

Construction of Taliban Image in Pakistan: Discourse Analysis of Editorials of *Dawn* and *The News*

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Abstract

The aim of this research study is to investigate as to how the image of Taliban is being constructed in the print media discourses. In the last couple of years, media in Pakistan widely covered the involvement of Taliban, fanning extremism in Pakistan, which, at present, forms a frame of reference in national context. The media coverage shows that the Taliban mostly carry negative images. They might have some positive gestures as well, but the overall image is clearly negative.

Most of editorials in leading newspapers see Taliban behind growing extremism in the country. This paper discusses the difference of image building between two leading English language newspapers - *The News* and *Dawn*. The study describes the coverage pattern of the two distinct newspapers on Taliban and extremism. Editorials of these two Pakistani newspapers published from 1st February 2009 to 31st March 2009 were selected to study media construction of the image of Taliban in Pakistan.

The rationales behind selecting these newspapers are: (1) both the English newspapers have a high circulation (2) both have distinct editorial policies.

The paper concludes that media constructs a negative image of Taliban in the editorial discourses. The paper examines as to how the media constructs the image of Taliban and to what extent this portrayal forms derogatory and stereotypical frames of them.

Concretely, this study focuses on the frame that has been applied by both the newspapers *DAWN* and *The News* while writing editorials on Taliban. These frames identify differences and similarities between the coverage of the two newspapers. The paper does speak of the stylistic features in editorials of both the newspapers.

Introduction and Background

Since the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan in 1979, Pakistan has been facing serious challenge of growing religious extremism that has now taken a new turn in terms of Talibanization. Militancy and incidents of terrorism routed from Talibanization are serious threats for Pakistan in particular and for the rest of the world in general. Talibanization has adversely affected the security situation and stability in Pakistan.

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The Mujahideen, the earlier brand of Taliban, who fought against the Soviet troops in Afghanistan gave birth to some home grown militant groups that emerged as Taliban. General Ziaul Haq, the then dictator of Pakistan, had continued to support to their growth even after the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan. As a result of fighting in Afghanistan, over three million Afghan refugees crossed over to Pakistan and the then military government helped them dwell in Pakistan. Among those refugees were religious fanatics who started indoctrinating the Pakistani youth with military training in the make-shift religious schools (Madrassas). Gradually, the Madrassas mushroomed in NWFP, Balochistan and Sindh under their control and supervision. The major destinations of these Mujahideen were Karachi, Akora Khattak, Faisalabad and Multan. It was the decision of General Zia to establish more Madrassas so that more extremist would ready to fight with Russians. These Afghan Madrassas on Pakistan's soul also encouraged the trend of setting up of Madrassas in other parts of Pakistan by local religious groups. The latest form of Taliban is the product of these religious Madrassas, flourished within recent decades.

Taliban is not a distinct organization but an alliance of different groups, which have common goals but different agendas, making it a more complex phenomenon. According to an editorial in *The News*, the Taliban were born in Afghanistan, 'product of a dark alliance between the CIA and our own intelligence services as a tool to lever the Soviet Union from power in Afghanistan'³. *The News* commented that 'militants comprise a number of groups rather than one homogenous unit' – and include 'extremists, criminals and smugglers'⁴. The newspaper believes that the 'Taliban are perhaps better armed and better funded than Ziaul Haq's era' in the contemporary times. It described that Taliban are medium for CIA's overt and covert aid as they were projected and constructed as (Mujahideen) freedom fighters⁵ by the Pakistan and Western media.

In generic terms, the word 'Taliban' is derived from 'Talib' (a student) which means the one who seeks for knowledge. According to Pushto language, Taliban generally denotes the students who are studying in 'deeni' (religious) madrassas. The term Talibanization generally used to be perceived as a process being implemented at the religious centres in terms of imparting religious education to students (Talibans).

Dr. Babar Shah in his article '*The Myth of Talibanization in Pakistan*' writes that 'emergence of the Taliban phenomenon, both in Pakistan and Afghanistan, is partly the result of internal conflicts, and partly a product of a number of vested interests', that operated, and are operating, using the localized, politico-religious milieu for their individual agendas. Social change is a natural process and it cannot be stopped. However, when coercive interventions are introduced under whatever, be the religious or political or ideological umbrellas, the results would be horrendous. The failed effort of the former Afghan Communist Governments, to 'russify' the Afghan society by coercion is a constant reminder of what the results can be.

³ *The News*, Editorial, 16 February 2009.

⁴ *The News*, 8th February 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

⁵ *Dawn*, 6th February 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

In addition to receiving donations from local philanthropists, these madrassas were reportedly massively funded by Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and some friendly, conservative Muslim countries as well. General Zia-ul-Haq had also authorized the district Zakat Committees to give them money from the official Zakat⁶ funds. Since massive population displacement had taken place, as the Afghan war took its human toll, the number of orphans also increased. Poverty was common. Every madrassa attracted students, because besides education, food, accommodation and clothing were also offered free. Apart from the traditional education, the students were imparted military training as well, which went down well in view of the Soviet presence in their country.

