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Title

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Exploring Dominant Aspect of Pak-Russia Relations in Pakistani Print Media during 2015-2019

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Abstract

Media in a country reflects its policies and priorities. It also plays important role in relations with other states. An analysis of print media in Pakistan shows various aspects, such as political, cultural, economic and strategic, of its relations with Russia. Frequency of themes in Pakistani print media shows mutual interest and improvement in relations. This research, explores dominant aspect of Pak-Russia bilateral relations, through the analysis of five daily newspapers, the Dawn, The Frontier Post, The News, The Tribune and The Nation. Predominantly qualitative method, complemented by Quantitative data has been employed with the framework of Framing Theory. This article attempts to answer the question that how Pakistani print media frame Russia to audience and which dominant aspect of mutual relations is being focused?

Keywords-Print Pakistani media, Newspaper, Pak-Russia relation, framing theory.

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Historical Background of Pak-Russia Relations

Pak-Russia relation can be traced back to diplomatic relations with former Soviet Union (USSR) soon after independence on may 1st, 1948. Pak-Russia Relations has seen noteworthy pattern of ups and downs. The relations took off with negativity, due to Pakistan choosing United States over Soviet Union in cold war and Indo-Soviet relations in polar world. relations remained cold and even strained throughout cold war between Soviet Union and United States as Pakistan remained in western camp as ally. Soviet Union supported India unconditionally against Pakistan in every aspect (Hussain & Fatima, 2013). The recent positive boost to Pak-Russia relations is resulted due to major development of US-Indian relations (Khan M. T., 2018). Mutual interests of India and United States have warmed up US-Indian relations which resulted in warm relations between Pakistan and Russian with China as catalyst (Khan F. H., 2021). Lack of trust was major factor that always hampered Pak-Russia relations.

States have bilateral, trilateral, multilateral and international relations. The severity and direction of these relations vary from state to state. Some states enjoy positive while other have negative relations. These relationship amongst states are reflected in its polices and media. There are various aspects of mutual relations such as political, cultural, economic and strategic. Media plays a significant role in this regard.

Role of Media in Bilateral Relations

Since 90's new media plays significant role in international relations (Robinson, 2013). Nik Gowing (1994) also highlighted the role of media in influencing decision makers regarding strategic decisions (Gowing, 1994). Media reflect policy agenda of government as well as setting agenda of foreign policy (Livingston & Eachus, 1995) (Dinakhel, Saeed, & Shafi, 2021). There is divergence of opinion about using media for setting agenda or merely reflecting state policy. Despite divergence a consensus exists that media is an important and integral part of society which affect thinking and behaviors of people (Gorvett, 2020). Newspaper represents the society and nation. Significance of print media is still valid specially in Pakistan because one of every fifth Pakistani read Newspaper (Foundation, 2019). Media Including newspaper influences in shaping idea and thinking of readers through framing effect (Tversky & Kahneman, 1981).

Theoretical Framework

According to framing theory mass media influence the choices of people by framing information in certain ways. The basic assumption of framing theory is that the media focuses attention on certain events and then places them within a field of meaning. The desired effect is achieved by presenting and framing the news in such a way that it influences the thought and ways of thinking of audience. Agenda setting theory of another theory related to framing theory. Framing theory is the difference between two theories is that the other, Agenda setting theory compel audience what to think about, while the framing theory focus on what to think and how to think (Davie, n.d.). Framing theory focuses on how media draws the attention of masses to specific topics – setting agenda, and then it takes a step further to create a frame, through which the audience will comprehend such information. Creating frames for stories is commonly a mindful choice by sources, reporters, journalists and/or editors. (Davie, n.d.).

Methodology

This is descriptive study with focus on frequency of news published in Pakistan five daily newspaper of English language regarding Russia during 2015-2019. The Dawn, The Frontier Post, The News, The Tribune (for 2018 & 2019 substituted by The Nation). All of the dominant themes published in these newspapers were collected and categorized into four categories (themes) namely Political, Cultural, Economic and Strategic because these are the significant

aspects of bilateral relations. This is a qualitative study with sprinkles of quantitative data under the paradigm in interpretation.

