

Peace Journalism in Pakistan: Perspective on

Taliban Conflict

Shabbir Hussain - TRANSCEND Media Service

Published on 11 April 2011 at <https://www.transcend.org/tms/?p=11431>



Introduction

The globalization of media has completely changed the dynamics of both inter and intra-state conflicts. Conflicts worldwide have been internationalized due to the media penchant for reporting on violent incidents to gain viewership and outdo their competitors. Reporting events that exacerbate conflicts are more newsworthy for mainstream media than those that may help resolve conflicts. Media can heighten conflicts through incitement, stereotyping and supporting growing disillusionment with the peace process (Kasbari, 2006). The media galore has facilitated citizens to view a conflict from many angles. Media portrayals of conflicts all over the world have been a major concern to combatants, public, and media professionals (Siraj, 2007).

Conflicting parties always use media to gain legitimacy and public support for highlighting their cause (Alamgor, 2005). In fact, media persons are not silent spectators rather they can have a significant impact on how the conflicts begin and end. Sylvie Niombo in her study found that media in Rwanda and Burundi were actually involved in exacerbating conflicts by becoming weapons of war and took an aggressive, defamatory tone, incited tribalism during conflicts, and were being manipulated by political parties. If the media persons have to play an ethical responsibility, it is mandatory upon them to understand the conflicts contextually and report the underlying causes of conflicts (Kovarik, 2007).

The literature on war or traditional journalism and peace journalism suggests the former primarily focuses on conflicts as a problem between opposing parties heading for zero-sum-game orientation while the later sees conflict itself as a problem, involving many groups, having impact on people of other region, and focuses on the suffering of common people (Lynch, 2005).

Peace Journalism sensitizes media-persons against war mongering and inflammatory rhetoric and urges adopting healthier methods of disseminating information that enshrines principles of objectivity and balance. Such an approach also helps orient media discourse towards the achievement of peace (Kovarik, 2007).

This study aims to analyze the framing of war and peace journalism in Pakistan on the conflict with Taliban in the two English newspapers Dawn and The News and the two Urdu newspapers Jang and Express from March 2008 to August 2008. This time period

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is important as after years of fighting with Taliban in Federally Administered Tribal Areas and few settled districts of Frontier province, the new civilian government after coming into power in February 18, 2008 elections, decided to settle the issue through negotiations as the people were not happy with the previous government policy of using force to quell the Taliban insurgency. Peace agreements between the two sides were signed but unfortunately they could not stick to the provisions of peace accords due to the mutual mistrust and the continuous international pressure to revoke those agreements.

The Taliban uprising started after the 9/11 attacks on US, when the then Pakistani government decided to join the global alliance against terror and stationed around 80,000 troops alongside border with Afghanistan in the tribal areas to check the Taliban flow into the Pakistani border areas. The decision was taken as Pakistan came under tremendous pressure from the United States. The then Pakistani ruler General Pervez Musharraf admitted in his book "In the Line of Fire" that the then US Vice President Dick Cheney had warned him of turning Pakistan into the stone ages if it did not delivered on the US demands. But the stationing of Pakistani soldiers in the border areas alongside Afghanistan offended the tribesmen and the local sympathizers of Taliban regime and they vowed to fight against the Pakistani forces (Ahmed, 2008). So far thousands of troops, Taliban and innocent people have been killed, wounded and millions displaced in the six years of infighting in the tribal areas of the country. Owing to the extreme unpopularity of war against Taliban, the new government after assuming power in February 2008 elections, decided to solve the issue through negotiations. This move was hailed by the Taliban and they halted attacks on the security forces. But this sudden halt in violence lasted only for a while as the two sides could not stuck to the commitments that they had agreed to earlier. At present, the war has turned even deadlier with unprecedented human cost.

The Taliban uprising and the Army action

The tribal belt of Pakistan consisting of seven agencies and about the size of Belgium is one of most economically deprived, politically disenfranchised and socially segregated part of the country. Historically, these areas were never brought under control by those ruling the sub-continent or Afghanistan. After the emergence of Pakistan, the tribal people were allowed to continue with their peculiar tribal system. The successive governments in the country never bothered to bring these far flung

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areas into the mainstream and resultantly the government writ weakened (Ahmed, 2008).