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Amid the increasing incidents of religious extremism, fundamentalism and sectarianism, Pakistan gradually witnessed upsurge in Talibanization and the State of Pakistan and its politico-religious forces, and deeni (religious) madrassas were dubbed as a breeding ground for religious fanaticism, particularly by the non-Muslim international media, which badly damaged Pakistan’s image in the international community (Shah, 2001).

Pakistani Pashtun rebellions, such as Baitullah Mehsud and Maulana Fazlullah, in varying degree, joined or supported the Taliban, motivated by the common goals of driving the United States and NATO forces out of Afghanistan, undermining the Afghan and Pakistani governments, and achieving political control over the Pashtun areas that span both sides of the Afghan-Pakistan border (Felbab-Brown, 2009).

During the past eight years, Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan have moved strategically to gain increasing control of the frontier regions at both sides of the Pak-Afghan border (Rana, 2009). There is, however, sufficient evidence that the Taliban were not keen on the imposition of Shariah and their primary purpose was to use the slogan of jihad (holy war) to recruit human resource and collect funds⁷.

The media reports collected by Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) states that Taliban groups imposed a ban on NGOs, targeted CD shops and attacked educational institutions, especially girls’ schools. These reports suggest that from January to May 2008, they attacked 29 schools, of which 17 were girls’ educational institutions.

Until February 2007, the Taliban killed 61 teachers, and forced 14 and 25 local and foreign NGOs to return to Islamabad by halting their operations. They also reported to have killed dozens of alleged ‘US and Pakistan government spies’ (Rana, 2009). Many of the Taliban gangs operating in the North-West Frontier Province and the tribal areas of Pakistan gathered in December 2007 under one umbrella, i.e; Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (The Pakistani Taliban Movement) (Felbab-Brown, 2009).

⁶ Zakat is a religious duty of Muslims to distribute some portion of their money and wealth to poor and under-privileged to help them survive.

⁷ Mullah Nazir, interviewed by Jamsheed Baghwan, Daily Express (Peshawar), May 13, 2007.

The process of Talibanization in tribal areas was gradual and they were successful in establishing parallel justice and administrative systems. Taliban leaders' statements suggested that their agenda was to enforce their system not only in FATA or NWFP but all over the country. The Taliban matured into a full-fledged insurgent movement within four to five years. The short-term objective of the Taliban was to initiate a Taliban insurgency in Pakistan and a counterinsurgency in Afghanistan for the US-led occupation forces through 'jihad' and to enforce a new social, political and economic order based on their ideology or interpretation of Islam. The long-term objective is to drive out the "infidel forces" from all Muslim mainlands. They associate their identity with various Islamic movements across the world and disapprove of geographical barriers. These structural flaws created space for Taliban who were offering parallel security and judicial systems to the people by establishing parallel "courts" in almost all parts of FATA and some areas of the settled districts in NWFP (Rana, 2009).

Dawn writes in an article⁸ that:

'The Taliban have simply become a cover for men to hide their own misogynist tendencies and make a mockery of institutional crimes against women routine in our society. Until such inherent contradictions are sorted out and secular alternatives take the form of policies that challenge and remove every level of institutionalised discrimination at state, social and domestic levels, none of these self-acclaimed liberals have the right to declare themselves secular in their politics. Till then, they remain as much a part of the problem as any Taliban'.

While Khattak (2004) unveils both genders of Talibanization wherein 'men were not allowed to shave their beards while women were denied employment'.

Pakistan seems to be committed to become a modern Islamic state, as envisaged by the founder of the country Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. The enforcement of the Sharia has to be an enlightened activity to be pursued by the politico-democratic means. Constant agitations, or the use of coercion, would make the nation and the country hostage to unacceptable means. The manner of functioning of the politico-religious forces for what they term 'Islamization' has shown that it is remote from the objectives of tolerance, peace and learning that the religion of Islam stands for (Shah, 2001).

Some recent developments in media sphere are progressive in nature. Similarly, Pakistani mass media is a bit fast paced in this decade. The electronic media growth is relatively higher in terms of reach and substance among all other media outlets. Previously, electronic media was for most part, an official spokesperson but now converted its role for people's voice. This time around it is the print media rather than the electronic which has led the charge by exposing the cruel reality of Taliban rule in the Swat valley; the electronic media having largely ignored it apart from routine reporting of army activity.

It were the editorial, op-ed and letters pages of *The News*, as claimed by the paper, and then other newspapers which drew aside the curtain and gave a voice to the people of

⁸ *Dawn*, 11 April 2009.

Swat⁹. It seems that media is somewhat playing a visible role in bringing about some sort of attitudinal change among people on war on terror, extremism and rule of law and democracy. The 24/7 media reporting on military operations against extremists at one hand and the reporting on people's long march for rule of law and democracy on the other hand are worth quoting from Pakistan's recent media history.

Previously, media somehow reportedly remained under pressure due to the threats from Taliban and generally remained in certain limits fearing any backlash from the extremists. Similarly, the government had also bowed before the religious extremism and agreed to implant a Shariah system that some religious groups wanted to impose in their area of control in Swat.

