Pakistan bureau. The new foreign editor, Seymour Topping, observed that the Pakistani officials were 'very anxious to have us open the Karachi bureau'.⁶⁹ Topping worked actively to shape the foreign news-gathering process by instituting new norms and restructuring the Foreign News Copy Desk in New York. He believed the newspaper should be 'more selective' in the details it publishes, and pushed correspondents to cover the 'social, intellectual and technological revolutions moving nations'.⁷⁰ In his 1968 'Foreign Desk Guidelines', Topping instructed the foreign correspondents to 'report more about how the people live, and what they and their societies look like, how their institutions and systems operate'.⁷¹ He also helped to place foreign news at the forefront, having played a key role in transforming the daily *Times* into a four-section paper, with foreign news (along with national news) placed in the first section. The four-section paper became a model for other newspapers.⁷²

Topping told the Pakistani officials that *NYT* would reopen its bureau only after it was assured that the new correspondent 'would be free of

⁶⁶ Letter from Nevard to Freedman, 19 July 1964, *New York Times Company Records: Foreign Desk Records, 1948–1993*, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, Box 70, Folder 5, 'Nevard, Jacques: Foreign Desk, 1964'.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ M. Musa, *My Version: India–Pakistan War, 1965*, Wajidalis, Lahore, 1983, pp. 4–5.

⁶⁹ Letter from Seymour Topping to Joseph Lelyveld, 31 March 1967, Box 61, Folder 2, 'Lelyveld, Joseph, Foreign Desk, 1967'.

⁷⁰ S. Topping, *On the Front Lines of the Cold War: An American Correspondent's Journal from the Chinese Civil War to the Cuban Missile Crisis and Vietnam*, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, LA, 2010, p. 318.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 319–20.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 321.

political censorship and the kind of harassment which Jacques Nevard was subjected to'.⁷³ Until then, Pakistan was covered from Delhi by Joseph Lelyveld. Lelyveld was a graduate of Harvard College and Columbia School of Journalism, as well as a Fulbright Scholar. He was promoted from the position of a copy editor to foreign correspondent after only three years on the job. He was later to earn a Pulitzer Prize for his work on South Africa, as well as serve as the executive editor of *The Times* (1994–2001).

The Pakistani government retaliated by making it difficult for Lelyveld to visit the country. In the spring of 1967, the newspaper took up the matter with the Pakistani Mission at the United Nations and, after five weeks, Lelyveld's visa was ready. However, the correspondent reported 'a couple of snags' with the visa. First, it was a single-entry visa, not the requested multiple-entry visa of long duration. Second, the correspondent was told that, if he wanted to meet government officials, he had to submit a list of their names at least four weeks before arriving in Pakistan. 'The effect of these two conditions is to create a nine-week lag between the beginning of plans for a trip to Pakistan and the trip itself . . . To put it mildly, this arrangement will inhibit coverage of Pakistan from Delhi—which, I take it, is the whole idea,' Lelyveld described.⁷⁴ He suggested covering Pakistan not from India, but from the more 'politically neutral from the Pakistani point of view' Iran or Turkey.⁷⁵

When he finally arrived in Pakistan in the summer of 1967, Lelyveld found that the situation was not as bad as it originally seemed. He was told 'at a very high level' that he would not be granted a multiple-entry visa. Pakistan was 'eager not to be covered from New Delhi', and could have a multiple-entry visa 'as soon as The New York Times named a correspondent to Pakistan, though it was recognized that I'd have little use for one then'.

The political uncertainty began to take an emotional toll on Lelyveld. He even considered quitting:

I don't mean to set myself up as a special case on the foreign staff, to be labeled 'handle with care.' But it is a fact that the Lelyvelts have been drained of almost all the resilience with which we started on this life—by having to begin anew in too many cities in too short a time, living in too many hotels, with too much uncertainty Some of these things are an unavoidable part of a

⁷³ Letter from Seymour Topping to Joseph Lelyveld, 31 March 1967.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

foreign correspondent's life, I know . . . All this has brought me up against a question I had never thought I would have to consider—whether I'm a misfit at this game and whether I had better get out.⁷⁶

Lelyveld applied for another visa to Pakistan while still being in the country. His request was granted, and the outcome even exceeded his expectations. 'Somewhere a cog in the administrative machine went haywire,' he explained.⁷⁷ 'Instead of a single-entry visa I received the best visa I've ever been granted to any country—unlimited entries for four years. Though somebody is going to lose his head, I didn't point out the mistake.'

