

## Coverage of Baluchistan Issues in leading Newspapers of Pakistan

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### Abstract

The conflict between Baloch nationalists and the Government of Pakistan has been a constant feature in the history of Pakistan. The study explores the treatment of conflict issues in Baluchistan in the editorials and columns of dailies of Pakistan, Jang and Dawn, in the year 2012. Findings show that the coverage on Baluchistan did not adequately reflect the intensity of the conflict. Most frequent themes were on political and religious leadership, foreign hands in Baluchistan and strategic importance of Baluchistan. Most of the opinion articles and columns, blamed bad governance, partial judicial system and rough attitude of security forces with local people as major reasons for the conflict in Baluchistan besides Bugti's murder and foreign proxy involvement.

**Key Words:** *Framing Theory, Conflict issues of Baluchistan Pakistani leading Newspapers, Daily Jang, Dawn, Bad Governance.*

### Introduction

Being the biggest in land and rich in minerals, Baluchistan is the most important Province of Pakistan. Political unrest, underdevelopment and deprivation of the people from their rights nationalism, foreign hands in unrest and terrorism, bad governance and corruption are such problems of the province which are more prevalent here than any other province. Media always influence

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political and social life of any region. Print media has its deep roots in the province and have always played an effective role in Baluchistan. Not only in this province but in the whole country Daily Jang and Daily Dawn are the most influential Urdu and English dailies. They have their negative and positive impact on the province's life. There is a need to see through their content what type of opinions and themes of political and social life these newspapers are supporting and where their policies are in contrast to the government's policies and actions. We need to see in the light of objective facts, what was the general and specific role of print media (major newspapers of Pakistan) regarding the Nationalism conflict issue in Baluchistan. This study is with special reference to conflict issues in Baluchistan. This issue of nationalism conflict in Baluchistan leads to conflict between government and Supreme Court because they differ in their modus operandi and the bounds and limitations they are working upon. Baluchistan is dependent on both internal and external factors for peace and stability, and both of them are not under control. The Baluchistan conflict is a constant conflict between [Baloch nationalists](#) and the [Government of Pakistan](#). The cause of this constant conflict is human rights exploitation, greater self-sufficiency, increased percentage from natural resources and provincial returns. The year 2012 has been crucial for the controversies between Government of Pakistan and Supreme Court of Pakistan.

This controversy was taken as the tussle between judiciary, government and parliament. Media can emphasize these controversies from any angle. In this way, media can boost the

political effectiveness of the lay people by providing a national platform to discuss all of these issues. Few people felt content with media and few had criticism. Electronic media in the interest of public was also felt widely for the first time in the history of the country while presenting different points of views. On the other hand, newspapers have their own impact because of their in depth coverage and details they were able to present of the issues. This study has focused on the role of print media in Pakistan, with special reference to conflict issues in Baluchistan.

Media role in management of justice is very important. Media is watchdog who has to see that every trial is carried out in democratic and independent manner. The parliament is dependent on free judiciary and liberal media depend on independent judiciary. Hence media, parliament and judiciary are interdependent. The concept behind this research was framing and agenda setting role of media. Covering the issues between judiciary and government, some aspects of a perceived reality are selected and make them more prominent in a communicating text, to promote a particular problem, interpretation and evaluation. Media can be considered as "watch dog" of political democracy. The media focuses in bringing details of all major political situations, decisions and scenarios.

### **Background**

In order to understand the Coverage of media regarding the relationship between the Judiciary and Government the issue highlighted was conflict issues in Baluchistan. The conflict between

government and Supreme Court was prominent in previous government that is Benazir's era, Nawaz era and Musharraf Era. During Benazir's rule 1993 to 1996 some important decisions relating to the judiciary were taken. These decisions had far-reaching adverse effect on the independence of judiciary. During Nawaz Sharif's Era first dispute between government and judiciary was over Anti Terrorists Law which was opposed by Justice Sajad Ali Shah. This conflict between Nawaz Sharif and Justice Sajad Ali Shah converted into very serious judicial crisis He was the first sitting Prime Minister in history of Pakistan who personally appeared before the court in a contempt proceedings. President Musharraf's decline started from March 9, 2007, when he summoned Chief Justice in his office and demanded his resignation. The Chief Justice's refusal embarked judiciary on a new level of independence. The unfolded events afterword led to the long march of June 2008 and historical long march of March 2009.