Dominant Variables and Themes:

As already mentioned, that four dominant themes, Political, Cultural, Economic and Strategic were explored in five newspaper during five years. In this study these four themes have been considered as variables. In the following lines sub themes are described within these four broader themes. It will further clarify the nature of contents placed under these four broader themes.

Politics.

News related to national and international politics, domestic security operations against opposition party, policies of former soviet union, Government policies about its citizens, visits of govt officials, exchanges, negotiations. international rivalry, alliances, and foreign policy were placed under this theme of political aspect.

Culture theme.

News and information related to culture, society, peoples and sports, have been placed under the broader cultural theme.

Economics theme.

News and information related to economy, economics, finance, business, trade, sanctions, production and distribution, were categorized under the theme of economic aspect.

Strategic theme.

This category includes themes related to security, military, arms, ammunition, terrorism, nuclear, computer hacking, Air Crashes, and strategic etc.

Operationalization of Variable

This research attempts to understand the Pakistan print media perspective regarding Russia through correlation between two variable, nature of framing(themes) of Russia and their frequencies in print media. Nature of framing(themes) is nominal variable with four categories as political, cultural, economic and strategic. The frequency is numeric variable which will be measured in numbers. This research study is attempted to understand how print media frame Russia to audience and which dominant theme is being focused?

Majority of publication were reflecting multiple themes such as political, cultural, economic and strategic at the same time. To keep research more concentrated to objective, each publication was coded for single theme/dimension. In case of multiple themes, theme was decided according to heading or title of publication.

Analysis of Data.

Data collected from five English newspapers Dawn, Frontier Post, The News and The Tribune (in 2018 & 2019 The Tribune has been substituted by The Nation was categorized into four themes such as Political, Cultural, Economic and strategic. The data covered broadened role of Russia in international politics from Middle East to Europe.

Table. 1 presents year-wise classification of four themes as follow.

- In each year, from 2015 to 2019, Political theme related to Russia was dominant in all five newspapers. These themes reflected Russia as major Actor in international relations.
- During each year for the same period, from 2015 to 2019, Strategic theme is second most dominate Theme in data. Highlights Russia as military power.
- Similarly, frequency of Economy related themes in each year from 2015 to 2019 is in third number.
- In each year, from 2015 to 2019, cultural related news received least importance.

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total Publication	123	55	34	58	50
Culture	4	0	1	0	6
Economic	16	1	5	4	3
Politics	63	41	15	30	25
Strategic	40	13	13	24	16

