

Analysis of Pakistan Print Media Narrative on the War on Terror

Shabbir Hussain^{1,*} and Adnan Munawar²

¹International Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan

²Riphah International University Islamabad, Pakistan

Abstract: This study examines the coverage of the Taliban conflict in four leading national newspapers of Pakistan from January 2014 to July 2014 from war and peace journalism perspective. The theoretical framework for this research is determined by peace journalism and framing theories, while the sample was selected by applying the systematic random sampling method. The findings, based on a content analysis of 821 stories from the four newspapers, indicate that the Pakistani media are inclined more towards war journalism framing than peace journalism framing in their coverage of the Taliban conflict. The two Urdu dailies namely *Nawa-i-Waqt* and *Express* have a stronger preference for war than peace compared to the two English dailies namely *Dawn* and *The News International*. Consistent with the existing peace journalism scholarship, the findings of this study also show that the newspapers not only toed and supported the official version on this home-grown conflict but also marginalized and undermined alternative voices calling for a peaceful resolution of this years-long conflict.

Keywords: War on terror, conflict coverage, peace journalism, national security, propaganda.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study is designed to analyze the Pakistan print media narrative on the war on terror from January 2014 to July 2014. More specifically, this study analyzes reporting of the Taliban conflict from peace and war journalism perspective in two English dailies *The News International* and *Dawn*, and two Urdu dailies *Nawa-i-Waqt* and *Express*. Pakistan has been fighting the so-called war on terror since 2001 when it became a front-line state in the American-led “war on terror” following the September, 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Centers in New York. Since then, the violent conflict has claimed the lives of thousands of people, including security personal, militants and civilians, in addition to worsening the law and order situation and causing several billion dollars of economic losses. While the conflict has received time and space in the Pakistani media discourse, it is important to note that the situation has worsen over the years, with the conflict being inflamed and escalated. In context of conflict escalation, it is important to analyze the media treatment of this conflict, discuss the factors that influence and shape conflict reporting, examine news coverage pattern in view of the peace journalism scholarship.

This study will be a significant endeavor in promoting peace journalism in Pakistan amid the turbulence and the frequency of conflicts in the region. This study will also benefit students and instructors in analyzing and understanding the media’s coverage and

treatment of conflicts in Pakistan. Moreover, this research will provide recommendations on how the media and journalists can play a constructive role in promoting alternative perspectives on conflicts. This study will also serve as a future reference for researchers on the subject of peace journalism and conflict studies.

MEDIA AND CONFLICTS

“War,” as 18th-century Prussian military strategist Carl von Clausewitz observed, “is nothing more than the continuation of politics by other means [1].” With the evolution and changes in politics and societies, the nature of wars and conflicts also has changes. By putting this into perspective and taking into consideration technological advancements, the Twenty-first century’s “war on terror” is undeniably a war that is also being fought through the media.

In today’s world, the media hold a central position in the overall outcome of a conflict given its power to shape public opinion and steer policy support for humanitarian crises. When faced with a conflict, either the media take a side with the conflicting parties and contribute to escalation, or the media stay neutral and independent and contribute to a peaceful resolution of a conflict by not alleviating possible violence.

In a given conflict, media’s role is determined by factors such as its relationship with state or non-state actors of that conflict and its independence from influence, among others. Generally, the mainstream media become party to a conflict/war, if their state is directly involved in that conflict. The media narrative on a given conflict is also influenced and shaped by the

*Address correspondence to this author at the International Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan; Tel: 0333-5096609; E-mail: Shasain2@gmail.com

government and military, which exert pressure on the media to manipulate and construct a social reality that suits their interests [2-4].

A plethora of literature on the coverage of conflicts shows that the mass media have a “long-standing preference for war” [4-5]. For example, just before the beginning of the Spanish-American war in 1898, the *New York Journal* stationed its envoy, Frederic Remington, to Cuba with instructions to stay there until the war began. After spending a few days and sensing no signs of war, Remington wrote to his boss: “W. R. Hearst: *New York Journal*, N.Y.: “Everything is quiet. There is no trouble here. There will be no war. I wish to return. REMINGTON.” In reply, Hearst wrote: “REMINGTON, HAVANA: Please remain. You furnish the pictures, and I’ll furnish the war. W. R. HEARST” [6].