But the emergence of Jamia Hafsa and Lal Mosque in the heart of Islamabad as a hub of militancy as reported in media became an eye opener for the people, the government and media to expose real face of Talibans. The killing of innocent people in series of suicide bombing across the country by religious militants reportedly created a change of mind among the people who thought that these killings have nothing to do with the religion of Islam but the acts of terrorism by certain disgruntled elements using the name of Islam.

The newspaper editorials show that most of the editorial writers have expressed concern about the 'talibanization' of Peshawar region. *The News International* in one of its article titled 'The idea of the talibanization of North-West Frontier Province' said that Talibanization may still seem a bit far-fetched, but reality is staring us in the face¹⁰. Should we close our eyes and behave like ostriches? The time has come for us to take a firm stand. An editorial writer with the *Frontier Post* added: 'These self-proclaimed guardians of the nation's morality ought to know that the population is not willing to accept their spiritual guides'¹¹.

In the light of this introductory background information, this paper attempts to explore as how media of Pakistan, *Dawn* and *The News* construct the image of Taliban in their editorial discourses. This study takes stock of how these two leading English daily newspapers built the image of the Taliban and Talibanization in print media discourse. This research investigates the following:

1. How print media are representing Taliban in their discourses & what metaphors are used to construct them?
2. Is the coverage of Taliban is mostly conflict-oriented and unfavorable?
3. Is the coverage in Pakistani print media discourses mainly condemning the government or appreciating?

⁹ *The News*, 2nd February 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

¹⁰ *The Taliban and the media: A country with no news or pictures*, Reporters Without Borders, September 2000. The paper can be accessed from http://www.omaidd.com/english_section/in_the_press/talibanMedia_ReportersWithoutBorders.htm, we retrieved it on December 15, 2009.

¹¹ *Ibid*

4. Is the construction of Taliban a strategy of group focused enmity by only constructing a foe image using predominantly negative portrayals?
5. Is print media only constructing a negative image of Taliban?
6. Does the use of frames differ between *The News* and *Dawn*?

Literature Review

While working on this study, a literature review is significant in the sense that many a researchers on the subject of Talibanization have used various media framing to track down the process of talibansation as a result of the former Soviet Union defeat in the hands of the Islamic militants duly supported by the then international community led by the United States. Frame analysis is a type of discourse analysis that asks, what activity are speakers engaged in when they say this? What do they think they are doing by talking in this way at this time? (Tannen, 1993). Schön and Rein say about frames 'we see policy positions as resting on underlying structures of beliefs, perceptions, and appreciations, which we call frames (Schön & Rein, 1994, p.23).

During the last decade, the framing literature has generated an abundant body of literature that has advanced our knowledge on different aspects of media functions in society. Framing scholarship has raised our awareness on how media frames are constructed and how these frames affect their audiences (Scheufele, 1999).

Over the last twenty years research on ageing has undergone a dramatic expansion (Andrews 1999). Discourse analysis has become popular qualitative approach both for psychology and media studies in recent years (Giles, 2002). Discourse analysis method is used to analyze discourses on a particular issue both conscious and unconscious agendas of the writer. The main objective of the discourse analysis is to analyzing text much more than attending to whatever is 'in' those texts (MacLure, 2003: 43).

Amid this discussion, constructivists believe reality to be a product of social construction with the mass media being powerful player in this process (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; McLeod & Chaffee, 1972; Schulz, 1976).

Wand and Weber (2002) says 'Realism' starts from the position that it is more likely that it is reality or it is only reality which has an effect on the agent (and not the reverse); while constructivism asserts that it is more likely or only the agent that, in the act of perceiving reality, creates it¹². According to Hall (1999), meaning can never be fixed. People have 'conceptual maps' that organize and assign meaning to events. Meaning is expressed through language and representation. 'Meaning needs a discourse to make it meaningful...without language there is no representation, no meaning' (Hall, 1999). Power enters into language to fix meaning (Hall, 1999). Gitlin (1980, p.7) describes

¹² Weber, Stefan, (2002) *Media and the Construction of Reality*. This paper can be accessed at: http://www.mediamanual.at/en/pdf/Weber_etrans.pdf we retrieved it on December 15, 2009.

media frames as, ‘largely unspoken and unacknowledged, organize the world both for journalists who report it and, in some important degree, for us to rely on their reports’.

Meyers and Davis (Meyers, 2004; Davis & French, 2008) suggests that ‘discourse is not simply a linguistic practice; it refers to and constructs knowledge about a particular topic’ (p.100). Critical discourse analysts focus on a range of rhetorical devices, structures, and semantic strategies to reveal ‘not only how language and representation produce meaning, but also the relationship between representation, meaning and power, and the construction of identities and subjectivities’ (Ibid, p. 101; Davis & French, 2008).

‘Media frames, in particular, have been defined as the core or central organizing idea of the news package that provides the means for understanding events’ (Gamson, 1983, p.398; Camaj, 2008) or as ‘conceptual tools’ used to convey, interpret, and evaluate information (Neuman et al, 1992, p.60; Camaj, 2008). Entman (2004) is one the scholars who has offered the most cited definition of media framing as ‘selecting and highlighting some facets of events or issues, and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and or solution’ (Entman, 2004, p.5; Camaj, 2008). The idea helps “understanding events related to the issue in question” (Gamson and Lasch 1983, p.398). Media reporters have been shown to play a central role in the reconstruction of social reality during periods of terrorism and war (Carruthers, 2000).

