

An Examination of Media Frames Regarding Taliban: A Comparative Study of the Editorials of Dawn and The Nation

Muhammad Umar Nadeem

Department of Mass Communication
National University of Sciences & Technology

Ijaz Hussain Bokhari

Faculty of Management Studies
University of Central Punjab

Muhammad Ashraf Khan

Department of Communication Studies
Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan

Faisal Mustafa

Faculty of Management Studies
University of Central Punjab

The present study aimed to explore the portrayal of Taliban in the mass media of Pakistan through agenda-setting theory. The two elite newspapers of Pakistan; Dawn and The Nation were considered for this paper in depicting Taliban in their editorials. A qualitative research approach was adopted and through a content analysis technique, the frames of the newspapers were analyzed. The data were collected from the online versions of the respective newspapers. The framing of the content was categorized into two subcategories which were: Friend and Foe. Throughout a year, Taliban were framed by Dawn and The Nation in a sum of 241 editorials. The findings indicated that both newspapers preliminarily framed Taliban as a foe in their editorials of one year. On the other side, the friend frames used by these newspapers are comparatively lesser as of foe frames regarding the Taliban. Findings also revealed that The Nation was friendlier than Dawn in representing the Taliban. However, Dawn employed more foe frames as compared to The Nation during the portrayal of the Taliban. The analysis revealed that both elite newspapers are representing Taliban with the foe frames which indicates that their policy is against the Taliban issue. Thus, it appeared that the agenda of mentioned newspapers is in line with the agenda of the state that Taliban are terrorists and they are a threat to the internal security.

Keywords: Agenda setting, Framing, Friend, Foe, Taliban, Media

The importance of media could not be denied in the current era, as this medium has the potential to influence the perception of the people to the lower or higher extent through its contents. Media is having a direct association with framing the social realities based on the norms, traditions, ethics, and values of the society, where they are being practiced (Entman, 2004; Zelizer & Allen, 2002). Most interestingly, media floats the information in the form of critics or appreciation about the deeds of the policy-makers, assists the individuals by facilitating them by the view of the world, which is not directly in their hands and frames the realities for the people (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, Signorielli, & Shanahan, 2002; McChesney, 2008). Several scholars have witnessed that effect of media is crucial in representing the information in critical scenarios, because throughout the world, governments and the individuals are influenced by the media framing (Chomsky, 1989; McChesney, 2008). Focusing the importance of media framing in covering the local or international issues, this study targets to explore the media framing in covering the Taliban issue in their discourses.

Taliban issue has been a point of attention after the 9/11 event, by the mass media researchers. The attention is given to the Taliban in

various ways like Taliban as one of the key issues of Pakistan (Madni, 2014), the image of Taliban in the print media of Pakistan (Malik & Iqbal, 2010), the representation of Taliban in print media discourses (Hayat & Juliana, 2016) and the peace deeds between government and Taliban covered by the mass media of Pakistan (Subhani, Khan & Sultan, 2015). It indicates that the Taliban issue in the context of media framing is overlooked and understudied by the past researchers. Nadeem and Khan (2017) pointed out the need for such studies which explore the Taliban issue in the light of media framing. Therefore, this paper targets to address the nature of frames incorporated in the editorials regarding Taliban by the two elite English newspapers of Pakistan, which are Dawn and The Nation.

During the era of the 1980s, individuals who have been involved in the battle against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan are the Mujahideen or Taliban. They emerged as the more lethal force, which affected the Soviet Union as a massive level. Initially, the assistance has been provided to them by the government of Afghanistan and later several Muslim countries provided the financial assistance to them. Two main intelligence services of the whole world CIA and ISI have also been involved in training the Taliban for the fight against the Soviet Union. After the terrorist spell of 9/11, USA has launched an operation of War on Terrorism against the Taliban and many other countries became the ally of the USA for this war (Bajoria, 2011).

Taliban's agenda seems to be very clear when we look at the literature. Their prime concern is that to force the state to follow the values of Islam and ban those activities which derived from the west. Their perception of Islam is that women should be covered with Hijab, men must have a proper Beard, and television is Haram for Muslims and many more rigid concepts about Islam. If the individuals are not following the preaching of Islam, they must be punished according to the teachings of Islam (Bajoria, 2011).