Few weeks later, an American battleship exploded and sank in Havana Harbor. While the cause of the deadly incident was unknown, Hearst’s *New York Journal* blamed the Spanish for the mysterious sinking of the ship and helped shape public opinion in support of the war through an aggressive campaign. Whether this whole episode is accurate or not, it does explain media’s tilt towards wars¹⁰. Researches on media coverage of conflicts reflect a similar trend, including coverage of conflicts in the Middle East, the South East Asia, the Gulf, Kashmir, Chechnya, Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan etc. [7].

Many media practitioners and liberal scholars support the notion that journalists report conflicts independently and impartially because they are sharp and wise enough to shrug off organizational and ideological limitations. However, a large number of scholars disagree to such notions and argue that ideological and organizational structures not only come into play in the day-to-day work routines of journalists but also influence the way news media cover and report events. For example, Herman and Chomsky [8] blame mass media for playing down any information that runs counter to “official” sources as “unacceptable” during times of war — leaving ideological alternatives as ignored, and discussions constricted by reproducing frameworks of political and military leaders. Herman and Chomsky quoted the example of the media coverage of the Vietnam War, arguing that the coverage could be defined on the basis of what media “excluded: the voices of the anti-war movement in the US, the motives of the Vietnamese people and the

‘inexpressible’ notion that the US, not North Vietnam, was the aggressor in the conflict.”

Similarly, Norwegian scholar and founder of the discipline of peace studies Johan Galtung, who first outlined the peace journalism approach for journalists covering wars and conflicts, argues that today’s media reporting on conflict is predominantly biased in favor of war, which he defined as war journalism [9]. While stressing the need for conflict journalism, Galtung coined the term peace journalism. According to Galtung, the news media are generally biased in favor of wars than peace and take sides with powerful elites and ignore the sufferings of the people affected by a given conflict [10].

According to Galtung, the media generally follow what he termed the “low road” in covering conflicts and wars, a road that leads towards war journalism. Galtung suggested an alternate route, the “high road” that discards war journalism in favor of peace journalism and focuses on transformation of conflicts to help de-escalate a given conflict and highlight voices calling for a peaceful resolution.

According to Galtung [11], war journalism is “violence-orientated, propaganda-orientated, elite-orientated and victory-orientated”. In contrast, peace journalism is “peace/conflict-orientated, truth-orientated, people-orientated, and solution-orientated [12].”

On the contrary, many media scholars and professionals have criticized the concept of peace journalism. For instance, Hanitzsch [13] criticized peace journalism for its subjectivity similarities with public relations practices. Hanitzsch argues that journalists are not accountable for promoting peace; instead policy makers are responsible for pursuing peace efforts. Similarly, Loyn [14] opposes the peace journalism concept and argues that it is not everybody’s responsibility to prevent a given conflict. Another criticism comes from Fawcett [15], who argues that journalists are forced by various factors, including professional requirements and organizational structures, to support and oppose a particular party in a conflict.

Critical studies on conflict reporting have found that the traditional media are tilted more towards war journalism than peace journalism in times of conflicts, thereby worsening the situations and reducing chances of rapprochement.

BACKGROUND OF THE TALIBAN CONFLICT

While some analysts view the Taliban uprising in Pakistan as a harsh blowback of its policy towards militants and Afghanistan during the Afghan-Soviet war [16], others view it as the fallout of a major shift in the country's policy after the 9/11 attacks in US when the then General Pervez Musharraf-led government took a U-turn and decided to join the US-led global alliance on the "War on Terror [17]."

Pakistan not only promised to withdraw its support to Afghan Taliban, but also decided to provide support, including intelligence and logistical assistance, to the US and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces in Afghanistan, in addition to fighting the pro-Taliban militant groups in the FATA region.