Pakistan hangs in a precarious balance. As a nuclear power having fought three wars over Kashmir with nuclear India, as the home of radical jihad groups nurtured there since the 1970s, and as a hideout for al Qaeda and Taliban fighters since the US-led war on neighboring Afghanistan in late 2001, Pakistan’s actions in international politics influence both regional and international. The Taliban were the products of the Deobandi religious seminaries (Madrassas) which dotted the Pashtun-dominated areas of Pakistan along the borders. Madrassas also mushroomed in the Punjab and Sindh (Behuria, 2007). Support for the Taliban was a major part of Pakistan’s foreign policy, but was also integral to its domestic policy. Beyond strategic depth, the relationship gave the ISI the opportunity to use the Taliban and al Qaeda to provide facilities and expertise to the jihadis fighting for Kashmir. Domestically, the friendship with the Taliban helped address two trends since the 1970s and 1980s – firstly, the civilian governments had a way to provide patronage to the growing number of Islamists and secondly, to build a support structure among to endorse their popular and at times unpopular regimes. Also, Pakistan’s leaders could address Pashtun alienation within Pakistan, while steering the Taliban clear of efforts to encourage Pashtun separatism (Ayoob, 2002). The Taliban are an austere religious group, articulating a Deobandi Islam strongly influenced by Saudi Wahhabism, and supported financially by the Saudis for that reason¹³ (Gregory, 2007).

Considering the media position on Swat issue, *The News* describes that ‘the start of the Malakand operation produced the most amazing spectacle of all...anchors and reporters... changed their tune about the Taliban.... the term ‘Taliban’ has all but

¹³ Gregory, S. (2007). ‘The ISI and the War on Terrorism’, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*. The paper can be accessed from http://www.humansecuritygateway.com/documents/PSRU_Pakistan_ISI_WarOnTerrorism.pdf we retrieved it on December 15, 2009.

disappeared from the lexicon altogether, replaced by ‘terrorists’ or ‘militants’¹⁴. Further, it described that ‘Many observers who have long opposed the establishment’s support for jihadi groups will presumably be happy about the fact that the popular media has also stopped romanticising the Taliban (with a few exceptions). Viewed in isolation, the media’s about-turn is indeed a good thing. But put into its proper context, the shift reflects that very little has changed at all. Ultimately, the media is simply singing to the establishment’s (revised) tune. It should not be forgotten that the establishment has assiduously used the media for many decades to project the image of jihad as holy war. Without the media’s support it would have been very difficult to justify the dumping of this narrative that continued to be favoured until quite recently’¹⁵.

While critically examining the media stance on Swat issue, *The News*, on the one hand, particularly in the urban areas of Punjab, like other most of media plays a significant role in shaping public opinion. But on the other hand, for the best part of 60 years, the media has been unable to generate support for the state’s national security imperatives in Sindh and Balochistan, and only to a certain extent in NWFP. In effect the media’s pandering to the establishment at the present time serves to keep the Punjabi heartland on board as an extremely delicate and dangerous ideational leap is made in which jihadi forces previously seen as essential to the security interests of the nation are now depicted as constituting a serious threat.

Based on the literature review and explication above, the study attempts to test the following hypotheses:

- H1: *The News* constructs the image of Taliban chiefly in national context whereas *Dawn* does so in a globalized or system perspective.
- H2: *The News* represents Taliban with relatively more violent image(s) than *Dawn*.
- H3: *The News* caters to the opinion of general public for the construction of Taliban’s image whereas the *DAWN* caters to the opinion of elite class on the subject.

Dawn and The News

According to Shafqat Munir ¹⁶(served at a senior editorial position with *The News*), *The News* is a radical, open, a bit progressive newspaper while *Dawn* is traditional and conservative in its approach. Both cater to the needs of two different segments of the society, with some portion of overlapping audience.

The oldest newspaper of Pakistan is *Dawn*. It is widely-read English-language newspaper. *Dawn* and Pakistan, both are founded by Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah – one in 1940 and other in 1947 as a part of his struggle for an independent homeland for Muslims. It was first published from Delhi, the capital of British India, to

¹⁴ *The News*, 22nd June 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Currently he works as Editor Infochange News and Features Network (INFN). He taught media developments in Pakistan at the National Institute of Pakistan Studies (NIPS), Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad Pakistan. He is a media critique and also heads a media think tank ‘Journalists for Democracy and Human Rights (JDHR)’. JDHR conducts research and sensitizes media and journalists on peace and development issues.

raise the voice of Muslims under British Raj. Jinnah expressed his feeling about *Dawn* in the following words¹⁷:

‘The Dawn will mirror faithfully the views of India's Muslims and the All India Muslim League in all its activities: economic, educational and social and more particularly political, throughout the country fearlessly and independently and while its policy will be, no doubt, mainly to advocate and champion the cause of the Muslims and the policy and programme of the All India Muslim League, it will not neglect the cause and welfare of the peoples of this sub-continent generally’.