Figure 1 year-wise classification of themes

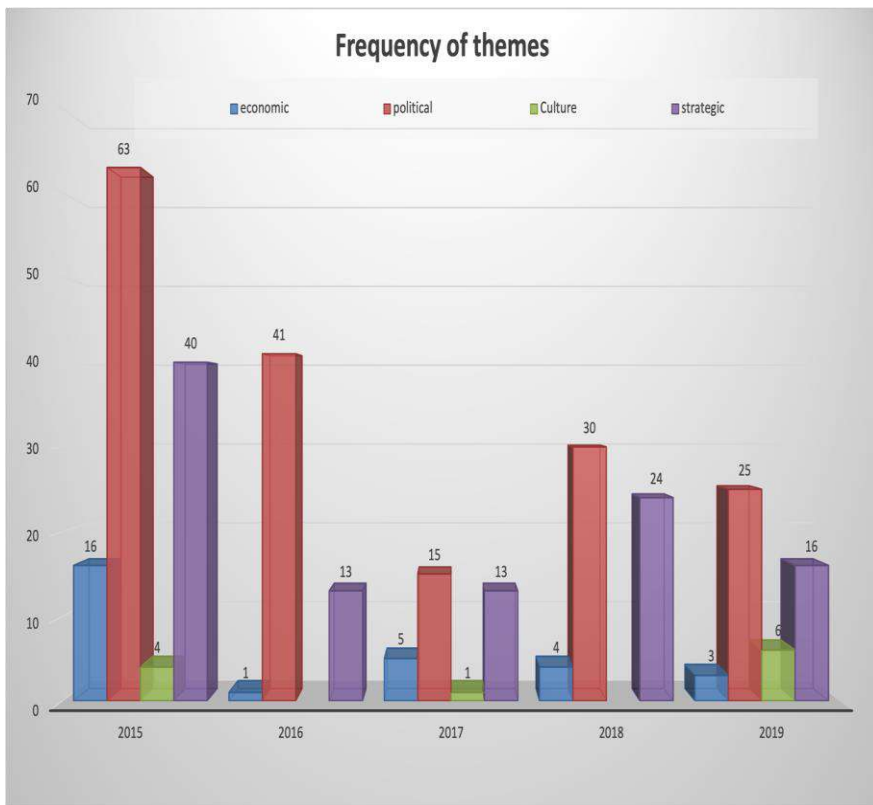


Figure 2 Year-wise frequency of themes

In five years, 320 publications related to Russia were recorded. The Russia related publication topped in 2015 with 123 publications with daily average of 0.34 (average of 1 publication every 3rd day). in 2016 the publications declined to 55 with daily average of 0.15 (average of 1 publication every 6.6th day) . Th decline continues in 2016 as well with total publication of 34

with daily average of 0.093 (average of 1 publication every 10.7th day). The year 2018 marks increase in publications with 58 publications with daily average of 0.16 (average of 1 publication every 6.4th day). In 2019 50 publications were recorded average of 0.14 (average of 1 publication every 7.2th day). In 2015 Russia was in spot light due to invasion of Crimea and political unrest within country. Russia was also highly active in international arena.