During his summer of 1967 visit, Lelyveld found Pakistan 'fascinating', and advised Topping to increase the newspaper's coverage of the country. He had raised the newspaper's concerns about censorship and harassment of correspondents with the Pakistani officials, who denied the accusations. 'But that's just the way Pakistan is; it's the way a lot of other countries are and we'll just have to finesse it,' he concluded.⁷⁸ Lelyveld reasoned that Pakistan requires an experienced correspondent who could navigate the difficult conditions, but 'it might also be an advantage if he were young and single, for he would have to travel tremendously . . . to get anything out of the beat'.⁷⁹

Topping replied that he did not see any need to assign a special staffer to the Pakistan–Turkey–Iran area, and inquired 'if the Pakistanis would find it acceptable to receive, on a temporary assignment, a Times staffer based in Israel'.⁸⁰ Topping's question came just two months after the 1967 Arab–Israeli war; if there was a country that drew more hostility from Pakistan than India, it was Israel.

Only one of the five articles Lelyveld filed from Pakistan was published in the newspaper. The correspondent was disappointed, but 'after three martinis—a trick of meditation taught to me by my guru—I decided to take the matter philosophically'.⁸¹

⁷⁶ Letter from Joseph Lelyveld to Seymour Topping, 1967, Box 61, Folder 1, 'Joseph Lelyveld—Foreign Desk—1962–1966'.

⁷⁷ Letter from Joseph Lelyveld to Seymour Topping, 21 July 1967.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Letter from Seymour Topping to Joseph Lelyveld, 2 August 1967, Box 61, Folder 2, 'Lelyveld, Joseph, Foreign Desk, 1967'.

⁸¹ Letter from Joseph Lelyveld to Seymour Topping, 7 December 1968, Box 61, Folder 3, 'Lelyveld, Joseph, Foreign Desk, 1968'.

Don't send fruit cakes: Pakistan news gathering in 1969–71

As Ayub decided to step down in 1969, the *NYT* began seriously considering reopening the Pakistan bureau.⁸² In January 1970, Pakistan's Ambassador to Washington, Agha Hilaly, lunched with Topping in New York. He 'urged' Topping to base a correspondent in Pakistan, indicating that 'the situation in Pakistan had changed drastically' and that a *Times* correspondent would be 'well treated if we decided to post one there'.⁸³

The years that followed were particularly tumultuous. In 1970, Pakistan held the first nationwide general elections that were based on universal adult suffrage on a one-person, one-vote basis. The widespread enthusiasm about the astounding democratic development—a military ruler voluntarily relinquishing power to elected civilian authority—was, however, short-lived. An unexpected electoral outcome quickly triggered a political crisis in the country's Eastern wing, soon to be followed by a civil war. On 25 March 1971, the government initiated a military crackdown of East Pakistan. On 16 December 1971, it surrendered to the joint command of the Indian and rebel forces. Pakistan's Eastern wing became a new country called Bangladesh.

Malcolm W. Browne's experience demonstrates how both the political and the logistical problems faced by foreign correspondents in Pakistan came to a head. Browne observed that the Pakistani government regarded all journalists as 'enemy agents'. Censorship extended 'to all outgoing cables and to all airfreighted material, including film. The problem is that once something goes into the censorship maw, I have no idea what comes out. Copy may be deleted, or, what's worse, changes may be made'.⁸⁴ Consequently, Browne asked that the editor's office keep his copies as they arrived in New York so that he could compare them against the originals. He decided that he would try to deliver through someone else the very sensitive stories that were unlikely to pass censorship. 'There is some risk involved in this, since I am watched like a hawk, and the playback

⁸² Letter from Joseph Lelyveld to Seymour Topping, 3 March 1969, Box 61, Folder 3, 'Lelyveld, Joseph, Foreign Desk, 1968'.

⁸³ Memorandum for James Greenfield from Seymour Topping, Box 134, Folder 10, 'Karachi, Pakistan Bureau, 1953–1965'.