In 2001, Pakistan for the first time deployed its troops in the tribal areas alongside the Afghan border to not only contain the increasing influence of militants, who survived the US bombings in Afghanistan and sought refuge in the FATA region, but also to capture hardcore militants amid immense pressure from the US government. Pakistan's participation in the war brought the "war on terror" into its soil [18-19].

Meanwhile, the US and NATO adopted a new strategy and started carrying drone attacks into the tribal areas of Pakistan, which the pro-Taliban militants had been using as sanctuaries. The drone strikes further escalated the conflict between the tribesmen and the Pakistani government, in addition to increasing the enmity of locals towards the West [20]. Since then, the violent conflict has taken the lives of as many as 50,000 people have died and many more injured in this conflict (tribune.com.pk) [21], while causing billions of dollars in damages to the country's economy.

After the May 2013 general elections in Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif was sworn in as prime minister of Pakistan in June 2013. He vowed to resolve the conflict with the Taliban through a dialogue process, as backed by an all-party conference. In January 2014, Sharif announced a four-member committee to facilitate talks with the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan militants. However, after several rounds of formal and informal talks, the dialogue process was suspended when the Taliban claimed responsibility for the killing of 23 security personnel. While the dialogue process resumed in March 2014, it could not last too long, as TTP claimed responsibility for the June 8, 2014, attack on the Karachi Airport. Following the attack, Pakistan Air Force carried out air strikes on militant hideouts in

North Waziristan and a few days later, the Pakistani government announced the launch of operation "Zarb-i-Azb" against the armed insurgent groups [22], resulting in the displacement of more than a million tribal people.

While the Taliban conflict has received considerable time and space in the Pakistani media discourse, it is important to note that the situation has worsen over the years, with the conflict being inflamed and escalated. In context of conflict escalation, it is important to analyze the media treatment of this conflict, discuss the factors that influence and shape conflict reporting, examine news coverage pattern in view of the peace journalism scholarship.

Based on the review of existing literature, the following research questions were posed to analyze reporting of the Taliban conflict by four selected newspapers of Pakistan.

Research Questions

RQ1. How the Pakistani print media report the Taliban conflict from war and peace journalism perspective?

RQ2. Did the coverage of the conflict in *The News*, daily *Dawn*, *Nawa-i-Waqt* and *Daily Express* significantly differ in using peace and war journalism frames?

RQ3. Did the print media narrative on the Taliban conflict change during the peace and war periods?

METHODOLOGY

The research is primarily a quantitative content analysis of news articles on the Taliban conflict published in two English-language dailies *The News* and *Dawn*; and two Urdu-language dailies *Express* and *Nawa-i-Waqt* for a seven-month period spanning from 1 January 2014 to 31 July 2014. The selected stories were placed into specified categories and content-analyzed quantitatively to examine the news coverage of conflict from war and peace journalism perspective. The study used Galtung's classification of peace journalism and war journalism frames, and follows the data analysis approaches of scholars, including Lee, Maslog, Kim, Siraj and Hussain etc. [23-27].

From the opinion pages, the researcher selected newspaper editorials to examine how different news outlets treated and framed the Taliban conflict from peace and war journalism perspective. All other pages, including the opinion items, were left out due to time

constraint and nature of the research, which primarily focuses on examining the media reporting of the Taliban conflict. Moreover, the study will leave out photo images because they require a different approach for framing analysis. The selected stories were content-analyzed to examine the nature of reporting on the Taliban conflict by the four newspapers during the specified period. The selected news stories were classified on the basis of qualitative judgment and coded in a sheet that included peace and war frames and placement of placement of news etc.

TIME PERIOD OF RESEARCH

The selected newspapers were examined in a specific seven-month period from 1 January 2014 to 31 July 2014. The selected time period was divided into two periods to analyze how the media covered the Taliban conflict during two different periods. The first period which spanned from 1 January 2014 to 30 April 2014 is significant because the two sides were engaged in peace talks to resolve the conflict through dialogue; the second period which spanned from 1 May 2014 to 31 July 2014 is noteworthy because it saw the formal collapse of peace talks, the launch of the military

operation in North Waziristan as well as the displacement of nearly one million people from the war-affected FATA.