According to Jabeen (2009), Baluchistan is dependent on both internal and external factors for peace and stability, and both of them are not under control. The Baluchistan conflict is a constant conflict between [Baloch nationalists](#) and the [Government of Pakistan](#) and [Government of Iran](#) over Baluchistan. The cause of this constant conflict is human rights exploitation, greater self-sufficiency, increased percentage from natural resources and provincial returns. This issue became the most prominent issue in the years afterwards.

### **Research Questions**

1. What topics/themes were reflected in the coverage of conflict issues in Baluchistan?
2. Did the slant of the coverage given to conflict issues in Baluchistan differ both the newspapers?
3. Did the frames used in coverage of conflict issues in Baluchistan differ in both the newspapers?

**Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework of this research is significantly subjective to the theory of framing particularly the work of Entman (1993, p. 52), Tankard et.al (1993, p. 52) who came up with the idea of “to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text”. Agenda setting is the process by which the media transfer the salience of issues to the public (Michelle Wolfe, 2012).

It was found that that both signs of flexibility and change in newspapers coverage demonstrate intricate interactions between reporter’s activists group and real world-events (Mwesige and Paine, 2007). The shift in public opinion on the issue of 1996 U.S Federal budget have been studied and it was analyzed that the theories of agenda setting and framing gives a right explanation for the shift in collective opinion (Fan and Faber, 1998).

Another study was conducted to investigate the relationship between the public and print media agenda. A strong relationship was found between public and media agenda. Another finding is that both newspapers have different agendas (Riaz, 2008).

It was further analyzed that government parties were successful in introducing their issue over the media agenda. The

picture of the election campaign in the news remained the main agenda of news in the PBS as well in the new private channel. But the private channels did not follow the party agenda fully (Rulopeh, 1991). Another study identified four dominant frames to investigate how media coverage affect the importance assigned to the budget issue. This study take into account the tone of the coverage of issue or media effects on public opinion on the issue of federal budget, by combining framing and traditional agenda setting approach (Fan and Faber ,1998).

### **Conceptual Framework**

Media not only deal with politics but also serve society by disseminating news, information and entertainment. Media critically examines issues and commercial aspect of media has made the media to highlight non-issues (Yaqoob, 2009). The role of mass media was analyzed from the context of Africa and found that media made countless contributions for promoting good governance (Eltzroth & Kenny, 2003). To communicate government policy objectives and actions to citizens, mass media can help, thus increasing citizen conformity and participation (Lawson, 2002 and Stiglitz, 2002).

Regarding media's possible positive involvement to democratization and media and government relationship, it is argued that, there was a journalistic-government consent in which both parties encouraged democratic values and the new political system (Fell, 2006). The relationship between press freedom and democracy is sometimes paradoxical, in which limitations on press

freedom are often acceptable on grounds of protecting democracy (Hedwig De Smaele's, 2002).

The Internet papers can play a role in democratization by offering alternative political viewpoint and unbiased reporting (Krasnoboka and Brant's, 2006). Regarding the role of media, media scholars expect from media to function for the creation and promotion of a democratic political by public grounds and general sense of social unity and public connection (Albridge, 2007, Couldry et al 2007). Another study analyzed that the media should play genuine role in both democracy and authoritarian regime (Chatora, 2009).

It was further analyzed that media plays very important role, having an effect on government policies. It can liberate the segments of population, whenever their rights are violated. Therefore; it is considered the fourth pillar of the state. Print Media not only gave more coverage to judicial crises but it was found more inclined positively towards judiciary or its slant was towards the judicial crises. It was analyzed that different sources vary concerning different agendas (Nadir, 2008).

It was further concluded through content analysis that during judicial crises more coverage was given to this issue, especially Urdu newspapers have given more coverage than English newspapers. Secondly, it was found the news slant was towards the judiciary (Ayesha, 2011). Newspapers play very important role in making an informed and vigilant society about the issues of country. Hence, media not only inform us but also help us to analyze the situation and make a rational comment on an issue.