⁸⁴ Letter from Malcolm W. Browne to James Greenfield, 15 May 1971, Box 13, Folder 4, 'Browne, Malcolm W., Foreign Desk, 1971'.

of my copy to officials is practically instantaneous,' he explained.⁸⁵ In June, Browne received an official reprimand from the Pakistani government for including in his piece a quotation from and reference to the Holy Prophet. He predicted that the atmosphere will worsen as 'foreign aid remains largely choked off', and noted that the local newspapers are now suggesting that American policy is characterized by 'duplicity' and that the USA 'is now in league with India and the Soviet Union to undo Pakistan'.⁸⁶

The response from the foreign news editor, James Greenfield, was highly supportive: 'we all stand impressed at the ease in which you have slipped into an extremely difficult situation.'⁸⁷ By fall, this difficult situation also involved the inability to receive packages:

A glance at my calendar reminds me that it's getting near that time of year again, and if I don't write quickly someone in New York will attempt once again to send me a Christmas fruit cake. As a matter of fact, I like fruit cake. But I hate to see it end up confiscated or swiped by voracious customs men, or, alternatively, spending weeks trying to get it clear for import. If there's to be fruit cake this year, PLEASE, WHOEVER'S INVOLVED, DO NOT SEND MINE TO PAKISTAN.⁸⁸

Browne also accused the Pakistani Post Office of stealing magazines, 'which later turn up being sold by street urchins and even supposedly reputable publication dealers'.⁸⁹

Anticipating that the newspaper would be sending multiple correspondents to East Pakistan to cover the civil war and its outcome, Browne put together a list of tips for them. He warned that at the Intercontinental Hotel, in government offices, and at all the foreign consulates in Dacca (the administrative capital of East Pakistan), 'roughly half of the local staffs are either friendly toward or active agents of the Mukti Bahini guerrillas. The other half work for the secret police'.⁹⁰ He explained that there have been numerous assassinations and bomb incidents in the city and so 'no one has a

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Letter from Malcolm W. Browne to James Greenfield, 28 June 1971, Box 13, Folder 4, 'Browne, Malcolm W., Foreign Desk, 1971'.

⁸⁷ Letter from James Greenfield to Malcolm W. Browne, 29 June 1971, Box 13, Folder 4, 'Browne, Malcolm W., Foreign Desk, 1971'.

⁸⁸ Letter from Malcolm W. Browne to Foreign Desk (Cathy), 28 September 1971, Box 13, Folder 4, 'Browne, Malcolm W., Foreign Desk, 1971'.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Letter from Malcolm W. Browne to James Greenfield, 14 November 1971, Box 13, Folder 4, 'Browne, Malcolm W., Foreign Desk, 1971'.

sense of humor'.⁹¹ He also noted that 'War and Islam have combined to make booze especially expensive and scarce. Always bring some'.⁹² He concluded:

[The] prospects of war between India and Pakistan are small and that most of the gnashing of teeth is phony. I can't escape the impression that there is a deliberate effort on both sides to fan the war scare for the sake of keeping the aid pumps working. The logic is that war can be averted by keeping humanitarian and development aid flowing in huge quantities. Constant shelling, occasional infantry probes, even naval incidents help maintain the tension. I think it is 90% bluff, and I think it has been taken too seriously by Washington. The guerrilla war is, however, certainly real enough, and that will surely continue for a very long time. Personally speaking, I thank the stars the United States has no stake in this, and hope we have the sense to avoid joining China and Russia in this can of worms.⁹³

So politically and logistically constrained was the news-gathering process that a reporter as highly experienced and perceptive as Browne⁹⁴ was unable to see the coming of a war between India and Pakistan. In fact, the major scoop came from Washington when Jack Anderson revealed Nixon's secret tilt toward Pakistan despite the genocidal conditions in the country's Eastern wing.⁹⁵ During the East Pakistan crisis, the Nixon Administration convened meetings of the Washington Special Action Group to discuss the situation in South Asia. Records of these meetings were leaked to Anderson. Kissinger was quoted as describing the conflict as a 'tragedy' that turned into 'an attempt [by India] to dismember a sovereign state and a member of the United Nations'.⁹⁶

Pakistan's military crackdown on East Pakistan occurred at the time the USA was busy winding down the war in Vietnam and building a diplomatic relationship with China. Consequently, as then-USA National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger recalls: 'there was almost

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ M. W. Browne, *The New Face of War*, Bobbs-Merrill Company, Indianapolis, 1965.