The tribal areas of Pakistan first came into the limelight when the then USSR made an incursion into Afghanistan during the height of cold war. Pakistan actively supported by the West started recruiting “Mujahiddin” in these tribal areas from all over the world to combat the “Russian infidels.” Pakistan assumed the role of frontline state against the spreading communism in its west as it was provided both with the money and weaponry by the West, which it badly needed against its arch rival India in the east. The US and other westerner powers succeeded in defeating the USSR’s misadventure in Afghanistan. Once the Soviets were out from Afghanistan, the US and its other allies also lost interest in the area. The region was left in a mess with a sizable majority of foreign nationals to mend for themselves (Rashid, 2000).

In the next twenty years prior to the September 11, 2001 attacks on the US, the tribal areas were being used as a conduit to control Afghanistan for the strategic depth against India. The poor tribal people felt alienated as no development work was done in their areas to create a sense of belongingness with the rest of the country. Across border, the continuing volatile situation in Afghanistan also had an enormous impact on the tribal areas of Pakistan. After the Soviets debacle, different Afghan factions started fighting among themselves to capture power in Kabul but neither succeeded. The active involvement by Pakistan to install a friendly government in its west further added to the animosity among different Afghan factions (Murshid, 2008) till the advent of Taliban in 1994. During all these years, the tribal regions of Pakistan were mired in lawlessness and became an epicenter for smuggling, illicit weaponry; bereft of all the advantages of modern world (Lamb, 2005). Religious seminaries mushroomed in the area where the students were taught centuries old religious syllabi, advocating militancy and medieval ethos and where after graduation, they had no chance to get jobs other than become prayer leaders (Hussain, 2007).

After the September 2001 attacks on the US, it was abundantly clear that Taliban government in Afghanistan would not be spared as they were suspected to have provided safe havens to Al-Qaeda members. In the next few days, US military started massive preparations for military assault against the Taliban in Afghanistan. The campaign against Taliban and Al Qaeda started on October 20, 2001 and came to an end on May 1, 2003 with the dislodging of Taliban government and the installation of

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Hamid Karzai as the new president of Afghanistan (Malik, 2006). Pakistan was pressured to provide all sorts of logistics and intelligence facilities to the American led International Security Assistance Forces in Afghanistan. To stop the fleeing Taliban and Al Qaeda elements from Afghanistan, the Pakistani government decided to station one hundred thousand troops alongside the Durand Line.

In July 2002, Pakistani troops, for the first time since independence, entered the two tribal agencies of South and North Waziristan bordering Afghanistan. The various tribes were persuaded to allow the troops deployment in lieu of development work in the area. But the army presence did not remain peaceful as they were meant here to flush out "the few Al Qaeda' elements. Instead of solving the issue through negotiations as was promised, the army resorted to bombardment of the suspected places, much to the chagrin of the local people (Saleem, 2006).

The move proved to be extremely unpopular not only in the tribal areas but also in the rest of the country. The local sympathizers of Taliban and the tribesmen were obviously annoyed as they viewed the activities of the troops as an attempt to subjugate them. The government's reliance on force increased feelings of ill-will and the campaign against the suspected foreign elements turned into a war between the Pakistani security forces and the estranged local tribesmen having sympathies with the Afghan Taliban. That proved to be a deadly affair in the months to come as hundreds of troops, tribesmen and ordinary citizens were killed and wounded in the fighting. The fighting also brought unprecedented sufferings to the common people. Business in the conflict region was badly disturbed, leading to a massive exodus of tribesmen from the troubled areas.

Realizing the futility of war, the Pakistani government started approaching the warring tribesmen to settle the issue through negotiation, who had by then gathered under the umbrella of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan. At the time of US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, the local sympathizers of Taliban regime were not known as "Taliban". In fact the Taliban movement popular known as Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan has evolved over the past few years with the merger of different dissident groups due to the government's apathy to events after 9/11 event (Hassan, 2008).