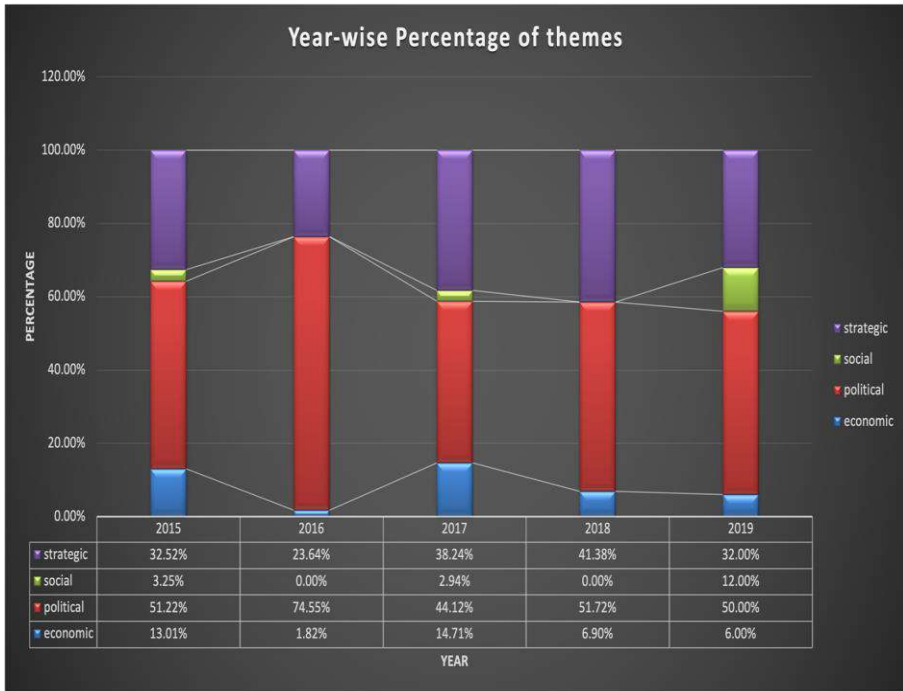


Figure 3 Year-wise Percentage of themes

Political theme remained dominant throughout for five years (2015 to 2019). the theme had frequency of 63 (in 2015), 41(in 2016), 15 (in 2017), 30 (in 2018) and 25 (2019) (54.4%, total frequency of 174 out of total 320 publications). The second most prominent theme was Strategic after political theme . Strategic Theme was recorded with frequency year-wise as 40 (in 2015), 13 (in 2016), 13 in (2017), 24 (in 2018) and 16 (in 2019) (32.5%, total frequency of 106 out of total 320 publications). Highlighting Russia as military power. Economic and culture themes were least published ones. Economic and culture theme frequencies were 29 and 11 respectively of total 320 publications. Economic and culture theme covered 9.06% and 3.44% respectively of total publications.

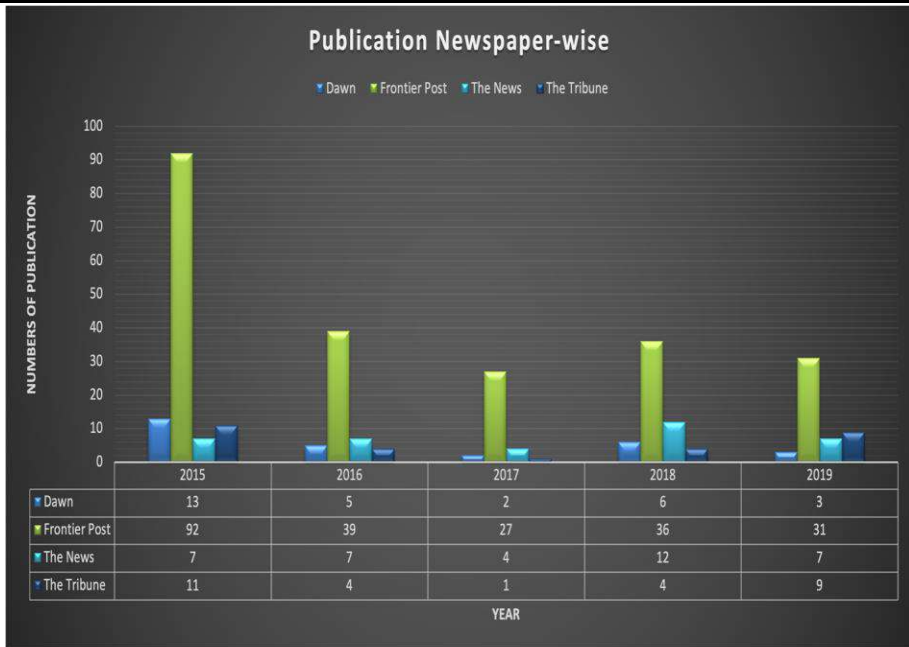


Figure 4 Publication Newspaper-Wise

29 publications were recorded from Daily Dawn newspaper published from Karachi. Political theme remained dominate in its publication with frequency of 17 (58.62%), seconded by strategic theme with frequency of 8 (27.6%). On third position Economic theme was recorded with frequency of 3 (10.34%). Cultural Theme was published only 1 (3.4%) in five years (2015 to 2019) in Daily Dawn.

Daily The Frontier Post from Peshawar printed the highest number of news/ Articles that is 225 related to Russia during 2015-2019. Political theme was dominated in Frontier Post publications throughout five years with frequency of 128 (56.8%). Strategic theme was at second position with frequency of 73 (32.4%). Economic theme stood third with frequency of 17 (7.5%). The cultural theme was bottom with frequency of only 7 (3.1%).

The News published from Karachi printed only 37 items. Strategic theme was most dominate in Daily The News with frequency of 17 (27.8%). Second dominate theme that was published in this newspaper Political theme with frequency of 14 (22.95%) Economics theme stood at third position with frequency of 4 (35.7%). Cultural theme was recorded only twice in Daily The News with frequency of 2 (3.2%).