⁹⁵ J. Anderson with G. Clifford, *The Anderson Papers*, Random House, New York, 1973.

⁹⁶ National Security Council, Notes, Anderson Papers Material, 6 January 1972, NPMP, NSC Files, Country Files: Middle East, Box 643; 'The tilt: the U.S. and the South Asian crisis of 1971', in *National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book Reviews*, S. Gandhi (ed.), No. 79, 16 December 2002.

nothing the [Nixon] Administration was less eager to face than a crisis in South Asia.⁹⁷

Pakistan served as an important channel of USA–China rapprochement, and USA leadership turned a blind eye to the accounts of ‘selective genocide’ pouring in from the State Department.⁹⁸ Nixon’s reliance on Pakistan for the China connection, and belief that Pakistan would soon ‘learn the futility of its course’, led to the USA ‘policy of restraint’ vis-à-vis the crisis in East Pakistan.⁹⁹ In practice, this meant privately trying to persuade the Pakistani leadership to accept East Pakistan’s autonomy, while also sending ‘clear signals’ to the Soviet Union not to support India in an invasion of Pakistan.¹⁰⁰ When the war with India finally broke out, Pakistan counted on the USA for support. The support never arrived, and the special relationship between the two countries effectively came to an end.

Conclusion

Despite its status as a USA ally in the ‘war on terror’, Pakistan has maintained a negative public image in the USA. News coverage of the country is rarely positive. A recent poll revealed that less than a fifth of Americans view Pakistan in a favourable light.¹⁰¹ As one Pakistani lamented: ‘Whenever a Western movie contains a connection to Pakistan, we watch it in a sadomasochistic way, eager and nervous to see how the West observes us. We look to see if we come across to you as monsters, and then to see what our new, monstrous face looks like.’¹⁰²

This article shows that, in addition to the actual events unfolding in the country, the high uncertainty characterizing the news-gathering

⁹⁷ H. Kissinger, *White House Years*, Little, Brown and Company, Boston, 1979, p. 842.

⁹⁸ A. K. Blood, *The Cruel Birth of Bangladesh: Memoirs of an American Diplomat*, University Press Limited, Dhaka, 2006, pp. 213–16.

⁹⁹ Kissinger, *White House Years*, p. 855.

¹⁰⁰ R. Nixon, *The Memories of Richard Nixon*, Grosset and Dunlap, New York, 1978, p. 526.

¹⁰¹ Pew Research Center, ‘How Asians view each other’, 14 July 2014, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/07/14/chapter-4-how-asians-view-each-other/>, [accessed 1 September 2017].

¹⁰² B. Shah, ‘A “homeland” we Pakistanis don’t recognize’, *New York Times*, 15 October 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/16/opinion/bina-shah-a-homeland-we-pakistanis-dont-recognize.html?_r=0, [accessed 1 September 2017].

process significantly shapes the type of news coming out of Pakistan. Pakistan is neither an institutionalist nor a constructivist wonderland. Foreign correspondents working there—even those working for a highly professional and reputable newspaper—face significant political and logistical on-the-ground constraints to their reporting. They navigate the demands of their profession with that of their immediate environment.

This article's contribution is two-fold. First, it shows that the professionalization of foreign correspondence has not eliminated the on-the-ground reality faced by reporters—the 'fog of news'. Neither is foreign correspondence a fully subjective enterprise. Second, this article adds a new and hereto underexplored dimension to understanding the formative years of the USA–Pakistan relationship. It shows that the ambiguity of today's dealings is far from new. The varying levels of uncertainty encountered by the *NYT* corresponded to the gaps in Pakistan's perceived and preferred rapport with Washington. The foreign correspondents were caught in the middle of highly strategic and complex diplomatic manoeuvres, and they were not always prepared for them. The mixture of thrill and frustration experienced by most of the foreign correspondents based in Pakistan set the country on a course of news coverage that is either limited or generally unfavourable.