The agenda setting theory is very important to understand the connection between media and government. Legislative and executive branches are not towards public seeking behavior as much as judiciary. Not only news values can lead to coverage of certain issue, but some other signals used to judge immediate newsworthiness (Sill and Rouse, 2013). Media is not only going to have an effect on audience but media itself is affected by number of factors. Media content is affected by personal attitudes of media workers, professionalism, corporate policies, ownership patterns, the economic environment, advertisers, audience and above all, the government (Riaz, 2010).

Another study identified the relationship between mass media and government. It was concluded that both the party and government should play a positive role to facilitate the media for projecting the country's foreign policy, because the effectiveness of media depend largely on party and government ,which support them. Media in any society function according to the rules set those who own and control them (Kamuhanda, 1989).

Democracy is traced through different culture systems and culture systems are defined by their dominant communication system. The participatory democracy functions as a standard image that dominates the political communication of political thinking in current culture (Bertelesen, 1992).

Government authority is linked to the reliability and success of rule of law. In the same way judiciary have acquired a central place in political centrality, as judges are involved to resolve the political disputes and also to involve in judiciary assessment of



government process (Domingo, 2004). The changes in the Italian political scene are linked to expanding roll of judiciary. The judicialization of politics in many democracies, but in Italy the judicial revolution has been increased by institutional setting of increasing independence. When there exist a political vacuum or there will be political crises than the judiciary will be strong. In case of political stability, it could lead to the repression of judicial power. (Pederzoli, 1997).

### **Methodology**

The study is primarily a content analysis, which has examined quantitatively the publication of the opinion articles and columns in the leading Pakistani newspapers; i.e., *Daily Jang* and *Dawn*. For the purpose of this content analysis, coding sheet was constructed and prior to constructing a coding sheet a pilot study of articles was conducted. Based on findings of this pilot study coding sheets were developed. Each coding sheet had given the information's of newspaper, writer and date in addition to themes and frames.

The period for this study is one year, 2012. The year 2012 has been vital for the controversies between Government of Pakistan and Supreme Court of Pakistan. There were many issues which became bone of contention.

The population for this study was all opinion articles and columns related to conflict issues in Baluchistan, published in *The Daily Jang and Dawn*, in one year. The news stories of the *Daily Jang and Dawn* were retrieved from their relative websites. The one-year period was specified as –January 1, 2012 to December 30, 2012. The

database yielded 326 articles of the Daily Jang and 77 articles of Dawn regarding the conflict issues in Baluchistan. Systematic sampling method was considered appropriate and applied for this study. As a result 30 articles from the Dawn and 30 articles from the Daily Jang were selected regarding the issue of conflict issues in Baluchistan.

The Daily Jang and Dawn have been selected for this study because they are the leading Pakistani newspapers and circulated widely across the country. Senior media person, high officials, critics, and policy makers in Pakistan also read these newspapers to have in-depth knowledge of current issues.

Hassam, Ali. Z et.al (2013) found that discourse of Dawn is harsher in its editorials as compared to News in case of Lal Masjid issue. They supported the government agenda in case of Lal Masjid issue. Ali. S (2010) argued that Dawn is always neutral and give positive coverage regarding the issues of minorities. Ahmad. M, Mahsud. M et al. (2011) found that Daily Jang give coverage to the issue that may be analyzed as conventional wisdom. Variables for this study were of media, coverage and judiciary versus government. That is the Print media's role during the controversies between judiciary and government was determined and coverage of issue in two leading newspapers was studied that how important aspects of story were highlighted and importance given to the issues. Coverage of media regarding the relationship between the Judiciary and Government was determined by focusing the conflict issues in Baluchistan. Themes/Topics identified for the issue of NRO in this study are Role of media, political and religious

leadership, security forces ,judiciary, foreign hands, Pak US relationship, strategic importance, neglected province, role of government ,drone attacks, Bugti Murder and political Instability

## **Results**

Database yielded 326 articles of the *Daily Jang* and 77 articles of *Dawn* regarding the conflict issues in Baluchistan. Systematic sampling method was considered appropriate and applied for this study. The sample comprised 30 stories regarding the conflict issues in Baluchistan, with 15 stories being from the *Dawn* and 15 stories being from the *Daily Jang*. Columns were selected as a sample, by type of stories.