Daily The Tribune (The Express Tribune) based in Karachi published 29 publications in five years (2015-2019). Political theme remained on top with 15 (51.7%) publications followed by strategic theme at second with frequency of 8 (27.5%). Economic theme stood at third position with frequency of 5 (17.24%). Culture theme secured fourth position with frequency of 1 (3.4%).

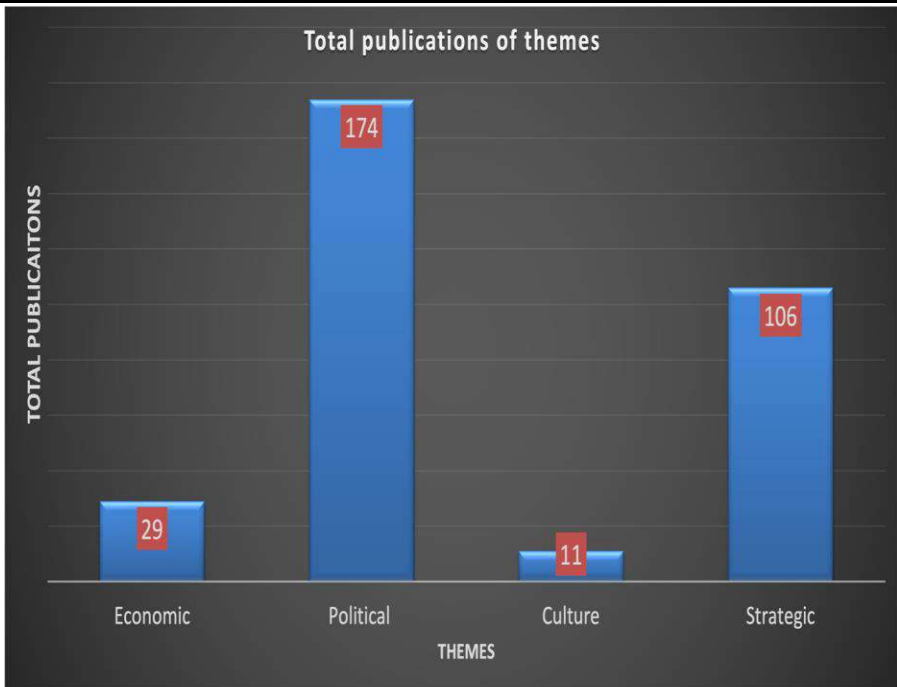


Figure 5 Total publications of themes

Frequency of Themes

All five newspapers shared same trend throughout five years(2015-2019). The Political theme remained dominant during the period of five years (2015-2019) in every newspaper (54.2%) with Strategic theme at second (33.2%). The Economic theme stood at 3rd position (9 %) and theme of Culture remained at bottom with (3.4 %).

Political

Political theme was most dominant theme in publications related to Russia in print media from year 2015 to 2019. Out of 320 publications, 174 were related to political theme which is 54.4 % of all publications. During the target period i.e., from year 2015 to 2019 political theme remained dominant and kept highest frequency. Daily The Frontier Post, published 128 publications on political theme which is 73.6 % of total political theme publications. Dawn secured second position with frequency of 17, and percentage of merely 9.8% of total political theme publications. The tribune was third in race in terms of publications related to political themes with frequency of 15 and percentage of 8.6 % of total political publication. Daily The News remained the last newspaper with minimum publication related to political themes. Frequency of political theme in Daiy The News was 14 and percentage of just 8.05% of all publications related to political themes.

Strategic

Strategic theme was second most framed one in Pakistani print media during 2015-2019. It appeared 106 items (33%) in over 320 publications in five years (2015 to 2019). Daily Frontier Post framed over 73 items (68.9% of all strategic publications). Daily The News follows on number 2 with frequency of 17 items (16% of all strategic publication). Daily Dawn and Daily The Tribune shares third spot with frequency of 8 items (7.5% of all strategic publications) each on strategic related publications.

Economic

Economic theme secured third spot out of four after political and strategic theme, as printed in five newspapers during years 2015 to 2019. Frequency of Economic theme in newspapers was 29 out of 320 total publications. Economic theme had percentage of 9% in whole publications.