Dawn is famous for its controversial leftist social agenda. The newspaper is published by Pakistan Herald Publications, which has now developed different media outlets including *Dawn News* (tv channel) and *Herald* (magazine). The newspaper has offices in all major cities of Pakistan, viz; Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad, and has representatives abroad¹⁸.

It has a week-day circulation of over 138,000 copies and a total readership base in excess of 759,000. Read every morning by policy and decision-makers in the public and private sectors, at federal and provincial government level and by the majority of Pakistan's English reading newspaper, the newspaper from its inception, DAWN has been at the forefront of the many events that constitute Pakistan's history¹⁹. Being an English language daily, *Dawn* has an elitist readership and character. Since it is hardly read by the common people as being an English language newspaper, the establishment had traditionally shown greater resilience and tolerance to its criticism (Akhtar, 2000).

The News International is the second largest English language newspaper in Pakistan. *The News* has an ABC certified circulation of 140,000 copies. It is published from Karachi, Lahore and Rawalpindi/Islamabad. An overseas edition is published from London for the Pakistani community in the United Kingdom and plans are currently underway to start publication in New York City, USA.

The News is published by the Jang Group of Newspapers, publisher of the *Daily Jang* - the largest Urdu language newspaper of the country²⁰. Jang Group controls over 65% of the total urban newspaper readership in Pakistan²¹. Mir Khalil ur Rehman was the founder of the newspaper and his younger son, Mir Shakil ur Rehman, is the present owner²². *The News* caters to those who want to know commentaries on current national and international events and newsworthy incidents. Among the various newspapers of Pakistan, *The News* enjoys extremely wide readership.

Method

The method selected to explore the discourses of Taliban image in both the newspapers *The News* and *Dawn* was discourse analysis. Fairclough (1995, p.41) describes discourse analysis as ‘a type of language associated with a particular representation, from a specific

¹⁷ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dawn_\(newspaper\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dawn_(newspaper))

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ <http://www.dawn.com/fixe/group/publicat.htm>

²⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_News_International

²¹ World Association of Newspapers – World Press Trends 2008

²² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_News_International

point of view, of some social practice'. The 'specific point of view', as ABC comments on Fairclough refers to is that the social life is regarded as 'interconnected networks of social practices of diverse sorts (economic, political, cultural, family, etc.)' (The Discourse of HIV/AIDS in Chin, 1998). This method was useful in the sense as to look at arguments and dialogues in a systematic way (Priest, 2009).

As news media operate in the public sphere and shape public discussion, Van Dijk (1988) argued, 'news should be studied primarily as a form of public discourse' (p.vii). Beyond media pervasiveness, the power of news discourse to shape social reality is derived, in part, from the appearance that coverage is normal, neutral, and value-free (Meyers, 2004; van Dijk, 1991).

To keep these descriptions in mind, this study is based on the qualitative method to explore the construction of image of Taliban in print media discourses. This paper describes the coverage pattern of two distinct newspapers on the subject of Taliban and extremism. The editorials of the two leading newspapers - *The News* and *Dawn*, published between February 2009 and March 31, 2009 were chosen to identify the frames of the image of Taliban. This period was considered to be the peak time of the issue, particularly when debate over Taliban and Swat issue was taking enough of space in all media outlets. Altogether, 354 editorials were read out from both the newspapers and 24 editorials from *The News* and 14 editorials from *Dawn* were found relevant to Taliban issue for this study.

The main domain of the study was the critical examination of Taliban activities in Swat and its nearby areas. Their sub-domains included: enforcement of Sharia and its effects on the masses, brutal activities of Taliban, growing extremism, apparent silence of religio-political leaders on militant activities, migration of people as Swat has become hazardous and war zone for them, role of the state on Taliban issue, origin of Taliban, criminal activities like kidnapping and killing of Taliban, Taliban activities against NGOs, characteristics of Taliban. All the selected editorials were found to be criticizing Taliban prominently.

Hypotheses Testing

Image construction hardly precludes the discussion on bundle of epistemes usually used in media contents. However, our major focus was on certain trivialities in the analysis such as metaphors or labels used to describe Talibans or their actions – not seeing them in linguistic metamorphism but as a label negative in its manifestation and its frequency.

Following lines sheds some light on the hypotheses the study constructed:

H1: *The News* constructs the image of Taliban chiefly in national context whereas *Dawn* does so in a globalized or system perspective.

While analyzing the editorial contents of both the newspapers, it can be predicted that *The News* and *Dawn* construct the image of Taliban in different contexts. *The News* appreciates the stand of a key Jamaat Islami leader Qazi Hussain Ahmad, a pro-Islamic politician, who condemns the Taliban activities against schools and barbers and branding them as un-Islamic.

The News raises the voice in national context. *The Newspaper* says that 'if the growing extremism that threatens almost everyone in the country is to be battled, we need support

of our religious leaders'²³. However, at a very few stances *The News* expressed the concerns in globalised perspective. It further comments that 'the senseless acts of militants, who clearly understand little of the religion they profess to be enforcing, go to further damage its image in the world'²⁴.