In April 2004, the Pakistani government signed a peace agreement with Nek Mohammad Wazir, the Taliban leader in South Waziristan. But before it could come

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into fruition, Nek Mohammad was killed in a missile attack in June 2004 which added to the acrimony between the conflicting sides. By those times, Taliban had established themselves as a strong force in the tribal areas. In February 2005, the government signed another peace pact with Baitullah Mehsud, a former Guantanamo captive. That brought a relative peace and calm in the region and was replicated in the North Waziristan agency in September 2006. Though these peace pacts were never followed as promised, but still these had substantial impact in reducing tension in the troubled areas.

Unfortunately, both these peace agreements had to be abrogated in August 2007 after the Lal Masjid operation in Islamabad. The operation proved to be extremely unpopular in Pakistan and the Taliban vowed to avenge the killings in the Capital's seminary. In the coming months, a series of suicide attacks were carried out against the security forces and targeted individuals. The Pakistan army retaliated, killing hundreds of Taliban in the tribal and some settled districts of the Frontier province. Common people happened to be the worst sufferers in this conflict in terms of losses of lives, properties and dislocation from their ancestral lands. There was a realization of the futility of excessive military force but the government could not pursue peace talks with Taliban due to the foreign pressure. Ever since the first peace accord with Taliban, the Western powers had started blaming Pakistan for the leniency as these pacts were supposed to have provided Taliban with the time to regroup and reassert themselves. It was being advised if the peace agreements are to be signed; these must be signed with the tribesmen and not with Taliban because it indirectly conferred on them the title of representing tribal people (Rhode, 2006).

In this context, the fourth peace agreement was signed on September 5, 2006 between the Pakistani government and the tribal leaders to put an end to the fighting and bellicosity in the area. It was agreed that foreign militants would be expelled and government would launch development projects and compensate the affected tribesmen. But by that time much to the chagrin of the government, Taliban had succeeded to make incursion into the other five agencies of Fata and Malakand division. Also in those times, a firebrand Taliban leader, Maulvi Faqir Mohammad, emerged as a force to be reckoned with in Bajaur agency. The government was quick to realize his ascendancy and signed a peace accord with Faqir Mohammad which brought a relative calm in the area (Slakelback, 2007).

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In the early months of 2007, the government started changing military policy by approaching the tribesmen to defeat foreign militants in the Waziristan area. The move did work and by April 2007, the tribesmen succeeded pushing the foreign militants out of Pakistani borders.

Despite signing peace agreements with Taliban in various tribal agencies, peace was never there in the strictest sense of the word due to the reluctance of the two parties to abide by those accords. An uneasy calm prevailed in the tribal areas till July 2007, when the Lal Masjid saga occurred and dealt a death blow to the peace process. The killings of seminary students sparked hostilities between the two belligerent sides and the Taliban vowed to take revenge. They orchestrated a number of suicide attacks on the security forces killing dozens of soldiers and wounding even more. The Pakistan army retaliated with full force and killed hundreds of Taliban. Civilian casualties were alarmingly high this time around and human miseries multiplied. In the months ahead till October 2007, the war in Waziristan turned even bloodier.

The number of security personnel, Taliban fighters and innocent civilians killed in the war swelled to hundreds. As the army was busy fighting Taliban in the Waziristan area, the Taliban sympathizers had strengthened themselves in the Swat valley under Maulana Fazlullah. The rulers in Islamabad deciphered the challenge and sent thousands of soldiers to quell insurgency there. By the start of November 2007, an intense fighting started resulting in heavy casualties on both sides. Elsewhere in the country, Law and order situation deteriorated prompting General ® Pervez Musharraf to impose emergency in the country, though the real causes for the imposition of emergency were both personal and political. As the time for elections was approaching, Pakistan Peoples Party chairman Benazir Bhutto was assassinated during electioneering. The government was quick to blame Taliban but the Taliban commander Baitullah Mehsud denied any role in the attempt. As the year 2007 was closing in, Pakistani army was fighting a full- fledged war in the tribal and Swat regions (Dawn 2007).