The two-phase time period was selected to examine differences, if any, in the coverage of the Taliban conflict during the peace and war periods. The specified time period would also help analyze whether the Pakistani press changed its perspective on Taliban in context of the peace and war journalism frames.

A total of 821 stories were selected from all four newspapers as a final sample for measurement. Of the total, 744 stories were hard news, a definition that includes news stories that appeared in the front and back pages of the four newspapers, and 77 stories were soft news, a definition that includes newspaper editorials only. The final sample comprised 182 stories from *The News*, 109 stories from *Dawn*, 269 stories from *Nawa-i-Waqt* and 261 stories from *Express*.

RESULTS

The number of war journalism stories was larger than peace journalism stories. Results from the Table 1 indicate that the Pakistani print media favored war

Table 1: The Pakistani Print Media are Inclined in Favor of War Journalism than Peace Journalism

Distribution of Frames by Newspaper, by Placement					
		Front Page	Back Page	Editorial	Total
War Frames	The News	65	18	8	91
	Dawn	48	6	10	64
	Nawa-i-Waqt	95	26	23	144
	Express	83	24	12	119
	Total	291	74	53	418
Peace Frames	The News	54	10	4	68
	Dawn	29	3	8	40
	Nawa-i-Waqt	60	30	4	94
	Express	75	27	8	110
	Total	218	70	24	312
Neutral	The News	18	5	0	23
	Dawn	5	0	0	5
	Nawa-i-Waqt	17	14	0	31
	Express	27	5	0	32
	Total	67	24	0	91
Total	The News	137	33	12	182
	Dawn	82	9	18	109
	Nawa-i-Waqt	172	70	27	269
	Express	185	56	20	261
	Total	576	168	77	821

Chi square = 60.327; p. = .000.

Table 2: The Frequency and Percentage of both War and Peace Journalism Stories in Nawa-i-Waqt and Express will be Greater than in The News and Dawn

Frequency and Percentage of Stories by Newspaper, Frame				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
The News War Frames	91	12.5	12.5	12.5
The News Peace Frames	69	9.5	9.5	21.9
Dawn War Frames	63	8.6	8.6	30.5
Dawn Peace Frames	41	5.6	5.6	36.2
Nawa-i-Waqt War Frames	143	19.6	19.6	55.8
Nawa-i-Waqt Peace Frames	95	13.0	13.0	68.8
Express War Frames	119	16.3	16.3	85.1
Express Peace Frames	109	14.9	14.9	100.0
Total	730	100.0	100.0	

Chi square 83.238; p = .000.

framing in their coverage of the Taliban conflict. A major chunk of the stories (418) were found in the war journalism category, followed by peace journalism stories (312). The newspaper gave more prominence to war journalism frames, as the frequency of these frames was greater in the front, back and editorial pages, in contrast to peace frames. Out of the total war journalism frames, 291 stories were published on the front page, 74 stories were published on the back page, and 53 stories were published on the editorial page. In contrast, out of the total peace journalism stories, the newspapers published 218 stories on the front page, 70 peace stories were published on the back page, and 24 stories were published on the editorial page, see Table 1. The low Pearson Chi-square value (.000) supports H1 (Pearson Chi-Square = 60.327; p = .000).

Table 2 indicates that *Nawa-i-Waqt* had a significantly higher frequency and percentage of war journalism reporting 143 (19.6%), followed by *Express* 119 (16.3%). In contrast, the frequency and percentage of war journalism reporting in *The News* and *Dawn* was 91 (12.5%) and 63 (8.6%), respectively. Similarly, the frequency and percentage of peace framing in the *Express* and *Nawa-i-Waqt* was 109 (14.9%) and 95 (13%), respectively. The frequency and percentage for peace reporting in *The News* and *Dawn* was 69 (9.5%) and 41 (5.6%), respectively. So, the frequency and percentage of war stories differed in the four newspapers with Urdu newspapers having the highest frequency and percentage in both peace and war stories. The low Pearson Chi-square value (.000) supports H2 (Pearson Chi square 83.238; p = .000).