While defusing the impression that 'the curse of militancy is limited chiefly to the remote, tribal areas' with limited 'ability to strike virtually anywhere in the country'²⁵, *The News* considers them a threat to security of people and country and not a threat to the political and social system and not a danger having potential of crossing Pakistan's borders. The newspaper further opines that 'the destruction of life in that valley has been swift and the assault came unexpectedly. The same sequence of events can be replicated in other places'²⁶. Here, it replicates the same approach.

The News raises the concerns that 'paramilitary forces and the troops deployed in the area in increasing numbers since 2007 have been unable to locate and close down the illegal radio station used so effectively by the local militant leader Maulana Fazalullah to spread his dangerous message'²⁷. This seems to be a myopic understanding of the situation as by media of mass communication would mean halting the danger in the area.

The News expresses concern over the expansion of writ of Taliban. The newspaper describes that 'the writ of the Taliban now runs much further than the confines of the Swat valley, extending even to the so-far peaceful Chitral, which has managed to avoid the extremes that have plagued other parts of NWFP'²⁸.

The News critically examines the orders of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) to all non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to immediately leave the Swat valley, including those agencies working on polio eradication. The newspaper further analyzes the situation and comments that 'The TTP is against polio vaccination because it causes infertility – thereby reiterating the old and entirely-without-foundation myth in the Muslim world that polio vaccination is some sort of vast Western conspiracy to emasculate and impoverish Muslim nations'²⁹.

The News further warns that if people of Swat refuse to take polio vaccination, the virus will find a ready means of traveling across borders, both national and provincial³⁰.

Dawn critically examines the militant strategy fighting the State to challenge its writ by shattering the confidence of the people in the government and its ability to protect the life and property of citizens³¹. *Dawn* while discussing the kidnappings by Taliban says that the kidnappings suggest the militants want to be in conflict at the cost the peace in the region³². The approach *Dawn* adopted while making discourses on Taliban remained system specific most of the time. The editorials of *Dawn* talked about the atrocities

²³ *The News*, 1st February 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

²⁴ *The News*, 1st February 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

²⁵ *The News*, 10th February 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

²⁶ *The News*, 10th February 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

²⁷ *The News*, 16th February 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

²⁸ *The News*, 21st March 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

²⁹ *The News*, 24th March 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

³⁰ *The News*, 24th March 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

³¹ *Dawn*, 21st March 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

³² *Dawn*, 24th February 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

Taliban inflicted upon the innocent people in Swat and the precarious law and order and political situation; however, most of the discourses were describing the situation as a predictor of a grave political upheaval in the country which could result in alienation of Pakistan at international front.

The analysis of both *The News* and *Dawn*, one can easily find a clear differentiation on the substance and inferences made from the ground realities of Swat situation. The inclination towards national or international aspects by both the newspapers is quite apparent in the conclusions drawn and the way the events have been discussed in the editorials. Significantly, the metaphors used by the newspapers also predict the same trend in the discourses. Keeping in view these indicators, it can be concluded that the analysis made supports our hypothesis which predicts that *The News* constructs the image of Taliban chiefly in national context whereas *Dawn* does so in a globalized or system perspective.

H2: *The News* presents relatively more violent images of Taliban than *Dawn* does.

When editorials of both the newspapers were analyzed, it was found that Taliban's portrayal with violent images is more prominent in *The News* than *Dawn*. The labels and metaphors used to describe Taliban in *The News* were 'frenzied militancy'³³, 'extremist'³⁴, 'terrorist'³⁵, 'reign of terror'³⁶, 'militant hallmark'³⁷, 'brutal manner'³⁸, 'terrorized people'³⁹, 'Taliban animal'⁴⁰, 'butchers'⁴¹, 'militant outfits'⁴², 'Taliban militants'⁴³, 'malevolent black Harpy'⁴⁴, 'band of frenzied men'⁴⁵, 'misogynist mindset'⁴⁶, 'frenzied militant armies'⁴⁷, to mention a few.

While, *Dawn* portrayed the Taliban or their activities as 'rabid Talibanisation'⁴⁸, 'Islamist extremism'⁴⁹, 'militants'⁵⁰, 'Terrorist'⁵¹, 'Taliban militants'⁵², 'ultra-orthodox'⁵³, 'Taliban-inspired militants'⁵⁴, 'terrorist-inflicted damage'⁵⁵, 'Taliban militias'⁵⁶ and

³³ *The News*, 1st February 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

³⁴ *The News*, 2nd February 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

³⁵ *The News*, 4th February 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

³⁶ *The News*, 3rd February 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

³⁷ *The News*, 6th February 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

³⁸ *The News*, 6th February 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

³⁹ *The News*, 6th February 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

⁴⁰ *The News*, 10th February 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

⁴¹ *The News*, 10th February 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

⁴² *The News*, 10th February 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

⁴³ *The News*, 12th February 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

⁴⁴ *The News*, 16th February 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

⁴⁵ *The News*, 16th February 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