Researches on the mass media effects tend to focus on the three effects of media, for instance, agenda-setting, priming, and framing that are quite similar to each other (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Agenda setting usually refers to those issues or events, which are prioritized by the mass media and having a strong relationship with the consumers of mass media (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). In a simpler manner, mass media sets an agenda regarding various key issues which are strongly related and having more importance among the audience. According to the literature of political communication, Priming denotes the transformation of mindsets of the individuals when they evaluate any political party, system, or scenario (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). Priming is directly linked with the coverage of news stories about the political events or issues in which it is recommended to the masses that they must select specific events as criteria for the assessment of governments and political representatives. Most of the times, priming is considered the perpetuation of agenda setting. In agenda setting, mass media predominantly highlights several worthy issues in the minds of the individuals (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). However; in priming, the media could influence and refine the mindsets and ideology of the individuals in evaluating their political issues and candidates.

On the other side, framing is slightly different from the priming and agenda setting. It usually relies on the prediction that how an event is shaping up in the news content must have an impact on how it is being perceived by the mass media consumers. The roots of framing can be detected from the sociology and psychology (Pan & Kosicki, 1993). The basics of framing in the discipline of sociology have been grounded by Goffman (1974) and others who infers that the reality of world could not be fully perceived by the masses and struggled hard to deduce their experiences regarding life and to develop the understanding of the world for them. He also argued that the processing of novel information by more effective means, individuals follow the explanatory techniques to categorize the information and absorb it in an effective manner (Goffman, 1974).

There are two categories, in which framing can be evaluated; micro and macro level (Scheufele, 1999). At the micro level, it preliminary deals with how the individuals process an upcoming information and the characteristics of specific events through the form of impression (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). On the other side, on a macro level, it refers to the different styles adopted by the media persons or organizations to represent an information in such a manner that revolves around the existing schemas between their audiences (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). This attempt does not necessarily mean that they tried to alter or modify a new information or to cheat their masses. The truth is that they try to decrease the complexity of an event through framing due to the limitation policies of their respective media organization regarding the airtime and slots of the news (Gans, 1979). In a similar vein, frames are frequently incorporated in order to reduce the complexity of the prevailing information, issue or an event.

In the agenda-setting of mass media, the core element is to frame the stories. Media framing refers to the construction of social messages and representing it through the mass media. It may involve

the social or political, national or international, or any issue related to the people and transform them into words or phrases to influence the perception of the individuals (Hayat & Juliana, 2016). According to Tuchman (1978) that media contents targets to inform the individuals what they need, want and should know about several issues. Framing denotes in pointing out some features from the event which make the event more prominent and interesting for the readers (Entman, 2004; McQuail, 1983). Framing is the process of transferring the issues of elite class to the masses through the mass media (Berinsky & Kinder, 2006).

Entman (1993) defines framing as highlighting the specific elements of the social reality and communicate in such a manner to promote any issue and provide treatment about that issue. By this technique, framing makes an event noteworthy and give a view on several dimensions which is easy to understand by the people. Goffman (1974) denotes framing as the process of transforming the worthless information to the worthy information about the social phenomena. Gamson and Modigliani (1989) resemble framing as the art which influences the editorial writers and the journalists to represent the information in such a manner to lead their explanations. Furthermore, it provides values to the event in the form of interpretations. Media framing is also described as to suppress some events and tilt the focus of media towards other events from the social reality to make it important for the audience (Miller, 2005).

Frames are basically the lenses by which one can view the social reality (Dillard, Solomon, & Samp, 1996). The term Framing has frequently been adopted by the mass media researchers to represent how any event or story is depicted in the stories or editorials. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the nature of framing in the discourses of print media of Pakistan about Taliban. The coverage of the Taliban has gained much more attention in the print media since their terrorist acts started and media of Pakistan started giving them space in their stories and editorials.

Media has a potential to change the minds of the individuals and enables them with the bombardment of information and knowledge (Razi, 2014). The functions of media include: the information, education, entertainment, and pursue the individuals about any issue or event (Yousafzai, 2007). While comparing the print and electronic media, the print media is generally considered as a more appropriate and accountable source of mass media and this medium highlights the most important and worthy events of national or international interest (Hassam, Ali, Iqbal, & Raza, 2013). Since long time ago, the English print media of Pakistan has been witnessed as an effective tool for transmitting the information to the national level (Rafiq, 2007).

Newspapers comprise of several sections, in which the editorials are the most important section of the newspapers because it deals with the policy of the newspapers. Editorials do influence the minds of the readers and develop their perceptions about several issues (Hayat & Juliana, 2016). Editorials are the point of view of the owner of a newspaper or the opinion of its key staff (Henry & Tator, 2002), which is considered as the opinion of the newspaper. The opinion of the newspaper on a specific issue helps to persuade the readers from the editorial (Van Dijk, 1996). The practice of Pakistani print media has been witnessed in the past about several issues like; Taliban, War on Terror, Drone Strikes and many more in their editorials.