4.1: RQ1: What topics/themes were reflected in the coverage of conflict issues in Baluchistan?

**Table 1: Topics/themes reflected in the coverage conflict issues in Balochistan**

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<b>Themes/Topics</b>
Role of media
Political and religious leadership
Role of security in Baluchistan
Role of Judiciary in Baluchistan issue
Foreign hands in Baluchistan
Pak US friendship
Strategic importance of Baluchistan
Neglected province
Role of Government (Federal and Province)

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**Table 02: Slant of the theme “Coverage of Baluchistan issue in both newspapers”**

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	<b>Dawn</b>	<b>Jang</b>
Positive Slant	2	0
Neutral Slant	7	0
Negative Slant	21	30

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Above mentioned are the themes and topics, which appeared frequently in both newspapers, Dawn and Jang regarding the coverage of conflict issues in Baluchistan.

**RQ2:** Did the slant of the coverage given to conflict issues in Baluchistan differ both the newspapers?

Data shows that slant of the coverage given in both the newspapers to conflict issues in Baluchistan differ. This data evaluates that thirty stories in Jang had a negative slant and twenty one stories in Dawn has been given a negative slant. Neutral slant for this issue is seven times in Dawn. While there is not any positive and neutral slant for this issue in Jang. Dawn will have a more positive slant as compared to the Jang is proven.

**RQ 3: Did the frames used in coverage of conflict issues in Baluchistan differ in both the newspapers?**

Frames	Dawn			Daily Jang		
	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Silent and Insignificant Media	2			4		
Leadership as ineffective	12		4	24		4
Security Forces are to blame	7	2	4	7	0	1
Judiciary as partial	4	0	2	9	1	1
US using Pakistan	6		2	11		0
government as ineffective	11		4	25		1
Bugti murder	5			10		

### **Frames used in coverage of conflict issues in Baluchistan**

As can be seen in data, the frame of silent and insignificant media has a less favourable slant in *Jang* as compared to *Dawn*. More stories in *Jang* will frame the silent and insignificant media as compared to *Dawn* is proved. Negative slant had statements like *"It's a bit late for a beginning. Too much blood has stained the province's rugged terrain in the interim, a phenomenon that until recently attracted precious little attention in much of Pakistan's mainstream media"* (Mahir, *Dawn* 13/3/2012). This table evaluates that the frame of Ineffective Leadership is supported more by *Jang* as compared to *dawn*. This frame ineffective leadership has a more negative slant in *Jang* as compared to *Dawn*. More stories in *Jang* will frame the Leadership as ineffective as compared to *Dawn* is proven. Statements having negative slant are like *"Pakistan has protested vehemently against the US congressional resolution on Baluchistan. Regardless of the motives behind this resolution, it is clear that the Baluchistan issue has gone global because of its mishandling by successive Pakistani leaders"* (Syed Fazl-e-Haider, 25 Feb, 2012). This table evaluates that the frame of security forces are to blame is supported by both *Jang* and *dawn*. Neutral slant for this frame is given two times by *Dawn*. *Dawn* has given the more positive coverage for this slant as compared to *Jang*. More stories in *Jang* will frame the less effective role of security forces as compared to *Dawn* is proven. Negative slant had statements like *"Four insurgencies have previously been witnessed in Baluchistan: in 1948, 1958, 1962 and 1973. Four military operations were undertaken but these*

*only resulted in a worse mess and in deepening the sense of deprivation, alienation and frustration in the province” (Syed, Dawn, 15/1/2012).*

This Table shows that the frame of partial judiciary is supported nine times in Jang and four times in Dawn. While this frame had a neutral slant only one time in Jang. This frame has been given positive slant in Dawn two times and one time in Jang. More stories in Jang will frame the judiciary as partial as compared to Dawn is proven. Statements depicting partial role of judiciary are like *“The piecemeal nature of the SC’s approach is neither helping victims nor discouraging the violators of human rights from curtailing what appears to be a policy to eliminate moderate Baloch activists under the pretext of counter-insurgency efforts” (Syed, 3/8/2012, Dawn)*