2008 was the election year in Pakistan and there was a common perception that the new government would call for a reversal of policies vis-à-vis the Taliban movement. Before elections, Baitullah Mehsud, a leading Taliban commander suspended all sorts of violent activities and announced a unilateral ceasefire. In those elections, Pakistan Peoples Party emerged as the leading party and Awami National Party took majority of

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votes in the troubled North West Frontier Province. The provincial government in Peshawar was quick to sign peace agreement with Taliban fighters in Swat. According to the 15-point pact, the government agreed to pull out troops from the area while the Taliban had to close training camps, expel foreigners and stop attacks on the government installations. Despite entering into a peace pact, skirmishes between Taliban and security forces continued in various parts of the tribal and few settled areas. There were fears of Taliban entering into Peshawar after having consolidated themselves in Khyber agency. A major offensive started against the Taliban in July 2008 and were pushed to the mountains without putting much resistance. However, Taliban were very much active in other parts of the Frontier province and carried out a number of suicide attacks killing and wounding dozens of security and common citizens. Till August 2008, Pakistani army was engaged in a full blown-war in Swat and the other tribal areas (Franco, 2007).

Unable to quell the Taliban insurgency through brute military force, the government came forward with a novel idea by preparing the local Lashkars to fight Taliban. In few areas, the private armies were prepared and the local population was provided with weaponry to fight the Taliban fighters but that had to be abandoned due to the reluctance of people on the larger part. The Pakistan army succeeded defeating Taliban in Malakand Agency in the end of 2009 but in the tribal areas, despite the intense military operation, insurgency is still going on.

Pakistan has suffered tremendously in the ongoing war in terms of human loss alongside the financial and social implications of the conflict. Though the two sides (Taliban and the government) are still at the loggerheads and nothing concrete has been done to solve the issue amicably in the national interests. While the Taliban insist on the enforcement of Sharia in their areas, the government is demanding disbandment of the movement. As for resolving the issue through peaceful means is concerned, Taliban will have to be considered a reality. The demand for Islamic law may be accepted coupled with socio-economic reforms in the troubled areas to ensure enduring peace. On their part, the Taliban need to respect the government's writ and try to come to terms with the government to avoid bloodshed and work for peace and prosperity of the tribal people

Media and conflicts

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Conflict depicts a certain milieu in which different persons or groups with different goals focus on a single agenda to accrue maximum benefits for themselves to the exclusion of others. According to Kramer, conflicts are born when the basic human needs like survival, well-being, identity and freedom are denied. Conflict does lead to violence and to achieve peace, it is not suffice to stem violence but also to understand the nature of the conflict (Howard, 2004).

In the present age of media galore, conflicts are viewed not just from the opposing parties' perspective but media is also considered a party to the conflicts. It has generally been observed that media exacerbate conflicts due to various reasons like the economic orientation of media organizations, ideological affiliations and the attitudes and backgrounds of media personnel that set the discourse. Carol Daniel Kasbari, contends if the media is part of the problem that can lead to violent conflicts, then the media must also be a part of the solution. However, just as pro-war propaganda is not the sole cause of the war; peace-oriented media cannot end conflict single-handedly. But there is a general realization that peace media discourses can significantly contribute to peace in war hit zones.

Cognizant of that very fact and critical of the conventional jingoistic journalism, Johan Galtung, Director of the Transcend, coined the term 'Peace Journalism' in the 1970s. He defined peace as composed of non-violence and creativity. For Galtung, peace does not mean the reduction of war to a state of non-violence: There must be creativity in the resolution process itself. For the media sector "creativity" points towards a more peace oriented rather than conflict oriented information gathering and reporting process (Galtung, 1996).

According to Galtung (as quoted by Saheed 2007), war journalism sees conflict as a battle and focuses on party that advances, counting the losses in terms of numbers killed, wounded, and material damage. It reduces negotiations to mere verbal battles, making heroics of the smarter ones, and those who undo others and champions the ideals of stereotypes and raw interpretation of events. On the other hand, Peace Journalism, say Annabel McGoldrick and Jake Lynch (2005) uses conflict analysis techniques to bring objectivity, fairness and accuracy in reporting. Peace journalism introduces the concepts of non-violence and creativity to promote understanding between conflicting parties to make visible the subjugated aspects of reality" (Galtung, 2005).