Based on abovementioned reasons, this paper targets to explore the nature of frames incorporated by the two elite English newspapers of Pakistan, which are Dawn and The Nation, regarding Taliban issue. These two papers are much popular among the readers of Pakistan due to their coverage on national and international issues (Hayat &

Juliana, 2016). Additionally, the writings of these newspapers have capacity to influence the mindsets of its readers about various issues. Therefore, this paper considered the editorials of Dawn and The Nation to find out what sort of frames they usually incorporate while addressing the Taliban. This paper proposes two hypotheses regarding the frames used for the Taliban.

Methodology

Sample

The sample comprised of all the editorials about the Taliban of two leading newspapers of Pakistan; Dawn and The Nation, starting from March 1, 2013, till February 28, 2014. The unit of analysis of the study includes an editorial in which the issue of Taliban has been highlighted whether in the title, paragraph or the whole editorial. The frames about the Taliban by the leading newspapers of Pakistan have been categorized into following two categories:

Friend. The title or paragraph of the editorial or editorial notes are considered as Friend frame, if it provides any information or material that construct the image of the Taliban as friendly to the nation or state.

Foe. The title or paragraph of the editorial or editorial notes are considered as Foe frame, if it provides any information or material that construct the image of Taliban as a threat or enemy of the nation or state.

Procedure

For this study, qualitative research methodology has been adopted to investigate the media frames about the Taliban in the leading newspapers of Pakistan. According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005), content analysis is the most recognized technique to demonstrate the contents of media for the better understanding of contents and to conclude the effective and reliable results. There are several systematic procedures which enable the researchers to describe the contents of media through qualitative content analysis (Forman & Damschroder, 2008). It is also a fact that the concerns of biasness and accuracy of analysis lie in content analysis, this approach still has the capacity to provide the contextual and reliable results about the contents of newspapers (Berg, 2004). This technique also facilitates the researcher through several ways of collecting the data (Chadwick, Bahr, & Albrecht, 1984).

Results and Findings

The nature of frames was specified into two categories; friend and foe by Dawn are presented in Table 1. These frames were considered for the duration of one year starts from March 2013 and ends in February 2014. Table 1 reveals that during September and October, Dawn published a couple of editorials about Taliban and framed them as more foe in 32 editorials as compared to the rest of the duration. On the other side, Dawn was witnessed in framing the Taliban as friends in 03 editorials during July and August. The overall trend of Dawn in framing the Taliban for about one year; 8.64% of the framing was a friend and 91.53% of the framing was a foe. A total number of 130 editorials were published during one year in which Taliban were framed as friends in 11 and foe in 119 editorials. This framing pattern clearly depicts that the Dawn portrayed Taliban the foe for the nation and country. Furthermore, it also appears that the policy of this newspaper is against the activities of the Taliban.

Table 1.

Frame Distribution in Dawn (March 2013 - February 2014)

Duration	Friend (%)	Foe (%)	Total (%)
March – April	02 (12.50)	14 (87.50)	16 (100)
May - June	02 (8.69)	21 (90.30)	23 (100)
July - August	03 (16.66)	15 (83.33)	18 (100)
September - October	00 (0)	32 (100)	32 (100)
November - December	01 (4.34)	22 (95.65)	23 (100)
January - February	03 (13.66)	15 (83.33)	18 (100)
Total (%)	11 (8.46)	119 (91.53)	130 (100)

For one year, The Nation published 111 editorials in which they framed Taliban. Friendly frames were used in 34 editorials, and 77 editorials were framed as a foe in terms of Taliban. In May and June, 10 editorials framed Taliban as friends. On the contrary, the Taliban were framed as a foe in 18 editorials during March and April. The Nation framed Taliban in their editorials about 30.63% as friends and 69.36% as foe during one-year coverage. The findings revealed that in the majority of the editorials, Taliban were framed as foe as compared to the friendly frames. Additionally, findings depicted that The Nation was friendly to some extent in framing the Taliban. However, the majority of the editorials framed Taliban as foe during one-year. It was further revealed that the agenda of The Nation was against the Taliban and for that reason their editorials were found to be framing Taliban as a foe.

Table 2.