⁴⁶ *The News*, 6th March 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

⁴⁷ *The News*, 25th March 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

⁴⁸ *Dawn*, 7th February 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

⁴⁹ *Dawn*, 13th February 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

⁵⁰ *Dawn*, 15th February 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

⁵¹ *Dawn*, 6th March 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

⁵² *Dawn*, 7th March 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

⁵³ *Dawn*, 7th March 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

⁵⁴ *Dawn*, 20th March 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

⁵⁵ *Dawn*, 21st March 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

⁵⁶ *Dawn*, 25th March 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

'extremist elements'⁵⁷. As the given labels predict the way *The News* attempted to construct the image of Taliban in its relatively more aggressive style than *Dawn*. Even in one of its editorials, *The News* described Taliban in following words⁵⁸:

'The creature that is the Taliban now has many heads and sits astride our borders and inside our country like some malevolent black Harpy. This creature rules a large part of south-east Afghanistan, the Swat Valley, sections of the Tribal Areas and other settled areas in NWFP. It reaches out at will in both Pakistan and Afghanistan, killing where it chooses and feasting on the bodies and minds of a gullible, fearful and compliant population who have been failed by successive governments. Nature abhors a vacuum and the Taliban were ready-made to fill the void left by those successive failures of governance and they once again have control of significant parts of both countries'.

The excerpts from *The News* editorials demonstrate how the paper (intentionally or otherwise) attempted to construct the image of Taliban as a wild band. Indeed, the violent band image of Taliban is a recurrent theme of *The News*. Construction of this brutal image becomes evident from the following excerpt also⁵⁹:

'The extent of the depravity of these people is almost unparalleled.... Dead bodies were dug out from graves and hung in public; women accused of being prostitutes were made to dance in streets before being killed; anyone who challenged the militants, including the elderly, was ridiculed, beaten and in some cases driven out of the valley'.

The analysis of both newspapers' editorials predicts that *The News* excessively used different aggressive and negative labels while *Dawn* also employed labels with negative connotations but less in number and negativity. While condemning the immoral and uncivilized activities of Taliban, *The News* used fourteen labels mostly having harsh nuances. Whereas, *Dawn* used only nine labels to describe the actions of Taliban.

Dawn presented the portrayal of Taliban in this way⁶⁰:

'The Taliban specialize in barbarity and aim to destroy everything they cannot abide. They hate music, clean-shaven men and education for girls, so they blow up CD shops and schools and attack barbers. Since they consider Sufis and their followers to be heretics, the Taliban feel it as their 'religious' duty to destroy shrines and kill devotees. They cannot tolerate Sufi music, dance or mysticism, or the intermingling of the sexes in shrines, or what they see as intercession between the individual and the Creator'.

The editorial contents of both the newspapers explicitly depicts that *The News* is portraying relatively more violent images of Taliban as compared to *Dawn*. However, it is clearly demonstrated that the style adopted by the both newspapers is condemning and discourses were made in epistemological fashion. In terms of quantum, *The News* is relatively more active with a greater degree of contents as found 24 editorials from *The News* and 14 editorials from *Dawn* relevant to Taliban issue to change existing attitudes of its readers towards brutal image of Talibanization in Pakistan. The analysis made supports our hypothesis.

H3: *The News* caters to the opinion of general public for construction of Taliban's image whereas the *Dawn* caters to the opinion of elite class on the subject.

⁵⁷ *Dawn*, 26th March 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

⁵⁸ *The News*, 16th February 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

⁵⁹ *The News*, 25th February 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

⁶⁰ *Dawn*, 7 March 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

Both the newspapers have more often been found constructing the image of Taliban in epistemic and condemning style. However, they are divergent while describing the image of Taliban keeping in view their prospective audience.

The News while condemning the brutal activities of Taliban, opines that 'there is much to repair in the battered tribal areas and the Swat valley...schools and other infrastructure have borne the brunt of the onslaught not by our own armed forces or American drones, but by the various Taliban groups who are vying for supremacy there'⁶¹. In continuation of this aspect, *The News* draws attention of the masses that repair needs not only to bricks and mortar but also to the hearts and minds of the people living in Swat.

Considering the problems faced by the people migrated from the Taliban controlled areas, *The News* says that Swat has become hazardous and war zone for them⁶². *The News* describes that 'the people of Swat are caught between the bombs of militants and the bullets of the military' considering 'both state forces and militants as enemies'⁶³.

The News attempts to educate the masses about the madness of militants who conducted destructive activities and threaten to kill lawyers and judges who oppose them. Conveying the true picture of the victims, *The News* expresses⁶⁴:

'These people live with militants who do not hesitate to kill, to maim, to beat or to ridicule. Business and indeed life itself in that once peaceful valley amidst tall mountains has been paralyzed'.

The News describes that 'the perceptions in Swat that the military was not committed to quashing the wild band of militants...confrontation added to the helplessness of the Peshawar government'⁶⁵.

The News condemned the hostility of Taliban against masses and described it in a descriptive fashion⁶⁶:

'The horrendous situation in a region where people have suffered tremendous brutality, where girls have been driven out of schools and where people have been beheaded in public for defying the militants.'

The News critically examined the criminal activities of the Taliban who are involved in killing and kidnapping of foreigners and other crimes⁶⁷.