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Carol Daniel Kasbari, (2006) contends that conflicts have always been valuable commodities for media persons because people want to know about the status of wars and the media focus increases viewership and readership. Media institutions have commercial anxiety that is why, they often use “conflict and war” oriented news. Journalists are locked into the “race” for being first, being the fastest, getting the unusual angle, and creating the most sensational stories that, in turn, might produce the largest audiences.

Annabel McGoldrick and Jake Lynch (2005) argue war journalism distinguishes between self and other, thus demonizes another party for being “beyond the pale” of civilized behavior. It exhibits partiality and comes into foray with pre-conceived notions of the “Good and Bad” in discourse.

This study discusses the Taliban conflict from a perspective of war and peace journalism. The Taliban ranks consist of local tribesmen, students of religious seminaries and few foreigners Jihadis who are against the Pakistani government for its support in the war on terror and want imposition of Islamic system in the areas of their control. The government of Pakistan fears the Taliban poses a threat to national security and want them to disarm and cease links with Al Qaeda. This study construes Taliban as the Pakistani Taliban that share the ideals of Afghan Taliban who had ruled Afghanistan in the latter half of 1990s and had defeated the then USSR army in Afghanistan alongside Mujahiddin. After the Soviets debacle and internecine wars in Afghanistan for years, the Taliban were able to capture power in Afghanistan in 1996. Once they were in power, Taliban imposed a rigid Islamic law in the country which earned a lot of animosity for them. But their stint was brief as they were alleged to have provided conduits to Al-Qaeda leadership responsible for the September 9, 2001 terrorist attack on the US. In a matter of few days, they were dethroned by the mighty superpower through its high-tech weaponry with active support from Pakistan. Pervez Musharraf (In the line of fire 2007) says Pakistan after vetting its role thoroughly, decided to join the US led war on terror in its supreme national interests. But that decision antagonized the local sympathizers of Taliban regime in Pakistan leading to the antagonized tribes rising against the government.

To quash the local Taliban insurgency, Pakistani government started army operation against them. Thousands of troops have been deployed in the tribal areas and dozens

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of operations have been conducted in the areas of Taliban dominance. Thousands have been killed, maimed and displaced in this military action which has now entered into the sixth year. The area once bastion of peace has now been turned into a veritable hell (Mohmand, 2008). The Soviet era remnants in the tribal areas then euphemistically called 'Mujahiddin' have now upped the ante against the government for 'its connivance with the US'. The ranks of Taliban have swelled in the recent years and the movement has gained momentum in other settled parts of the Frontier province.

According to Anwar Syed (2008), the Taliban have two main objectives. First, they want to expel the Americans from Afghanistan. To this, they attack the US and Afghan forces. They want Pakistan dissociate itself from the terror war. As Pakistan will not do that, they consider Pakistan a friend of their enemy and hence their enemy. Secondly, they want Islamic system 'as they know them' to be implemented in Pakistan.

Taliban are being criticized for entertaining a rigid view of Islam and fears are rife that their victory would transport the country into the ephemeral dark ages. Pressured by such horrific prognosis, the state has often retaliated with force. According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, gross human rights excesses have been made by the security forces and Taliban in the troubled areas. Attacks on the non-combatants and the collateral damages are all times high. Hundreds of thousands of ordinary people have been rendered homeless and now living in total discomfiture.

The study aims to analyze the media strategy in reporting the tension between the Taliban and the security forces. Taking cue from the original Galtung model of peace journalism, this study strives to help devise a media strategy to promote peace and conflict transformation between the warring sides.

In an empirical content analysis study by Jake Lynch on the coverage by UK newspapers of the 'Iran nuclear crisis' over five months from August, 2005, he found the coverage highly warring and inciting conflict.

In a seminal study, Dr Syed Abdul Siraj explored framing of war journalism and peace journalism in the Pakistan-India conflict over Kashmir in two US newspapers, the New York Times and the Washington Post. The study showed that the number of war journalism stories and frames in both newspapers was greater than the number of

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peace Journalism stories and frames.