Table 3: The Print Media will Use more Peace Frames during the Peace Dialogue Period

Distribution of Stories by Period, Frame, Newspaper						
Period	Frames	The News	Dawn	Nawa-i-Waqt	Express	Total
January-April 2014	War-orientated	15	6	18	20	59
	Propaganda-orientated	12	9	25	15	61
	Elite-orientated	16	6	22	17	61
	Victory-orientated	6	8	22	23	59
	Total	49	29	87	75	240
	Conflict-orientated	15	7	18	23	63
	Truth-orientated	12	6	15	20	53
	People-orientated	7	3	16	14	39
	Solution-orientated	22	13	24	31	90
	Total	56	29	73	88	246

Chi-square = 512.266; p = .000.

Table 4: The Print Media will Use more War Frames after the Collapse of Peace Talks and the Launch of the Military Operation

Distribution of Stories by Period, Frame, Newspaper						
Period	Frames	The News	Dawn	Nawa-i-Waqt	Express	Total
May-July 2014	War-orientated	12	9	14	13	48
	Propaganda-orientated	11	9	17	14	51
	Elite-orientated	8	7	12	10	37
	Victory-orientated	11	9	13	7	40
	Total	42	34	56	44	176
	Conflict-orientated	3	1	2	3	9
	Truth-orientated	1	3	5	4	13
	People-orientated	5	6	10	11	32
	Solution-orientated	3	2	5	4	14
	Total	12	12	22	22	68

Chi-square = 257.431; p. = .000.

Together, the four newspapers used slightly more peace frames (246) than war frames (240) from January 2014 to April 2014 when the Pakistani government and the Taliban were engaged in peace talks. By newspaper, the daily *Express* used more peace frames (88) than war frames (75), followed by *The News* with 56 peace frames, as opposed to 49 war frames. The frequency of war/peace frames in *Dawn* was same (29). However, *Nawa-i-Waqt* was the only newspaper that used more war frames even during the peace talks period (87) compared to peace frames of (73), see Table 3. The low Pearson Chi-square value (.000) supports H3a (Chi-square = 512.266; p. = .000).

For the second period from May 2014 to July 2014, the Pakistani press shifted from somewhat mixed peace/war journalism framing to aggressive war journalism framing. Combined, the four newspapers applied significantly higher war frames (176) than peace frames (68). War journalism indicators in daily *Nawa-i-Waqt* were greater (56) than peace journalism indicators (22). The daily *Express* also applied more war frames (44), than peace frames (22). *The News* came in third in terms of war indicators (42), compared to peace frames (12). The daily *Dawn* followed the same trend with the war frames being greater (34) than peace indicators (12), see Table 4. The low Pearson Chi-square value (.000) supports H3b (Chi-square = 257.431; p. = .000).

DISCUSSION

This study of four sample newspapers shows how the Pakistani print media viewed and framed the

Taliban conflict from peace/war journalism perspective. The operationalization of Galung's peace and war journalism model helped measure and compare framing of the Taliban conflict in two English-language dailies, *The News* and *Dawn*, and two Urdu-language dailies, *Nawa-i-Waqt* and *Express*. Overall, this study posed three questions to help understand the news coverage and framing of the conflict. The first question sought to address how the Pakistani media reported the conflict; the second question sought to analyze the framing pattern of the conflict; and the third question sought to examine the differences, if any, in the coverage during peace and war times.

