

Reasons to Remedies: Framing of Terrorist Attacks in Major Urdu and English Newspapers of Pakistan

Muhammad Akram Soomro

University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan.

Bushra H. Rehman

University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan.

ABSTRACT

Twenty first century has witnessed a new kind of war, “War on Terror”. Pakistan joined this war after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and became a front line state in this war. Resultantly, Pakistan had to end its support for the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. The Afghan Taliban did not accept that policy shift and in reaction began attacking almost every place and segment of society right from military to politicians, mosques to parks, and hospitals to schools. The relationship between media and terrorism is indispensable because terrorists need media coverage and publicity, and media needs shocking and sensational news stories. Given this backdrop, this study intends to investigate two research questions. First, “What reasons of terrorist attacks were discussed in the editorials of major Urdu and English newspaper of Pakistan?” and second, “What solutions were suggested in the major Urdu and English newspaper of Pakistan?” Two newspapers, daily Dawn (English Newspaper) and daily Jang (Urdu Newspaper) have been selected for this study. Content analysis has been used as methodology and editorials published during 2001 to 2016 constitute the population for this research study. The results show that shift in foreign policy of Pakistan towards Afghanistan was discussed as a major reason of terrorist attacks and similarly, as solution, review of foreign policy of Pakistan towards Afghanistan was discussed in highest number of editorials.

Key Words: Terrorist Attacks, Framing, Editorials, Foreign Policy, Military Actions

Introduction

The terrorism has become a topic of global importance and no continent can refrain itself from discussing its reasons, impact and consequences. Pakistan has a unique history of terrorism due to its past and geo-political location. The Afghan Jihad is a classical case study because the mujahedeen were introduced as heroes, they finished the job, and then they were declared the terrorists and a largest threat for the humanity. The incident of 9/11 not only changed the international politics but its real effects were seen in this part of the world. After the incident of 9/11 America declared war on terror and resultantly Bush administration labeled that new kind of war as “War on Terror” (Powell, 2011). The key targets of that war were the Taliban who were ruling Afghanistan and Osama Bin Laden who was also living in Afghanistan at that time (Rees and Lewis, 2009).

In 1980s and 1990s, both English and Urdu press of Pakistan used to support the Afghan Jihad and presented Afghan Mujahedeen as 'Heroes of Islam'. But in the post 9/11 circumstances now Pakistani press had to deal with the War on Terror also which was against those Taliban and Mujahedeen who had been fighting for Pakistan and US in 1980s and 1990s. The war against terrorism brought a lot of challenges for both Pakistani government and media also. The Pakistani media was in great difficulty, because 1) they were facing it difficult to deviate or oppose the foreign policy of Pakistan towards Afghanistan and 2) religious sentiments and liking of Taliban in Pakistan was making it difficult to portray them as terrorists.

Since, Pakistan facilitated US led NATO forces to attack Afghanistan; therefore in reaction Taliban began attacking different cities of Pakistan. This reaction was already expected because Mullah Zaeef who was the spokesperson of Taliban in Pakistan said, "the possibility of a massive attack by our mujahedeen cannot be ruled out, if any neighboring country offers its ground or air bases to US forces". (The news, 2001)

As a result of US attacks Taliban and other jihadist groups fled from Afghanistan and tried to settle in the border area known as FATA, a territory within the borders of Pakistan. Pakistani military launched operation in the FATA area and in retaliation Taliban and other terrorist groups began to target civilians, law enforcement agencies, civic structures, public places, religious places and gatherings even military installations in Pakistan have not been an exception.

Miller (1982) says "terrorism and the media are entwined in an almost inexorable, symbiotic relationship. The relationship between media and terrorism can best be measured through framing of terrorism in the media content. The framing approach facilitates to investigate that how terrorists and their actions were discussed in the mass media. As Papacharissi and Oliveira (2008) said, applying frames to a terrorist attack, may serve as a strategy with which to identify main causes and responsible agent, make moral judgments, and , finally, to suggest policy responses to the event (P. 54). Therefore, this is very important to study that how Pakistani media framed the terrorist attacks which terrorists managed as a reaction of shift in the foreign policy of the Pakistan and military operations against those terrorists who were not Pakistani but trying to settle in FATA and wanted to continue their fight against American forces who had taken control of Kabul. Framing was selected as a theoretical framework to study terrorist attacks in the major English and Urdu dailies of Pakistan. Goffman (1974) was the first scholars to have developed the general concept of framing. Ryan (2004) said that framing as a process guides us that how news stories are constructed and how some facts or information are selected or excluded to produce a news item for the readers. This is very important interpretation and definition Rayn offered because this on one hand that news story or journalistic piece of information is not totally objective and on the other hand it tells that through framing we can asses that what has been included in the piece of information and what has been excluded when terrorist attacks were framed in the newspapers. According to Entman (1993),

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framing is “to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text”. This second definition further clarifies that framing is not selection or exclusion but also making something more prominent which definitely affects the readers or the consumers of the information.

Content analysis has been employed for this study. Content analysis has been the traditional form of scientific analysis of textual content which has dominated the study of news during most of this century (Steuter, 2010). The unit of analysis was editorial or sub-editorial. The duration of study is sixteen years from September 2001 to December 2016. The newspapers for which have been selected for this study are Dawn and Jang. The papers have been selected on the basis of the circulation, the Dawn is largely circulated English newspapers while the Jang is largely circulated Urdu newspaper. The purposive sampling technique has been used for this study and editorials which were published after terrorist attacks in these papers were included in this investigation.

Findings and interpretation

Table 1.