In a similar study, Lorraine Onduru, in her study (peace journalism in practice, 2006) while suggesting peace journalism frames for the journalists in Uganda after the agreement between the government and the LRA (Lord's Resistance Army) in the country says journalists reporting on the issue should shed light on what still needs to be done, like rehabilitation of victims, the underlying issues faced by the Acholi ethnic group, tribalism, and creating a culture of peace for highlighting the common issues.

Seow Ting Lee and Crispin C. Maslog in their study "Asian Conflicts and the Iraq War: A Comparative Framing Analysis" examined the news coverage of the Iraq War and Asian conflicts by eight newspapers from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and the Philippines to compare the framing of two different levels of conflicts - international and local. Based on Galtung's war/peace journalism framework, a content analysis of 1558 stories on the Iraq War and the Asian conflicts involving Pakistan and India's tussle over Kashmir, the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka, the Muslim separatist movement in the southern Philippine province of Mindanao and the Aceh and Maluku civil wars in Indonesia showed that the Asian newspapers used a war journalism frame in covering local conflicts but deployed a peace journalism frame in covering the Iraq War.

In another study, Peace journalism and the Northern Irish Peace Process' Graham Spencer, using the key frames of peace journalism like non-confrontational discourse and 'non-zero-sum', says that the news coverage of the peace process has sensationalized and personalized peace politics to the detriment of public knowledge. Drawing from extensive interview material conducted with the parties in Northern Ireland it sets out the news media's obsession with confrontational discourse and 'zero-sum' politics rather than non-confrontational discourse and 'non-zero-sum', indicates a lack of receptiveness to articulations which propose integrative and constructive ideas about how to build peace.

Mr. Bayuni, a leading peace reporter in his write-up, Would Peace Journalism have made a difference to East Timor today, says media oversimplified the East Timorese issue by going for war journalism frames in portraying the conflict as a war between "giant Indonesia and tiny East Timor, between the mighty Indonesian Military and the Fretilin separatist movement, and between Muslim Indonesia and Christian East Timor. In his analysis, Mr Bayuni says peace journalists would have looked at the

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origins of the conflict that the 1975 invasion of East Timor was part of the cold war conflict, and Indonesian soldiers moved in with tacit approval from the United States and Australia. Farther analysis of East Timor politics would have told us that East Timor was a divided society, and that a sizable part of the East Timorese people wanted to be part of Indonesia under either a special autonomy arrangement, or as a full fledged member of the republic.

Oma Djebah, in his study "Peace Journalism in Africa: the Nigerian experience" conducted a content analysis study of three Nigerian newspapers during the Nigeria Delta crisis. Using the Galtung peace journalism model, Oma established that the media saw the conflict as a battle who advances, who capitulates short of their goals; counting the losses in terms of numbers killed, wounded, and material damage. The zero-sum perspective was the predominant theme.

The present study aims to analyze the framing of war journalism and peace journalism in the four leading newspapers of Pakistan including daily Dawn, The News, Jang and Express. It will also analyze the extent of humanization in Pakistani journalism and suggestions for promoting the concept of peace in the media.

War Journalism and Peace Journalism

The theoretical framework of this article is determined by framing-theory, the peace journalism frame and the war journalism frame. In fact, ever since Johan Galtung, a renowned sociologist coined the term peace journalism years back in 1970s; we have seen two different approaches to reporting wars; the peace journalism and the war journalism. Johan Galtung classification of peace journalism and war journalism is supported by four distinct factors having their peculiar linguistic orientation and practices. These are peace/war, truth/propaganda, people/elite and solutions/differences. War journalism is violence and victory orientated, dehumanizing the 'enemy', focusing on 'our' suffering, prioritizing official sources and highlighting only the visible effects of violence while the peace journalism is solution-orientated, giving voice to the voiceless, humanizing the 'enemy', exposing lies on all sides, highlighting peace initiatives and focusing on the invisible effects of violence (Keeble, 2007).

Frames can be defined as the mental mechanisms helping us to organize our thoughts

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and ideas and make sense of the world. Often these mechanisms are applied by us inadvertently in our daily routine lives but they have a huge role how we decipher the reality around us. Frames come with inferences, so each frame implies something different (Lakoff, 2004).