Regarding the first question, the Pakistani media's narrative was more tilted towards war journalism than peace journalism and the sample newspapers rallied their support in favor of the government's policy on the conflict, which confirms earlier findings that the media are less likely to stay neutral when their country is a direct party to the conflict. Generally, the media tend to toe the government version on home-grown conflicts and support the official narrative in shaping the conflict, while marginalizing, undermining and criticizing alternative voices on the conflict. In this regard, Siraj and Hussain [26] found in their study on the Taliban conflict that "traditional media attaches to war and give least coverage to peace overtures" due to factors, including sensationalism and market forces. For example, the cricketer-turned politician and Chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf Imran Khan was criticized for being supportive of peace settlements with the Taliban and labeled as the "Taliban Khan." Also, the war-orientation approach of the media indicates how

the news media deviated away from the reality that the Taliban are a single entity, which is a mere misperception of the reality. Thus, the press not only reflects a conflict through news, but also shapes a narrative pertaining to the conflict in the minds of its readers [25]. Peace journalism is grounded on the importance of journalists understanding the conflict and violence, as their understanding plays a key role in escalating or de-escalating a conflict. For J. Lynch [27], peace journalism is a strategy that discusses the conflict as involving several parties with multiples issues. In doing so, peace journalism practitioners not only map the conflict differently but also offer creative solutions for a peaceful resolution. Notably, the Pakistani press primarily discussed the Taliban conflict between the state and non-state actors, who are challenging the writ of the state and working against the “national interest.”

Regarding placement of news stories, most of the stories were placed in the front pages, followed by stories published on the back and editorial pages with war journalism stories dominating the news coverage on all these three pages. Since the majority of the stories were based on official statements by government officials and agencies, these statements were given prominence by the sample newspapers, confirming media reliance on official source and indicating the news media’s traditional tendency of highlighting official version on the conflict. Apart from routine practice, the placement factor also reflects elite dominance on media as well as pressure from different groups that restrain the media from balanced reporting, whereby all sides are treated equally by the media.

The findings of the study endorsed the basic supposition, providing an answer to the very first question that the Pakistani newspapers are inclined in favor of war journalism in reporting the Taliban conflict, which is apparent from Table 1. The findings also confirm the supposition that the Pakistani press gives more prominence to war frames over peace frames in their coverage of the conflict, which is apparent from Table 1. So, the first premise of this present study is answered that the Pakistani print media narrative is tilted towards war journalism in which journalists discard peace journalism in favor of war reporting.

Regarding the second research question about the percentage and frequency of war journalism and peace journalism indicators, the coverage of the conflict differed in each of the selected newspapers. However, the coverage pattern does reflect uniformity in framing

of the Taliban and treatment of conflict. The Taliban were portrayed as the enemy of the state and were blamed for escalating the conflict and causing violence against the state and its people. In particular, the press not only ignored the historical perspective on the conflict, but also avoided adding context to the conflict, particularly in relation to the uprising of the Taliban, the role of national and international players as well as the negligence on part of different regimes in fulfilling basic needs of the common people of troubled region. Hussain found a similar portrayal of the Taliban in his qualitative analysis on the coverage of Taliban conflict in *The News and Dawn*, with the Taliban framed as the enemy; Pakistani army framed as the rescuer; and, the newspapers call for the use of force as the means to find a solution [28].

More specifically, results of this study show that the coverage of the conflict in the two English newspapers — namely daily *Dawn* and *The News*— and the two Urdu dailies — namely *Nawa-i-Waqt* and *Express*— differed for both war and peace journalism indicators.

Overall, the percentage and frequency of war journalism frames in the two Urdu dailies was higher than the two English dailies. The Urdu newspapers, particularly *Nawa-i-Waqt*, were more aggressive and criticized the government for holding peace talks with the “anti-state,” “anti-democracy” and “anti-civilian” forces. The daily *Nawa-i-Waqt* applied more war journalism indicators and called on the state to terminate the peace talks and launch a military campaign to flush out militancy from the tribal belt, a stance that is in line with the newspaper’s profile of being the advocate of Pakistan ideology with pro-Pakistan Muslim League and pro-army labeling. The newspaper was openly propagandist in its coverage and published several editorials that urged the government to use force against the militants to resolve the conflict. Although the newspaper gave space and coverage to voices calling for peace agreements, the coverage was dominated by war journalism frames, particularly propaganda-orientated indicators. On the other hand, *Express*, being part of a liberal and secular media group in Pakistan, was somewhat balanced and objective in some of its reports, as the paper relied on both official and local sources while reporting on the clashes and causalities. The coverage, however, was dominated by war journalism indicators. In general, the two Urdu dailies ignored the contextual information in both hard and soft news and applied a greater number of war frames than peace frames.