Frame Distribution in the Nation (March 2013 - February 2014)

Duration	Friend (%)	Foe (%)	Total (%)
March - April	02 (10)	18 (90)	20 (100)
May - June	10 (58.82)	07 (41.17)	17 (100)
July - August	05 (31.25)	11 (68.75)	16 (100)
September - October	04 (23.52)	13 (76.47)	17 (100)
November - December	03 (23.07)	10 (76.92)	13 (100)
January - February	10 (35.71)	18 (64.28)	28 (100)
Total (%)	34 (30.63)	77 (69.36)	111 (100)

The comparison of frames incorporated by Dawn and The Nation in dealing with the Taliban issue is presented in Table 3. It revealed that The Nation was found to be using more friendly frames in 30.63% of their editorials regarding Taliban as compared to Dawn, which was found less in presenting Taliban in 8.64% of their editorials with friendly frames. In addition, Dawn used more foe frames in depicting Taliban in their 91.53% of their editorials, while The Nation incorporated foe frames in their 69.36% of their editorials

in depicting Taliban. In a simpler manner, the findings revealed that The Nation was friendlier in comparison of Dawn towards Taliban and Dawn was more foe as compared to The Nation in their editorials of one year. The overall portrayal of the Taliban was witnessed as more foe than friend. A total of 241 editorials were published by these newspapers regarding Taliban, in which 45 were framed as friend and 196 were against Taliban. These inclusive findings suggest that both newspapers were in a similar line in depicting Taliban and their agenda was crystal clear that they are not a friendly element for the nation and the country.

Table 3.
Frame Distribution March 2013 - February 2014

Newspaper	Friend (%)	Foe (%)	Total (%)
Dawn	11 (8.64)	119 (91.53)	130 (100)
The Nation	34 (30.63)	77 (69.36)	111 (100)
Total (%)	45 (18.67)	196 (81.32)	241 (100)

Table 3 reveals that The Nation used friend frames in 30.63% of their editorials while Dawn used friend frames in 8.64% of their editorials regarding Taliban. The Nation used more friend frames in comparison of Dawn. The findings also revealed that Dawn used foe frames in 91.53% of their editorials while The Nation used foe frames in 69.36% of their editorials. It was evident from the findings that Dawn was using more foe frames as compared to The Nation.

The findings of this paper are in line with the previous researches that preliminary focus on the Taliban issue specifically in the print media of Pakistan. A study by Malik and Iqbal (2010) about the representation of Taliban in the editorials of elite newspapers of Pakistan found that Taliban were negatively represented by the elite papers. Another research witnessed that Taliban were negatively portrayed in the Pakistani newspapers in reference to the attack on the innocent girl of Pakistan (Hayat & Juliana, 2016). Thus, the findings of this paper are consistent with the previous studies and further revealed that Pakistani elite newspaper is representing Taliban heavily with the foe frames in their editorials.

Conclusion

It is universally accepted that mass media has the potential to influence the mindsets of their audience. In a more specific manner, the editorials of any print media represent the opinion of that media group. Though the importance of editorials in formulating the opinion of the general public could not be ignored. Especially, the specific frames used in the editorials about national or international issues have a strong impact on the masses. This paper has undertaken the nature of frames used in the editorials of two elite English newspapers of Pakistan in dealing with Taliban. The finding revealed that Dawn used more foe frames as compared to the friend. In the same manner, The Nation found to be in the same line as Dawn in using the frames. While comparing these two papers, it is witnessed that Dawn used more foe frames in comparison of The Nation. Furthermore, The Nation used more friendly frames instead of Dawn in presenting the Taliban. The overall trend depicts that both papers were in a similar line in presenting Taliban with foe frames. It further indicates that Dawn and the Nation presented Taliban as terrorists, the threat for internal security, brutal killers, extremists, etc. in the

form of foe frames in their editorials. It is evident that the selection of frames is according to the stance of state regarding Taliban. This is initial attempt and there is much space available for the upcoming researchers to explore the presentation of Taliban by the other means of mass media of Pakistan.