Culture

The theme of culture was least published theme in Pakistani five newspaper during the five year (2015-2019). In five years, culture theme was published merely 11 times out of overall publication of 320, with share of 3% in all publications. Daily The Frontier Post published from Peshawar printed highest number of culture related items that is 7 (63.6% of culture theme publications). Daily The News registered frequency of 2 items (18% of all culture theme publications) for Culture theme. Daily The Tribune and Daily Dawn published just 1 item (9% of all culture theme publication) publication each related to culture theme.

Conclusion

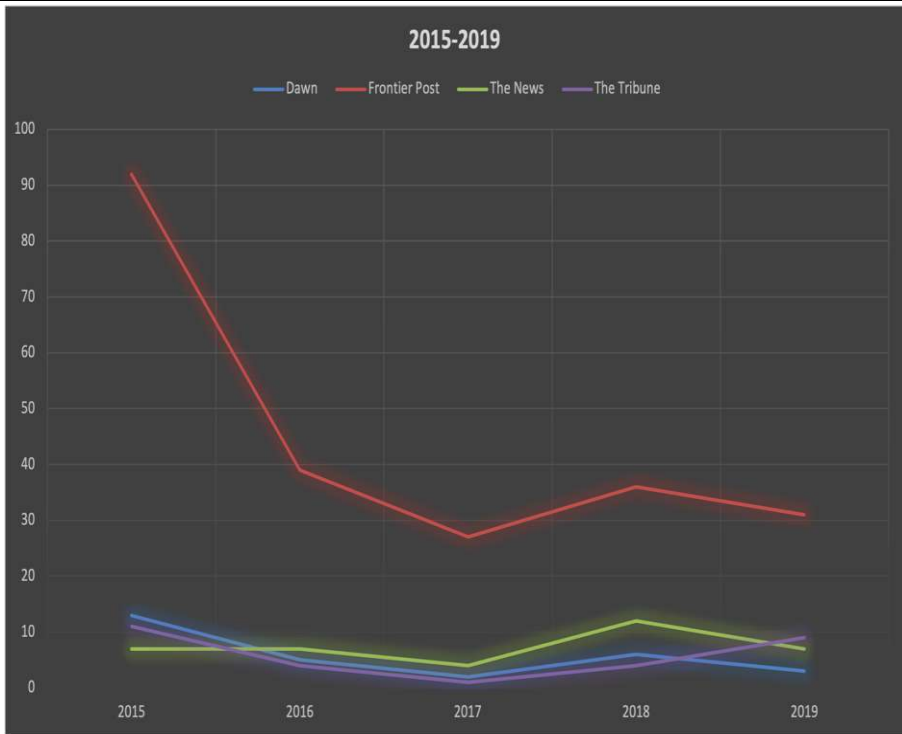
Dominant aspect of Russia in Pakistani print media has been explored in this article. Analysis of data shows that print media in Pakistan frames Political aspect of Russia followed by Strategic, economic and cultural. The print media promote political theme as compared to the strategic, economic and cultural themes. The media attempts to portray and frame Russia as important political power to its audiences. All of the five newspapers analysed in this study follow the same pattern of political theme as dominant one. In the rest of the three aspects of bilateral relations, strategic aspect of Russia gained more visibility in print media as compared to economic and cultural dimension. Cultural aspect having least frequency in Pakistani print media. Interestingly, the newspaper published from Peshawar published more items on cultural relations as compared to the newspapers published from other cities.

Acknowledgment

Data was collected, scanned and preserved for future reference from the newspapers available at the library of Area Study Center, (Russia, China & Central Asia), University of Peshawar Pakistan.