In comparison, the two English newspapers gave less space and coverage to conflict, particularly by the daily *Dawn*, which carried the least number of stories on the conflict. Although the overall coverage pattern of *The News* and *Dawn* was dominated by war journalism frames, particularly propaganda- and elite-orientated indicators, the peace frames were somewhat more visible than the Urdu newspapers, as the two English dailies added more context and background to the conflict and criticized evil-doers from all sides. The English press also critically discussed demands by various groups and analyzed the conflict from different angles, although the frequency of such peace frames was low, compared to the war frames. In reporting violence, the English press relied primarily on government officials as sources of information. The papers also used local sources to report civilian casualties in the FATA region, although the number of such reports was on the lower side. Like the Urdu papers, the two English dailies predominantly ignored the sufferings and miseries of the common people in their overall narrative on the conflict, despite the fact that the papers did carry some stories orientated towards the common people. While the reportage of the Taliban conflict reflects the news media's tilt towards war journalism, the reportage also highlights the fact that war/conflict reporting in Pakistan is very challenging and dangerous, as journalists, particularly those stationed in the conflict zone or local journalists, receive threats from both sides with some being killed. The researcher observed that stories produced by local journalists employed more peace indicators, however, the number of locally produced stories was low. An earlier study on the Iraq war by Lee, Maslog, & Kim [25] found similar pattern that local journalists applied more peace frames in their reporting of the war, compared to stories from foreign news wire services, which were dominated by war frames.

Conflict are born and escalated when people are marginalized and sidelined from the mainstream, and are deprived of their fundamental rights, including social, political and economic rights. Historically, the FATA region has been neglected not only by the state, but also by the news media, as both view and frame the conflict as a security threat rather than a humanitarian issue that requires a multi-pronged strategy involving humanization, rehabilitation, development and uplift of the people. However, the newspapers followed the elitist and propagandist approach and "conveniently ignored" the root cause of "Talibanization" and many other anti-statist movements [28].

The findings of the study support the second supposition and provide an answer to the second question that the coverage and nature of PJ/WJ frames differed in the four newspapers, specifically between the Urdu and English press as shown in Table 2.

Therefore, it is argued that the Pakistan newspapers follow the sports journalism model that primarily focuses on winning in a zero-sum game. According to Galtung, peace journalism is closer to health journalism in which journalists not only write about a patient's fight against cancer but also shed light on the causes of cancer and discuss a range of cures.

The variation of coverage in both English and Urdu dailies might be due to their poles apart readerships, stance and policy of the newspapers. The readership of two Urdu newspapers includes common people from both rural and urban centers, government officials and politicians etc. On the other hand, the readership of the two English dailies includes influential people, elites, government officials, diplomats and foreigners etc. Overall, the coverage pattern also reflects the newspapers dependence on government advertisements and reliance on official sources for information, which supports the argument that official, ideological and commercial patterns do influence media content [29].

Regarding the third research question whether the print media discourses changed during peace and war times, the results indicate that the newspapers used toed the official narrative on the conflict with WJ framing dominating the coverage during the four-month period from January 2014 to April 2014 when the two sides were engaged in peace talks, see Table 3. For example, the conservative and pro-army *Nawa-i-Waqt* and the pro-Pakistan Muslim League government and the right-wing *The News* applied more WJ frames during the said period than peace journalism frames. The results correspond to previous researches on war and peace journalism, such as Shinar [7], who found that the news media are tilted towards war framing even when they are covering peace negotiations between the conflicting parties. Meanwhile, Fawcett [15] found that the news media in Ireland are inclined more in favor war journalism framing than peace journalism framing. Contrary to general expectations, the pro-liberal ideology and secular-orientated *Dawn* and the left-wing *Express* applied more peace frames in their news coverage of the conflict during the four-month period.