References

- Bajoria, J. (2011). The Taliban in Afghanistan. *Council on Foreign Relations*, 1-8.
- Berg, B. L. (2004). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Berinsky, A. J., & Kinder, D. R. (2006). Making sense of issues through media frames: Understanding the Kosovo crisis. *The Journal of Politics*, 68(3), 640-656.
- Chadwick, B. A., Bahr, H. M., & Albrecht, S. L. (1984). *Social science research methods*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Chomsky, N. (1989). *Necessary illusions: Thought control in democratic societies*. Toronto: CBS Enterprises.
- Dillard, J. P., Solomon, D. H., & Samp, J. A. (1996). Framing social reality: The relevance of relational judgments. *Communication Research*, 23(6), 703-723.
- Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of communication*, 43(4), 51-58.
- Entman, R. M. (2004). *Projections of power: Framing news, public opinion, and US foreign policy*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Forman, J., & Damschroder, L. (2008). *Qualitative content analysis*. In *Advances in Bioethics - Empirical Methods for Bioethics: A primer*. Vol 11. Eds L. Jacoby, L. A. Siminoff. Elsevier. pp 63-81.
- Gamson, W. A., & Modigliani, A. (1989). Media discourse and public opinion on nuclear power: A constructionist approach. *American Journal of Sociology*, 95(1), 1-37.
- Gans, H. J. (1979). *Deciding what news is*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Gerbner, G., Gross, L., Morgan, M., Signorielli, N., & Shanahan, J. (2002). Growing up with television: The cultivation perspective. In M. Morgan (Ed.), *Against the mainstream: The selected works of George Gerbner* (pp. 193-213). New York: Peter Lang.
- Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Hassam, M., Ali, Z., Iqbal, A., & Raza, M.R. (2013). Comparative study of editorial treatment of Dawn and The News regarding Lal Masjid operation. *The International Asian Research Journal*, 1(1), 22-35.
- Hayat, N., & Juliana, A. (2016). A comparative analysis of Pakistani English Newspaper editorials: The case of Taliban's attack on Malala Yousafzai. *Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities*, 24(3), 1087-1101.
- Henry, F., & Tator, C. (2002). *Discourses of domination: Racial bias in the Canadian English-language*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Hsieh, H. F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15(9), 1277-1288.
- Iyengar, S., & Kinder, D. R. (1987). *News that matters: Television and American opinion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Madni, A. R. (2014). Editorial treatment of national and international

- political issues by Pakistani national dailies for the period of three months (January 2014 to March 2014). *VFAST Transactions on Education and Social Sciences*, 2(1), 1-9.
- Malik, S., & Iqbal, Z. (2010). Construction of Taliban image in Pakistan: Discourse analysis of editorials of Dawn and The News. *China Media Research Journal*, 7(2), 46-56.
- McChesney, R. W. (2008). *The political economy of media*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- McCombs, M. E., & Shaw, D. L. (1972). The agenda-setting function of mass media. *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 36(2), 176-187.
- McQuail, D. (1983). *Mass communication theory*. London: Sage.
- Miller, K. (2005). *Communication theories: Perspectives, processes, and contexts* (2nd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Nadeem, M. U., & Khan, M. A. (2017). Pakistani print media and Taliban: A test of media conformity theory. *VFAST Transactions on Education and Social Sciences*, 13(2), 1-6.
- Pan, Z., & Kosicki, G. M. (1993). Framing analysis: An approach to news discourse. *Political communication*, 10(1), 55-75.
- Rafiq, A. (2007). *A comparative analysis of editorial coverage regarding judicial crises*. (Unpublished master's thesis.) Punjab University, Lahore, Pakistan.
- Razi, S. (2014). Editorials in the leading English press in Karachi: An analysis of their representation. *Academic Research International*, 5(5), 236-241.
- Scheufele, D. A. (1999). Framing as a theory of media effects. *Journal of Communication*, 49(1), 103-122.
- Scheufele, D. A., & Tewksbury, D. (2007). Framing, agenda setting, and priming: The evolution of three media effects models. *Journal of Communication*, 57, 9-20.
- Shoemaker, P. J., & Reese, S. D. (1996). *Mediating the message: Theories of influences on mass media content* (2nd Ed.). White Plains, NY: Longman.
- Subhani, M. S., Khan, R. A. & Sultan, K. (2015). Pakistani newspaper on peace talks with Tahrik e Taliban Pakistan. *Journal of Business and Social Review in Emerging Economies*, 1 (1) 47-60.
- Tuchman, G. (1978). *Making news: A study in the construction of reality*. New York: Free Press.
- Van Dijk, T. (1996). *Opinions and ideologies in editorials*. Paper presented at the 4th International Symposium of Critical Discourse Analysis, Language, Social Life and Critical Thought. Athens, Greece.
- Yousafzai, A. (2007, January 25). Impotence fears hit polio drive. *BBC News*.
- Zelizer, B., & Allen, S. (2002). *Journalism after September 11*. London, UK: Routledge.

Received: 8th May, 2019

Revisions Received: 8th July, 2019