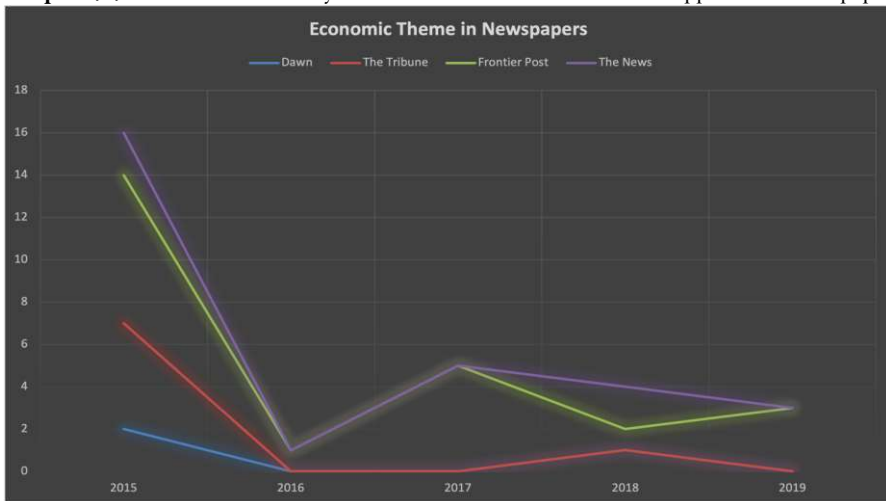
Graphs

Graph a below presents the year wise distribution of the publications appeared in four newspapers.