After the peace talks stalled in May 2014 and the launch of the military operation in North Waziristan in June 2014, the four newspapers rallied their support in favor of the military campaign and predominantly used war journalism frames, a tendency that indicates the media's preference of war/violence, see Table 3. Notably, the four newspapers primarily relied on official sources such as the ISPR to report updates about the operation while the voices calling for peace agreements simply disappeared from the coverage. Although the papers did write about the sufferings and miseries of the IDPs, who were forced to leave their homes due to the violence in the region, the overall use of peace frames was low in each of the four newspapers. In contrast, the use of war frames was high among these newspapers with propagandist approach and elite orientation dominating the coverage pattern. The change in media discourse and preference for war supports Wolfsfeld's [4] argument that the print media are inclined in favor of covering "tension, conflict, and violence." The result also is in line with Mandelziz [30] finding that two Israeli newspapers followed peace narrative during the signing of the Oslo Accords, and returned to the war discourse when Hamas threatened to attack Israel later on. The findings also support remarks made by a Turkish journalist, who was quoted as saying by Ozgunes and Terzis [31]: "I am always thinking of our national interest and the interest of my newspaper when I am reporting Greek-Turkish affairs. At the end of the day I don't want to criticize my government because my 'objective' reporting might be used wrongly by the other side."

The researcher acknowledges that the case examined in this study does not provide a sufficient ground for determining whether the media treatment of the Taliban conflict in peace and war times is common to other conflicts in different parts of the world. Therefore, the researcher recommends that more research work is needed to investigate other conflicts for an extended time period to draw more generalizable and comprehensive conclusions.

For all its contributions as an exploratory study, the present effort has some limitations as follows:

- This study was confined only to two English dailies and two Urdu dailies and it did not cover all leading national newspapers and electronic new media due to shortage of time and lack of resources.
- Likewise, the study did not cover all the pages of newspapers for content analysis and primarily

focused on the front page, the back page and editorial page.

- The researcher selected only the hard news appeared in the front and back pages of the selected dailies, and only editorials as soft news from the opinion pages, excluding features, columns and letters to the editors etc.
- The study solely was based on the content published from January 2014 July 2014. A longer time span could have given better insight into the coverage of the Taliban conflict, particularly before the beginning of the peace talks period and post-launch of the military operation. Further, a longer time period could help draw more generalizable and holistic conclusions.
- Galtung's peace and war journalism criteria also posed a challenge for the researcher to assign coding categories to stories for content analysis.
- This study is also limited by its focus on the Taliban conflict only. Future studies could also include more home-grown conflicts to analyze and compare how the news media frame and treat different conflicts in the same country.
- Lastly, the study is limited by focusing on war/peace framing and placement only. Future studies could focus on sources as well as length of the stories to better examine the media coverage of the conflict.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Further studies related to the news coverage of the Taliban conflict can be conducted in multiple ways:

- National and international news media content can be analyzed to examine the framing of the Taliban pre-9/11 period and post-9/11 period.
- Electronic news media coverage can be analyzed to explore the coverage pattern of the conflict after the launch of Operation Zarb-i-Azb and/or after the Taliban attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar.
- A comparative study can also be conducted to analyze the electronic and print news media content from peace and war journalism perspectives.
- An exploratory study can be conducted to examine whether and to what extent the Pakistani media follow the government policy on the Taliban conflict.

- A qualitative study can also be conducted to answer why the news media are ignoring the sufferings of the internally displaced people and not discussing long-term solutions to the conflict.
- Social media content, including Facebook and Twitter, can be analyzed to explore the framing of the Taliban conflict in the new media.
- Survey design can also be applied to find out the opinions of common people of Pakistan or that of the opinion leaders, including journalists and politicians etc., to get a clear picture about the prevailing perceptions about the Taliban.
- A study might also be conducted to investigate how the news media rely primarily on official sources for information on such conflicts while marginalizing people voices and undermining alternative narratives.

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