This Table shows that the frame of US using Pakistan is supported eleven times in Jang and six times in Dawn. Positive slant for this frame is two times in Dawn. More stories in Jang will frame the US using Pakistan as compared to Dawn is proven. Statements having negative slant are like *“The trouble in Baluchistan is entirely the doing of foreign elements hostile to Pakistan who are helping a few malcontents with money and arms! The same 40-year-old script. It failed then and it will not succeed now. (Rehman, 15/2/2012, Dawn).* As can be seen in data, the frame of Ineffective Government is supported twenty five times in Jang and eleven times in Dawn. Positive slant for this frame is four times in Dawn and one times in Jang. More stories in Jang will frame the government as ineffective as compared to Dawn is proven. Negative slant have statements like *“The situation is even worse in Baluchistan, which is already the poorest and least developed of the four federating units of Pakistan. The*



*government and civil society have been less responsive to victims of conflict in the province. The provincial government does not have a rehabilitation plan, which has contributed to fueling public sentiments against the state” (Muhammad ,Dawn, 10/2/2012).* This data show that the frame of Bugti murder raised conflicts is supported ten times in Jang and five times in Dawn. More stories in Jang will frame the Bugti murder raised conflicts as compared to Dawn is proven. Statements having negative slant are like *“In actual fact, the province slid into renewed violence as the news of Bugti`s death circulated. The killing revived and ignited Baloch nationalism, giving it a martyr while providing new young recruits to separatist and militant organizations” (Syed ,Dawn, 15 /1/2012,).*

### **Discussion & Conclusion**

A strong relationship has been found between judiciary and government regarding the conflict issues in Baluchistan. The print media played a very important and balanced role during the controversies between judiciary and government. Print media determined the negative relationship between government and judiciary. Frequent negative slant have been given in Urdu newspapers as compared to English newspapers. The present study revealed that the role of media will receive less favorable coverage in both the newspapers. Most of the articles revealed that little attention is given to Baluchistan conflict issue in Pakistan`s mainstream media. Jang was more towards writing about issue of conflict in Baluchistan in Pakistan`s mainstream media as compared to Dawn. This study further highlighted the idea that conflict issues

in Baluchistan were mishandled by successive **political and religious** leadership. The failure of **political and religious** leadership was highlighted more by Jang as compared to Dawn. Jang was more towards portraying role of judiciary in Baluchistan positively as compared to Dawn. Dawn was found more neutral as compared to Jang. This study further argued that most of articles focused on the idea that the trouble in Baluchistan is entirely the doing of foreign elements hostile to Pakistan and only few articles opposed this idea.

This study further concluded that the Jang was more towards highlighting role of government negatively as compared to Dawn, as columns depicted the role of Government (Federal and Province) is not satisfactory and governance must be improved and justice should be seen to be done . Though both the newspapers gave more negative coverage to issue of conflict in Baluchistan but Jang was more negative towards it comparatively. Role of judiciary regarding the conflict issues in Baluchistan was portrayed positively, while the role of government was not portrayed positively in both newspapers (Dawn, Daily Jang). Though both the newspapers gave more negative coverage to relationship of judiciary and government regarding the issue of conflict in Baluchistan but Jang was more negative towards it comparatively. Dawn focused on neutral coverage as well regarding this issue but Jang had no neutral coverage at all. Dawn will have a more positive coverage as compared to the Jang regarding the conflict issues in Baluchistan. Frequent negative slant have been given in Urdu newspapers as compared to English newspapers regarding conflict issues in

Baluchistan.

This study could have been more beneficial having triangulation. It could have been strengthened further if it was studied from audience perception. We can get more clarity about this issue if we had focus group discussions. It could have been strengthened further by conducting surveys. If study was conducted by focusing the electronic media as well in addition to print media, then it could have been more beneficial. The limitation of time and other resources lead to incomprehensive study. This study focused on conflict issues in Baluchistan, instead of focusing other issues as well, that are conflict issues in Karachi and double citizenship by the members of parliament. The controversies between Supreme Court of Pakistan and government could have been better analyzed by focusing these issues as well.

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