Furthermore while critically examining the enforcement of Shariah and its effects on masses, the newspaper expressed its concerns on Shariah rule as past experience shows that 'such practice provided militants chance to regroup and to wreak further havoc in Swat valley'⁶⁸.

⁶¹ *The News*, 2nd February 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

⁶² *The News*, 3rd February 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

⁶³ *Ibid*

⁶⁴ *The News*, 6th February 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

⁶⁵ *The News*, 17th February 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

⁶⁶ *The News*, 17th February 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

⁶⁷ *The News*, 10th February 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

⁶⁸ *The News*, 17th February 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

The News also commented plainly that there are reports that militants had warned that they would not tolerate women attending shrines, and that they suspected their involvement in immorality or illegal acts⁶⁹.

The News while criticizing legal system in Pakistan and realizing the problems being faced by the people of Swat due to Talibanization, narrated that 'traditional' justice meted out by 'jirgas' in effect controls people's lives adds to the complication we face⁷⁰. It also expressed concern on the discrimination perpetuated by the militants against women and others segments of society⁷¹.

The News made it part of its editorial discourse the 4th February 2009 report of an illegal FM radio station run by Taliban in Swat in which Taliban warned all lawyers and judges that they would be killed if they continue to be part of an 'infidel judicial system' and did not quit their profession⁷².

Analysis of discourses appearing in *Dawn* indicates that the newspaper more often considered the Taliban as a system-specific phenomenon. It has been observed that *Dawn* mostly kept in view the elite class while constructing the image of Taliban. *Dawn* discussed the agreement to enforce of Nizam-i-Adl Regulation between the government and TNSM (Tehrike Nifaze Shariate Mohammadi). The newspaper described: 'Now they are being empowered to act as vigilantes to check obscenity and corruption close down music shops and expel prostitutes and pimps from the regions'⁷³ under the legal cover provided by TNSM.

The newspaper further analyzed the situation to be arisen out of this agreement saying: 'It virtually amounts to handing over charge of Swat to the Taliban and allowing them to determine arbitrarily the distinction between vice and virtue and impose their own values through and extrajudicial system of vigilantes'⁷⁴.

Dawn also raised an issue that links to safe passage to the Tehrike Taliban Pakistan (TTP). The newspaper commented that there is an additional problem created which is the assurance of TTP personal safety after beheading and killing and maiming with frightening savagery for the past two years⁷⁵.

The discourses made in editorials of *Dawn* indicated that the government's inadequate response encourages militants to indulge in more violence while law-enforcement agencies experiencing a loss of confidence within their ranks⁷⁶.

Dawn critically examined the characteristics of Taliban as a systemic phenomenon by saying that 'Talibans specialize in barbarity...consider Sufis and their followers to be heretics...destroy shrines and kill devotees'⁷⁷.

⁶⁹ *The News*, 6th March 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

⁷⁰ *The News*, 10th March 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

⁷¹ *The News*, 14th March 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

⁷² *The News*, 21st March 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

⁷³ *Dawn*, 6th March 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

⁷⁴ *Dawn*, 6th March 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

⁷⁵ *Dawn*, 24th February 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

⁷⁶ *Dawn*, 21st March 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

⁷⁷ *Dawn*, 7th March 2009, Islamabad-Pakistan

The analysis of both the newspapers establishes that condemning style is dominated in the editorial discourses. *The News* quite often seems to be catering to the opinion of general public for construction of Taliban's image whereas the *DAWN* frequently caters to the opinion of elite class on the subject.

Discussion

A media discourse does not only communicate the world what it does, but it also helps people construct an image of what media discuss. The process of construction is not simple and one way, rather incorporates some other significant elements such as individuals' experiences and peers' support to anticipated image construction. The constructivist media effects model advocates the same when it says that reality is constructed 'from personal experience, interaction with peers, and interpreted selections from mass media' (Neuman et al., 1992, p.120).

This perspective has significant implications for media framing wherein selected images are made part of media discourses. Other side of the issue is how media, especially the two selected for analysis in this paper, perceive their inclination of selecting some specific frames. Is it all matter of editorial policy of the papers or intellectual/elite discourses in the system that guide them selecting the frame they highlight or inbuilt public perception of their organizations? *The News* has a long standing of a radical newspaper with some degree of political activism. The Jang Group of Publication which owns *The News* has been quite active in almost all the political movements in the history of Pakistan since 1947, with a visibly aligned position. *Dawn* is a conglomerate with an acclaimed posture of relative neutrality and political indifference. Even in extreme political imbroglios in the country, it attempted to maintain its neutral posture while covering extremely sensitive issues.

This notion seems to be reflecting in image portrayal of Taliban in Swat by the selected newspapers. *The News* has been open and politically active while commenting on the issue of Taliban in Swat and used excessively negatives frames for Taliban and their activities as it had to maintain its posture being politically active and radicalized media in the system. *Dawn* had somehow opposite position which was not in different direction from that of what *The News* followed but the perceived status and positions of the newspapers played active role in helping them maintain their stance in the issue. Selected frames of both the newspapers were not very different from each other but the overall context and construction of course was at extreme poles.

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