Case Study: Peace Journalism and Taliban conflict

The media discourse in Pakistan on Taliban conflict was predominantly guided towards war journalism. Thus the study conforms to other studies undertaken by various researchers using the same theoretical model like the Carol Daniel Kasbari, (2006) who contends Media institutions have commercial anxiety that is why, they often use “conflict and war” oriented news. Shinar (2004) concluded in his study that media would use war frames even though they would be reporting peace negotiations. Jake Lynch (2005) while studying the coverage by UK newspapers of the ‘Iran nuclear crisis’ found that the war journalism frame of propaganda was more visible than peace journalism frame thus paving the way for military intervention. Likewise, Fawcett (2002) found in his study that the Irish media was keener on reporting conflict frames than the conciliatory frames.

As far as the type of stories is concerned, the total number of articles on the topic was higher in the coverage than both the editorials and letters to the editor. Similarly, the English press gave more coverage to the conflict than the Urdu press and was more tilted towards war journalism than peace journalism. Likewise, News published more stories on the topic followed by Dawn, Express and daily Jang.

In the overall coverage, the Taliban got a more unfavorable slant and was framed as a foe. Furthermore, the Taliban were criticized as unfavorable in the war journalism frame and framed favorably in the peace journalism discourse.

The unfavorable slant about Taliban in the newspapers was quite likely as Taliban are fighting the Pakistani government and are violating the writ of the state. Moreover, they have brought a number of tribal and settled districts under their control where they people are not happy with their ways of governing. Thousands have been killed and wounded while hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced in the continuing conflict.

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In the present study, the friend and foe frames and the favorable and unfavorable slants towards the issue of Taliban point to the Jake Lynch view that media institutions have political and economic orientations that limit the journalists' approach to objective reporting to cover all sides of the story. The conclusion also backs the Turkish journalist quoted by Ozgunes and Terzis (2000) that I always take into consideration our national interests and hence don't write against my government because of the fear that my 'objective' reporting could be used wrongly by the other side.

Congruent with slants in the study, the nine war journalism frame indicators in the study far exceeded the alternative nine peace journalism frame indicators. In the war journalism frame, the most frequently used frame was of the 'dichotomy of good guy ad bad guy' indicator. Whereas, in the peace Journalism frame, the most frequently used frame was of 'people-oriented' indicator.

The four most salient indicators supporting war journalism frame, based on a total frequency count were 'differences-oriented', 'elite-oriented', 'dichotomy of good guy and bad guy' and 'zero-sum-oriented'. Regarding 'differences-oriented' frame, more stories were related to the cross-purpose objectives of the conflicting parties where the Taliban were condemned for being working against the territorial integrity and national interests. In the 'elite-oriented perspective', the stories were about the elites and decision makers of the two sides at the expense of the poor lot who were suffering the most. Regarding the 'dichotomy of good guy and bad guy' frames, the stories were carrying information of which party is working for the sacred mission and which is pursuing the devilish objectives. As far as the frame 'zero-sum-oriented' is concerned, the stories contained information that no deals and comprises can work and warn that if Taliban exist, they would destroy the whole state apparatus and Pakistani society would cease to exist.

The four most salient indicators supporting peace journalism frame, were 'solution-oriented', 'people-oriented', 'causes and effects' and 'multi-party oriented'. The 'solution-oriented' frame, contained stories about the possible solution to the conflict by bridging the gaps between the opposing parties. The people-oriented perspectives contained stories having information about the sufferings of common people in the conflicts and their viewpoints to solve the issue. The 'causes and consequences' perspective dealt with the contextual and background information of

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the conflict and the future repercussions of the conflict on the parties concerned and on the common people at large. 'Multi-party' coverage gave voices to many parties involved in the conflict.

The stories of war journalism frame pointed to the conflict itself where the Taliban atrocities were reported, their challenge to the security forces was discussed, their version of Islam was ridiculed, people were warned of their intentions, and condemned demonized as terrorists, fundamentalists.

On the other hand stories with peace frame, urged for solving the conflict through negotiations and less military means. These stories argued for the resumption of dialogue, shedding light on the sufferings of common people, looking at the issue from a broader and contextual point of view, highlighted the roles of the all stakeholders and suggested ways and means for the amicable solution of the conflict.

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