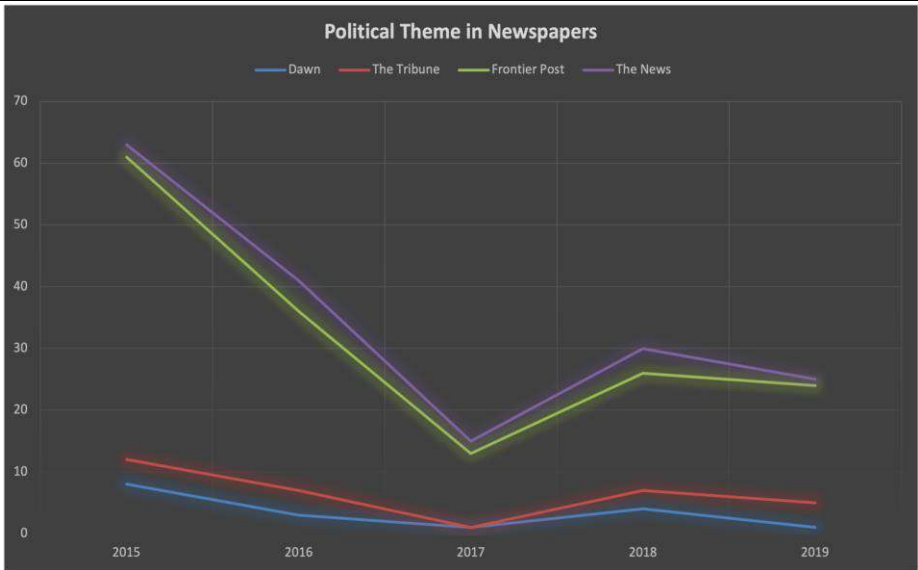


Graph a year wise distribution of the publications appeared in four newspapers

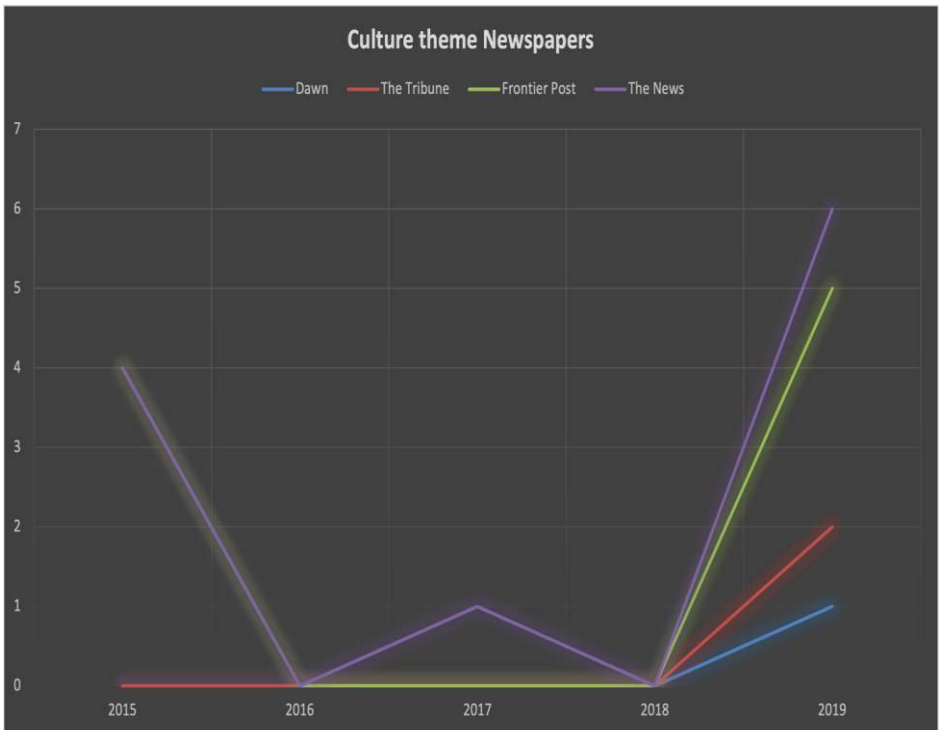
Graph b,c,d & e illustrates the year wise distribution of the themes appeared in newspapers



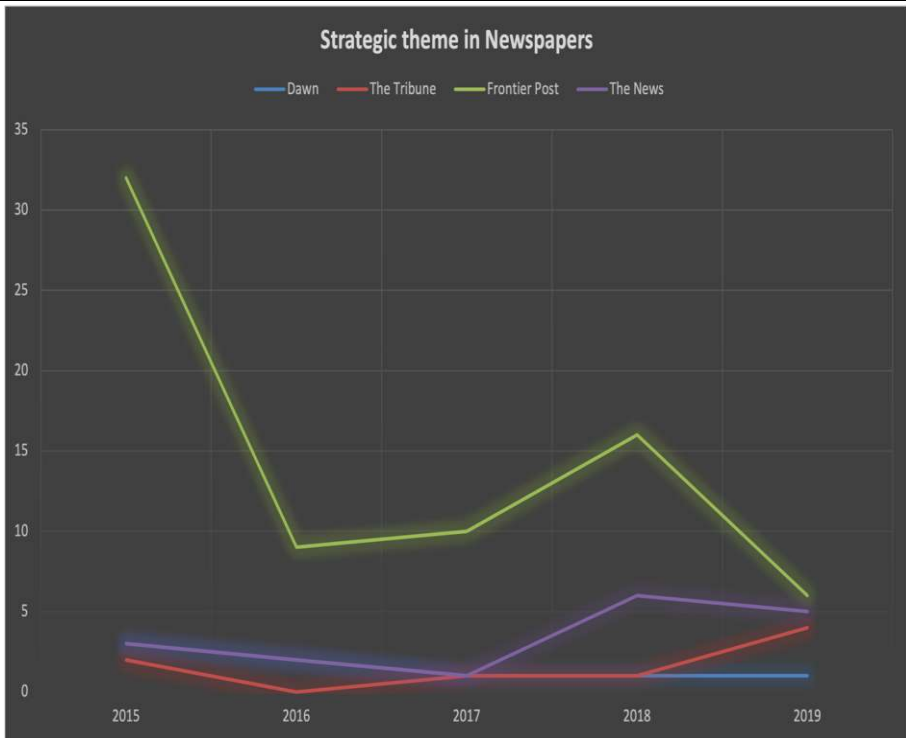
Graph b year wise distribution of the Economic theme in four newspapers



Graph c year wise distribution of the Political theme in four newspapers



Graph d year wise distribution of the Culture theme in four newspapers



Graph e year wise distribution of the Strategic theme in four newspapers

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