Cross-tabulation of Dawn, Reasons Category

Name of the Reasons Category Newspaper	Afghan Policy	Military Operation	Afghanistan Policy and Military Operation	Other	Not Discussed	Total
Dawn						
Editorial	7	20	3		66	96
	7.3%	20.8%	3.1%		68.8%	100.0%
Sub-editorial	5	8	2		25	40
	12.5%	20.0%	5.0%		62.5%	100.0%
Total	12	28	5		91	136
	8.8%	20.6%	3.7%		66.9%	100.0%

Table 1 shows that (68.8%) entries editorials did not discuss any reason of terrorist attacks while 7.3% editorials discussed Afghan Policy as the reason of terrorist attacks and 20.8% editorials discussed Military Operations as the reason of terrorist attacks.

In sub-editorials category, the table 1 shows that 62.5% did not discuss any reason of terrorist attacks, while 12.5% sub editorials entries discussed Afghan Policy as the reason of terrorist attacks and 20% editorials discussed Military Operations as a reason of terrorist attacks.

Table 2.
Cross-tabulation of Jang, Reasons Category

Name of the Reasons Category		Solutions Category				Total
Newspaper	Jang	Afghan Policy	Military Operation	Afghanistan Policy and Military Operation	Not Discussed	
		Editorial		7	17	2
	8.8%		21.3%	2.5%	67.5%	100.0%
Sub-editorial		6	7	0	35	48
		12.5%	14.6%	0.0%	72.9%	100.0%
Total		13	24	2	89	128
		10.2%	18.8%	1.6%	69.5%	100.0%

Table 2 shows that 67.5% did not discuss any reason of terrorist attacks, while 7.8% editorials discussed Afghan Policy as the reason of terrorist attacks and 21.3% editorials discussed Military Operations as a reason of terrorist attacks. The 72.9% sub editorials did not discuss any reason of terrorist attacks, 12.5% sub editorials discussed Afghan Policy as the reason of terrorist attacks and 14.6% sub editorials discussed Military Operations as a reason of terrorist attacks.

Table 3.
Cross-tabulation of Dawn, Solutions Category

Name of the Newspaper		Solutions Category			Total	
Dawn		Military Actions	Foreign Policy Review	Not Discussed		
		Editorial		17	43	7
	17.7%		44.8%	7.3%	30.2%	100.0%
Sub-editorial		10	11	3	16	40
		25.0%	27.5%	7.5%	40.0%	100.0%
Total		27	54	10	45	136
		19.9%	39.7%	7.4%	33.1%	100.0%

Table 3 shows that 30.2% editorials did not discuss any solution to end terrorist attacks, 17.7% editorials discussed Military Actions as the suitable solution and 44.8% editorials discussed Foreign Policy Review as the suitable solution while 7.3% editorials discussed Negotiations as the suitable solution.

Results show that 40% sub editorials did not any solutions, 25% editorials discussed Military Actions as the suitable solution, and 27.5% editorials discussed

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Foreign Policy Review as the suitable solution while 7.5% editorials discussed Negotiations as the suitable solution.

Table 4.
Cross-tabulation of Jang, Solutions Category

Name of the Newspaper	Solutions Category				Total
	Military Actions	Foreign Policy Review	Negotiations	Not Discussed	
Jang					
Editorial	21 26.3%	36 45.0%	11 13.8%	12 15.0%	80 100.0%
Sub-editorial	8 16.7%	18 37.5%	2 4.2%	20 41.7%	48 100.0%
Total	29 22.7%	54 42.2%	13 10.2%	32 25.0%	128 100.0%

Table 4 shows that 15% editorials did not discuss any solutions, 26.3% editorials discussed Military Actions as the suitable solution, 45% discussed Foreign Policy Review as the suitable solution while 13.8% editorials discussed Negotiations as the suitable solution.

The results show that in the sub editorial category 41.7% did not discuss any solutions, 16.7% sub editorials discussed Military Actions as the suitable solution, and 37.5% sub editorials discussed Foreign Policy Review as the suitable solution while 4.2% sub editorials discussed Negotiations as the suitable solution.

Conclusion

Framing refers to the way events and issue are organized and made sense of, especially by media, media professionals, and their audiences (Reese, 2001). The results of this study produce a vivid picture of content published by the newspapers and consumed by the audience during September 2001 to December 2016. The results of daily *Dawn* show that most of the editorials did not discuss any reason of terrorist attacks which means most of the time it was left with the reader of newspaper to make inference about the reasons of those incidents. Although framing scholar Entman (2004) concluded that at least the issues related to foreign policy and their framing should be aligned with administration. But, the result shows that foreign policy of the government towards Afghanistan and military operations were discussed as major reasons of terrorist attacks. Similarly in terms of solutions to stop terrorist attacks daily *Dawn* results show that most of the editorials did not discuss any solution to stop terrorist attacks. However, the editorials suggested military actions as solutions more than the negotiations with terrorist organization.

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The result of daily *Jang* shows that most of the editorials did not discuss any reasons of terrorist attack. The editorials discussed Afghan policy shift as the major reason of terrorist attacks and lowest number of editorials discussed military operation as the reason of terrorist attacks. Similarly, in the solutions category the majority of editorials discussed review of Afghan policy as solution to stop terrorist attacks. However, military actions were discussed as a solution more than the negotiations with terrorist attacks.

It is observed from the data and results that both English and Urdu newspapers presented shift in foreign policy of Pakistan towards Afghanistan as a major reason of terrorist attacks. The newspapers also discussed the review of foreign policy of Pakistan towards Afghanistan as a major solution to stop terrorist attacks. Similarly the military operations were discussed as the second major reason of terrorist attacks but ironically military actions have been suggested as solutions to stop terrorist attacks more than the negotiations with terrorist organizations.

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Biographical Note

Muhammad Akram Soomro is an Assistant Professor at Institute of Communication Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan.

Dr. Bushra H. Rehman is an Assistant Professor at Institute of Communication Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan.