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FRAMING OF AFGHANISTAN PEACE PROCESS IN THE REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PRESS

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ABSTRACT

This study focused on the role of the news media during the peace process, particularly the US-Taliban peace talks that are covered by both regional and international media outlets. The major foundation of this research was to understand the theory of peace journalism which fosters non-violent conflict. Model of peace journalism was presented by Galtung and subsequently described by Lee and Maslog (2005). This model was used to find out how media covers the conflict issues when it is going towards peace process. Eight newspapers were selected from different nations that have major stakes in Afghanistan. The selection of eight newspapers was taken from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran and India which are operationalized as Intra-Regional countries. The United States, United Kingdom, Russia, and China were operationalized as Extra-regional countries. From each state, the single most popular press was selected for a period of 26 months. Data was retrieved from Lexis-Nexis. For analysis, content categorization and coding sheets were utilized. This study provided answers to several research questions regarding agenda setting and provided support for the prevalent war and peace framing hypotheses. Results show that US and Afghanistan gave prominent coverage to the Peace talks issue followed by Pakistan and China. Overall, results indicate that Peace journalism outperformed war journalism in news coverage. In the Intra-Regional press, Peace journalism coverage dominates on US-Taliban peace talks, while war journalism dominates in the Extra-regional press. The most prominent category in War journalism frames was “Elite-oriented” and “Dichotomized”, while peace journalism categories were “Proactive”, “Multiparty”, and “Invisible war effects” was prominent. In the peace journalism category, newspapers gave less attention to “People-oriented” concerns and “Conflict resolution”. Local and national news was more peace-oriented than international news. With their pro-peace policy towards Afghanistan, Pakistan and China provide a favorable media environment for peace journalism. Governmental policies in the United Kingdom and India oppose peace negotiations; therefore, media labels debate war journalism. This study encourages international and local journalists to reconsider how they report on conflict and peace in order to enhance peace processes. In a nutshell, this study

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invites international and local journalists to re-evaluate their existing war and peace reporting tactics to enhance their constructive role in peace processes.

Keywords: *Peace talks, war journalism, peace journalism, Intra-Regional, Extra-Regional.*

Introduction

The 9/11 terrorist attacks were indeed a watershed moment in world history since they involved a non-state actor attacking the World Trade Center. From that day onward, a never-ending war erupted between state actors and non-state actors (Tariq, 2018; Lambeth, 2001). The US has spent over Nineteen years in Afghanistan to fight against terrorism and insurgency by stationing NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) forces in collaboration with the 'Allied Powers'. However, after nineteen years they have decided to withdraw from Afghanistan. No doubt, the peace struggle in Afghanistan started in the early stages after the US invasion of Afghanistan (Tariq, Zaman, & Ahmad, 2020; Hamidzada & Ponzio, 2019; Majidiyar, 2014).

Peace discussions have been sporadic since 2001. Political issues including US unwillingness to work with the Taliban have halted the process (Wolf, 2019). The biggest obstacles to restoring sustainable peace in Afghanistan include the trust deficit between Afghan officials and political party leaders, the absence of national consensus, and the debate over the formation of a delegation to talk to the Taliban. Afghanistan's legacy is also shaped by failed political settlements. Repeated failures to reach a permanent political settlement have also influenced Afghanistan's legacy (Mastoor, 2020; Sargana & Sargana, 2019; Sheikh & Greenwood, 2013). In addition, a variety of forums and meetings on peace talks have been held, *i.e.*, In Oct 2016, Afghanistan Trilateral Talks; in Feb 2017, Six-Party Talks and in Apr. 2017, Eleven National Regional Talks. The main goal was to help the Intra-Afghan peace process, but all these peace efforts failed to achieve the desired outcome (Nabeel 2018; Khan, 2017; Iqbal, 2016; Yousafzai. 2016).

US President Donald Trump revamped Afghanistan's policy in 2017. But as part of this reputed political phase, he did not specify what the US aims or conditions could be. Less than a year later, the US administration agreed, to enter into direct talks with the Taliban, without the involvement of members of the Afghan government (Farmer & Sabur, 2018). The US administration instructed its top diplomats Zalmay Khalilzad (the former US ambassador to Afghanistan) as Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation. This initiative in July 2018 to pursue direct talks with the Taliban without the Afghan government's involvement. The alleged meeting was held between the Taliban and a senior US diplomat in Sep 2018 (Clayton, 2020; Zargham & Adler, 2018).

From Taliban side, Mullah Baradar's have scheduled many rounds of negotiations in Doha, Qatar (Behuria, 2019). He said, peace discussions will allow both sides to agree on a variety of interrelated themes, including the removal of forces from Afghanistan, intra-Afghan engagement and negotiations, and the reduction of bloodshed leading to a real ceasefire (Basit et al, 2019). From January 2019, several rounds of talks culminated in a framework for the peace agreement, in which the insurgents would ensure that the use of Afghan territory by terrorists would be avoided and that the US troops could be withdrawn in full in exchange for greater concessions from the Taliban. This also meant a comprehensive ceasefire and an intra-Afghan dialogue in which both the Afghan government and Taliban

will speak to each other and decide the future of Afghanistan. But the Taliban declined to do so as long as foreign soldiers were deployed in Afghanistan (Ouwens, 2020; Gannon, 2018).

The US Representative Zalmay Khalilzad and his team facilitated intra-Afghan discussions with opposition parties, civil society, and women and young citizens through a national, cohesive, and inclusive Afghan negotiating team (Palladino, 2019). In July 2019, Afghan delegates (including 10 women and 17 Taliban representatives) finally gathered for the German and Qatari-sponsored Intra-Afghan Peace Conference in July 2019 (Qazi, 2019). The conference's goal was "initiating direct dialogue between the rival sides." "The Doha dialogue was serious and strategic," Zalmay Khalilzad said at this event (Irwin, 2019). The Taliban stated that the "conference is not a negotiations summit or meeting" because they only agreed to attend provided all delegates did so personally, but it was a major step towards peace in Afghanistan (Ouwens, 2020). For the first time, Afghan and Taliban delegations negotiated peace and signed a joint declaration pledging to end civilian fatalities (Qazi, 2019).

In September 2019, developments in the peace process peaked, as Zalmay Khalilzad announced after the ninth round of negotiations that "they were at the threshold of an agreement to reduce violence and open the door for Afghans to sit together and negotiate an honorable and sustainable peace and a unified, sovereign Afghanistan" (Yusufzai, 2019). He tweeted that "war will end only when all sides agree that it must end" (Khalilzad, 1 September 2019)(Ouwens, 2020). After a Taliban strike in Kabul killed eleven people, including an American soldier, President Donald Trump abruptly ended peace talks on 8 September 2019. He tweeted that if the Taliban failed to reach a truce during peace talks, they might not be able to negotiate a sustainable agreement (Washington Post, 2019). While they had constructive conversations with the US negotiating team and both sides began preparing for the announcement and signing of the final deal, the Taliban argued that the US president's suspension of negotiations would affect America more than anyone else.(Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, 2019).

In November 2019, it seemed that the frozen state of the peace talks was thawing. The Afghan government released three Taliban commanders as part of a prisoner swap movement at the end of November in exchange for two Western hostages (Hakimi, 2021). It seemed to be significant because, after almost three months of silence, the US president changed his mind about peace talks and declared a visit to Bagram Airfield (the largest US military base in Afghanistan) for Thanksgiving (Iqbal, 2020). He met with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and remarked that they were drawing down US troops at the same time, roughly 8600 at the same time (Maclean, 2019).

The US Representative Zalmay Khalilzad travelled to Doha and Kabul on 3rd December after the US President's visit and met with many Afghan government officials and other Afghan leaders. The US and Taliban negotiating teams have resumed peace talks for the tenth round of negotiations after a wavering interruption (Ouwens, 2020). After more than a year of official negotiations between the US and the Taliban members, the two sides reached an agreement on 29 February 2020, laying the ground for the withdrawal of the US Armed Forces from Afghanistan and the talks will start soon between Kabul and the Taliban. The following events, including numerous roadblocks to future talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government, have raised concerns about the deal and wider US policy in Afghanistan (Clayton, 2020).

After fighting terrorism and insurgency in Afghanistan for nineteen years with the help of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) and the US has chosen to pull its troops out of the country. This is how talks between the US and the Taliban are starting. The goal of

this study is to look at how some national and foreign news outlets have covered and framed the US-Afghan talks that have some stakes with Afghanistan. In this regard, it is critical to understand the role of the press in maintaining the peace process's stability. We need to talk about the role of the media in the negotiations for peace to comprehend the true situation in Afghanistan and the reconciliation endeavor.

Literature Review & Theoretical framework

As the war in Afghanistan has been one of the major international conflicts, it is, therefore not surprising that many scholars who worked on the war and peace perspective related to this topic have been published in the media coverage (Asmatullah et al., 2020; Siraj & Hussain, 2019; Sherbaz & Qaisar, 2018; Dimitrova et al, 2005; Nord et al, 2004). Scholars feel that ground events and facts substantially influence the media's involvement in conflict resolution. Violence increases when the media's role in dispute resolution decreases. Instead, peace discussions increased as media involvement increased (Zahid et al, 2018; Nadeem, 2017; Rahman and Eijaz, 2014; Haque and Hossain, 2012).

Media coverage of conflict management is nationalistic and propagandistic, according to many scholars (Hussain, 2017; Iqbal & Hussain, 2017; Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014). The news media generally employ government sources to report on disputes, therefore their stories are usually of national interest. Thus, the media influences how the government and politicians frame issues (Yousef, 2012; Auerbach & Bloch-Elkon, 2005; Boaz, 2005). Yousaf et al. (2013) found that patriotism influences Pakistan-India dispute depictions. A comparable analysis examines Pakistan-American and Indian American nuclear and Kashmir relations over democratic and diplomatic ties. The three countries' publications mainly follow their national perspective and cover all the above subjects neutrally. Research articles revealed that British media adopted a balanced approach during coverage of the Iraq conflict and mostly supported the nation's stance (Robinson et al., 2009).

Inter-state or intra-state conflict boosted patriotism for military solutions and legitimized government action. Several studies have shown that media outlets reported on national and international disputes without advocating for their policies globally (Becker, 1977; Hallin, 2004; Robinson et al., 2009). The New York Times opposed US backing for Pakistan during the Russian invasion of Afghanistan because it could shift power in South Asia (Azmat, 2002). A scholar investigated how the US media portrays the fight against terrorism. The findings revealed that the US media portrays Afghanistan in a bad light, depicting it as a hotbed of extremism and a haven for the Taliban and Al-Qaida (Iqbal, 2020, 2016).

International news keeps track of cultural and geographic variations across nations (Galtung & Vincent, 1992). This study investigates media coverage across time, across countries, and across news channels. The US, UK, Germany, and Netherlands publications reported the Iraq situation differently, revealing surprising distinctions. The study found that the national political situation, newspaper political leanings, and conflict stage might explain a lot of the subject's presentation and attention (Vliegenthart & Schröder, 2010). Susan (2004) said "The Independent" balanced its coverage by sympathizing with the US following 9/11 and criticizing the deaths in Afghanistan and Iraq. Many scholars have used the war and peace journalism approach to examine media coverage of almost all major foreign conflicts, including Afghanistan (Siraj & Hussain, 2019; Sherbaz and Qaisar (2018); Ishaq et al, 2017; Jawad, 2013a; Ottosen, 2005) conducted numerous studies on the role of the media in conflict resolution. According to studies on the peace journalism approach, war journalism receives

more publicity than peace journalism in media coverage of wars (Asmatullah et al., 2020; Nohrstedt & Ottosen, 2010; 2017).

Media tends to be more conciliatory and peace-oriented when both countries are engaging in diplomacy and more conflict-oriented when they are not (Siraj & Hussain, 2019). Peace journalism promotes peace. Peace journalism can also explain events. Peace journalism is influential in critically examining media portrayals of violence and peace (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005; Wolfsfeld, 2004; Galtung, 1996). In 1965, Johan Galtung and colleagues published about international conflict framing. The press preferred wars, elites, and jingoism (Galtung & Ruge, 1965). It shows that conflict news analysis has established peace journalism, whereas production process has been ignored during conflict. The term conflict resolution was adopted by Lynch, Lee and Maslog by created thirteen conflict and peace journalism indicators (McGoldrick (2005) and Galtung (2000, 2006). Media coverage helps scholars compare conflict and peace. A study on peace journalism study examines how two Pakistani news channels describe conflict escalation or de-escalation to identify key stakeholders and their interests. These findings show that conflict journalism is more nationalistic when national security is high and more humanistic when it is low (Mitra, 2018; Iqbal & Hussain, 2017; Calabrese, 2005).

In a liberal pluralist political system, few researchers believe the media opposes official views (Robinson et al., 2009; Jan 2011; Entman, 2003, 2007). Some analysts thought the media tried to retain its neutrality during the crisis (Althaus, 2003; Entman, 2003; Hussain, 2016; Tumber & Webster, 2006). The study about elite perspective in south Asian English newspapers and the war on terror in Afghanistan found that Dawn was deeply interested in the Taliban phenomenon, notably its editorial stance supporting the government's position. Dawn cautiously backed Taliban peace negotiations (Azmat, 2002). Media framing of national and international issues influences policymaking. Rawan, Hussain, and Khurshid (2018) examined Sino-Pak relations in key American, Indian, Chinese, and Pakistani media, particularly during the 2015 Chinese president's visit to Pakistan. The New York Times and Times of India reported less than China Daily and Dawn. Pakistani and Chinese news emphasized "economic responsibility and human interest," whereas selected US and Indian press concentrated on "conflict."

Research questions and hypothesis

RQ1. How extensively the selected press covered the peace talks between the US and Afghan Taliban.

H1a. The regional Countries such as Daily Dawn from Pakistan will be supportive of US-Taliban peace process when examined from a peace journalism perspective.

H1b. The International media such as the Independent from UK, will be more supportive of US-Taliban peace process when examined from a war journalism perspective.

RQ2. How do News Agencies from the Regional and International Press construct their frames on peace process between the US-Afghan Taliban?

RQ3. What aspects of the US-Taliban peace process have received the most coverage in Regional and International Press?

H2a: There will be significant difference in the framing of news sources on US-Afghan peace process.

H2b: PJ aspect will be more prevalent in National news sources as compared to WJ on US-Afghan peace process.

Research Methodology

In this study, content analysis was employed to answer the dominant frames used in selected dailies on US-Taliban peace talks. This study collected artefacts from eight newspapers in eight countries. The news, editorial and other stories belonging to Peace talks between US-Afghan Taliban are considered a unit of analysis. Data was retrieved from Lexis-Nexis after searching keywords. The time frame of study started soon after the announcement of US President Donald Trump's "withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan". A total of nine indicators were selected carefully for war and peace journalism, which comprised of approach base and language base (cited in Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005). All coding instructions are listed in **Appendix A**. For making comparisons between the contents of selected newspapers from selected countries based on stakes, they have with the land of Afghanistan. These countries were divided into two categories (Regional Countries & International Countries).

Regional Countries

Regional countries and selected newspapers including as 1) The daily outlook Afghanistan from Afghanistan: 2) Daily Dawn from Pakistan 3), Times of India from India and 4) Tehran Times from Iran. The operationalizing of these countries is based on bordering countries in the same region as Afghanistan are crucial geopolitically and strategically in the region. Those Asian countries most affected by the conflict between the US and Afghanistan. Except for India, all other countries share a border with Afghanistan.

International Countries: International countries and selected newspapers including the 1) The New York Times from USA 2) The Independent from UK, 3) The Moscow Times from Russia 4) and China Daily from China. The operationalizing of these countries is based on countries that play an important role in the US-Afghan war but do not have a physical border with Afghan territory. They have direct or indirect stakes in Afghanistan, and the most significant issue for these countries is the ability to veto. These countries are economically powerful and wield considerable power in international affairs.

Next, the story was coded as peace journalism (PJ) or war journalism (WJ) for the dominant picture, depending on the number of peace and war indicators. For instance, if a majority of war journalism indicators are found in a story, the story was considered as a conflict frame and vice versa. The story was coded as neutral if both peace and war journalism indicators were equal. When at least five of their nine indicators are present in a story, it is called dominating. As a result, the unit of analysis was the complete story. Each variable and its categories were measured using detailed rules. Appendix A. detail is mentioned below.

War and Peace Frames Indicators Appendix A

	Peace journalism indicators	War journalism indicators
A	Invisible effects of war: The story focuses on	Visible effects of war

	the conflict scenario has an impact on the country's long-standing diversity in terms of growth and democratization.	News story focuses on casualties, dead and wounded, damage to property, ceasefire, blasts.
B	People-oriented: The news contents giving more space to the voices of women, children, senior citizens, and giving voice to the voiceless who describe the exact condition of Afghanistan.	Elite oriented: The story covered able-bodied elite males being their mouthpiece except for sufferings.
C	Causes and consequences: A news story explaining the parties' position which was involved in the agreement that might lead to a solution/ resolution of conflict.	Here and Now: The news report mainly focusing on the most important, breaking news parts of the conflict and providing minimal background information.
D	Non-Partisan: Story covers both sides of a debate and balanced by providing relatively the same number of factual statements.	Partisan: Story shows biases and creates a distinctive sharp divide among groups.
E	Proactive: A news item avoids labelling before any violence/war occurs.	Reactive: A news story harshly respond to an attack or an incident or before an attack or incident.
F	Solution-oriented: story focus on resolution, reconstruction, reconciliation, and peaceful society.	Victory oriented: Focus on peace-initiative last before victory; and solutions were leaving for another war.
G	Multiparty involvement: A story gives voice to many parties which involved in resolution.	Two-party orientation: Focus on (one party wins, one party loses).
H	Harmonious: Avoid labelling of good and bad guys.	Dichotomizes: Only focus on good guys and bad guys. Victims and villains.
I	Avoid using demonizing language: The language used in the story is more descriptive and avoid demonizing and backbiting.	The use of demonizing language: News reportage includes backbiting words such as terrorist, radical, fundamentalist.

Themes Driven from the Whole Story Appendix B. These Themes were categories into four topics. News stories related to US-Taliban peace talks were classified based on the following themes. Each news story related to the US-Taliban peace talks was analyzed and categorized based on these themes.

Sr.	Themes	Explanation
A	Diplomatic and Political development	This theme covers the progress and setbacks in the peace negotiations, statements from political leaders, and the impact on domestic and international politics. News topics covered i.e., resumption of talks, forces withdrawal from Afghanistan, release of prisoner, and violence reduction that would enable the peace process moving forward
B	Fight and Talks strategy	These Themes covers the impact of the peace talks on security, including incidents of violence, changes in military presence, and the overall security situation in the region. News topics covered i.e., Taliban conducted and elevated number of attacks, while simultaneously perusing a potential peace agreement with US
C	Economic	This theme focuses on the humanitarian implications, such as the effects

	and humanitarian assistance	on civilians, displacement, human rights concerns, and the delivery of aid and economic consequences of the peace talks, including changes in trade, investment, and the economic stability of the region. News topics covered i.e., security concerns of entire region or story suggested mechanics through which this objective could be achieved.
D	Status of Conflict	News topics covered the violence from Taliban side or military attacks by US & NATO forces.

Data analysis:***Coverage of War and Peace Journalism in the Selected Press on US-Taliban Peace Talks***

Media scholars agree that international issue representation and framing are important subjects. Agenda-setting in news items changed how news is understood and judged, especially when reporting conflict (Bennett & Livingston, 2003, 2011; Finney, 2009; Lynch & McGoldrick, 2010, 2020; Ottosen, 2014). There are a total of 1,239 articles compiled from eight distinct sources. It is the New York Times (23%), the Daily Outlook Afghanistan (20%), the Daily Dawn (18%), the Times of India (5%), the Tehran Times (12%), the Moscow Times (1%), the Independent (11%) and the China Daily (10%) that provide the most coverage of the peace talks. Peace negotiations received more media attention in the United States than Afghanistan. Since the United States was more concerned with a peaceful exit from Afghanistan, it makes sense that they would host these negotiations.

Table 1.1: Framing Difference in Terms of Region

Region	Countries	Newspaper	Freq. & %	PJ %	WJ %	Neutral %
<i>A_Intra-Regional press</i>	1	Daily Outlook Afghanistan	248 (20)	153 (62)	50 (20)	45 (18)
	2	Daily Dawn	226 (18)	144 (64)	27 (12)	55 (24)
	3	Times of India	153 (12)	19 (32)	29 (49)	11 (19)
	4	Tehran Times	59 (5)	91 (60)	35 (23)	27 (18)

<i>Total</i>				285 (23)	141 (21)	138 (20)
<i>B=International</i>	5	New York Times	285 (23)	96 (34)	132 (46)	57 (20)
	6	Moscow Times	15 (02)	09 (60)	01 (7)	05 (33)
<i>Countries</i>	7	The Independent	132 (11)	36 (27)	74 (56)	22 (17)
<i>Press</i>	8	China Daily	121 (10)	69 (57)	31 (26)	21 (18)
<i>Total</i>				210 (38)	238 (43)	105 (19)

$$A=\chi^2: 43.334, P=.000 \quad B=\chi^2: 40.219, P=.000$$

1= Afghanistan, 2=Pakistan, 3=India, 4=Iran,5=USA, 6=Russia, 7=UK, 8=China

In the Regional newspapers, the peace journalism indicator is prominent in daily Dawn (64%), followed by the Daily outlook Afghanistan (62%), then Tehran times (60%) and Times India (32%). However, War journalism indicator (49%) is prominent in Indian press. Overall, In the International Press the indicator of war journalism is prominent. The Independent covered most of the news stories on war journalism (56%), followed by New York Times (46%), While Moscow Times gave prominently covered the Peace Journalism (60%) followed by China daily (57%). The answer shows that PJ approach is adopted by majority countries from regional category. While the WJ is prominently adopted by countries from the international press. Overall analysis reveals that in the regional press, most of the stories covered (59 %) peace frames followed by (21 %) war frames and (20 %) neutrals. However, in international press (43%) war frames which is little bit higher than (38%) peace frames followed by (19%) neutral. These findings incorporated the study statement. The overall coverage in both categories of newspapers was more tilted toward peace journalism than war journalism. These findings contradict previous research on war and peace reporting, such as (Fawcett, 2002; Shinar, 2007; Wolfsfeld, 2008) who asserts that the journalist's "normal mode of operation is to cover tension, conflict, and violence", even while covering peace talks, the media prefers to utilize conflict frames than conciliation frames.

Difference of framing indicators in war and peace journalism

In the Regional press analysis shows that Daily Outlook Afghanistan (DOA), Daily Dawn (DD) the most important categories of PJ are invisible effects of war (18% & 20%), While the most important predictors of WJ are elite oriented (18% & 30%). The Times of India (TOI) mainly gave prominence to multiparty involvement (21%) from the PJ indicator while the indicators of elite and partisan (18% & 17%) belong to the WJ approach. The key indicators from Tehran times (TT) are multiparty involvement (21%) from PJ and elite-oriented (28%) from WJ frames.

Table 1.2: Framing indicators in selected Press

Country Press	Afgh.		Pak.		Ind.		Iran.		US		UK		Russia		China	
	DOA	DD	DD	DD	TOI	TOI	TT	TT	NYT	NYT	IND	IND	MOS	MOS	CHD	CHD
	P%	W%	P%	W%	P%	W%	P%	W%	P%	W%	P%	W%	P%	W%	P%	W%
A	18	5	20	5	18	7	17	8	18	10	7	17	19	15	17	10
B	9	18	4	30	6	18	4	28	6	22	13	14	2	26	9	22
C	14	9	10	14	15	10	4	20	15	10	10	12	15	12	5	24
D	6	14	5	12	6	17	8	10	6	10	10	10	4	18	8	8

E	13	11	15	12	16	13	13	9	16	10	11	9	15	6	15	10
F	15	4	10	8	5	4	7	5	5	6	9	7	2	9	8	2
G	13	12	15	10	21	6	21	5	21	6	18	8	25	0	14	7
H	5	17	11	6	6	12	14	5	6	11	10	9	8	9	11	7
I	7	11	10	2	8	14	14	10	8	13	11	13	10	6	14	9
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

A=Invisible vs evident war, B= People vs elite, C=Reports on deeper causes vs here and now, D=Non-partisan vs partisan, E= Proactive vs reactive, F= Solution vs victory-oriented G= Multiparty vs two parties, H= Avoid to labeling good vs bad guys, I= Avoiding vs the use of demonizing language

As shown in the above table: The key PJ indicators from the US in the New York Times (NYT) is Multiparty involvement (21%). Prominent WJ includes Elite-oriented (22%). In Moscow Times (MOS), the most important category of PJ is multi-Party involvement (25%). While the most important predictors of WJ are elite-oriented (26%). Similarly, Independence from the UK mainly gave prominence to Multiparty involvement (18%) from PJ indicator and Visible effects of war (17%) WJ. On the other hand, the most prominent categories of PJ in Daily China are the Invisible effects of war (17%), whereas here and now (24%) is the most important indications of WJ.

War and Peace Framing by line and by Story

In the analysis of a conflict situation, the media, as a source of agenda-setting and framing, not only processes public opinion but also includes the prejudices and personal expectations of journalists.

Table1.3: WJ and PJ Framing by Sources and by Story

Byline	PJ %	WJ %	Neutral %	Total %
National news agencies	264 (43)	144 (38)	88 (36)	496 (40)
International news agencies	154 (25)	103 (27)	75 (31)	332 (27)
Journalist	199 (32)	132 (35)	80 (33)	411 (33)
Total	617 (100)	379 (100)	243 (100)	1239 (100)

$$A=\chi^2 :5.221 P= .265$$

This study relating to the News Agencies while covering US-Taliban talks findings portrays that news stories related to the PJ frames mostly covered by National news agencies (43%), followed by journalists (32%) and international news agencies (25%). Overall peace journalism frames (617) were more prominent by all sources than war journalism frames (379), and neutral frames (243). Statistically, the difference is not significant (5.221, P=.265).

Description of Topics Across the Region

Table 1.4 reveals that the regional countries press i.e. Times of India, Daily outlook Afghanistan and Daily Dawn and gave prominent coverage to Afghan reconciliation respectively (50, 51, 52 %), followed by Tehran Times (39%). Intriguingly, the press of all three nations provided scant coverage of the conflict.

Table1.4: Topics in Regional and International Press

Newspaper/ Country	Topic A	Topic B	Topic C	Topic D	Total
<i>I) Intra-Regional Countries Press</i>					
a= Afg.	126(51)	51 (21)	65 (26)	6 (2)	248
b=Pk.	118(52)	63(28)	37(16)	8(4)	226
c=Irn.	23(39)	24(41)	8(14)	4(7)	59
d= Ind.	76(50)	38(25)	32(21)	7(5)	153
Total	343	176	142	25	686
<i>II) International countries Press</i>					
e= US.	46(16)	135(47)	46(16)	58(20)	285
f=Ru.	9(60)	5(33)	1(7)	0(0)	15
g=UK.	28(21)	49(37)	34(26)	21(16)	132
h=CN.	61(50)	28(23)	29(24)	3(2)	121
Total	148	141	73	38	553

Topics; A= Diplomatic and Political development, B= Fight and talk Strategy, C= Eco & human assistance, D= Status of conflict

a=Daily Outlook Afghanistan, b= Daily Dawn, c=Times of India, d= Tehran Times, e= New York Times, f= Moscow Times, g= The Independent, h= China Daily

I. $\chi^2:19.981, P=.018$

II. $\chi^2:86.49, P=.000$

As shown in the above table: In the International press, The Moscow Times (60%) brought out Diplomatic & Political development, followed China daily (50%), While the Independent (21%). The New York Times was more focused on the fight and talk strategy (47%) followed by the Independent. Findings illustrate that Regional and International press gave maximum coverage to Diplomatic development followed by Fight and talk, Economic and human assistance and conflict difference is not as much significant in the chi-square value (19.981; P=.018; 86.494: P= .000).

Summary and Discussion

Researchers contend that the media can play a constructive and destructive role in conflict resolution depending on the news frames employed in reporting (Sadiq & Hassan, 2017; Wolfsfeld, 2004). This article examines the media's framing of peace talks between the United States and the Taliban in Afghanistan, beginning with Donald Trump's statement in 2018. In September of 2018, peace discussions began in Doha right after Zalmay Khalilzad appointment. Thus, the contemporary paradigm of peace journalism and the theory of media framing are both important considerations (Imtihani, 2014; Rahman & Eijaz, 2014). This study employed a comparative analysis to examine WJ and PJ frames from the press of eight different countries, which were divided into Regional and International. The researchers have selected the countries' press (US, UK, Russia, China, India, Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan) for the period of 26 months starting from July 2018 to Aug 2020. On the question of Afghanistan, these countries differed in terms of government policy and public perception. The study tries to answer the question of what causes variation in media coverage of peace talks. Results of the study confirm most of the hypotheses, demonstrating that the national

political context, the political leaning of newspapers, and the stage of the conflict may all account for a significant amount of variation in the issue's attention and presentation.

In response to the RQ1: How extensively selected press covered the peace talks between the US and Afghan Taliban. The results show that the New York Times received the most attention for its reporting on the US-Taliban peace process, followed by Daily Outlook Afghanistan and Daily Dawn. Since these negotiations were undertaken between the two countries to find a solution to the problem, and Pakistan is one of the primary stakeholders, this makes logical.

To answer the RQ2: How do reporters from Regional and International Press construct their frames on peace process between the US-Taliban? The results showed a statistically significant distinction between regional press and international press in the framing of war and peace perspective. (Table 1.2) Simply speaking, there were more articles on PJ than war reported by regional press. While more combat pictures were published by the international press. These results are consistent with previous research showing that the media spread peaceful images during national reconciliation. (Westcott & Wright, 2016; Irvan, 2006; Wolfsfeld, 2001; Lauk, 2008).

Findings of the Regional press the most important categories of peace journalism are “Invisible effects of war” by Daily Outlook Afghanistan, while Daily Dawn, and Tehran Times focused on multiparty involvement from PJ perspectives. Dawn's findings in terms of war and peace journalism are consistent with the findings of, (Asmatullah et al., 2020; Siraj & Hussain, 2019) who discovered that Pakistani media do not provide historical and background information on conflicts and focus on the viewpoints of military elites. The Times of India, on the other hand mainly gave prominence to “Multiparty involvement” stories from the PJ indicator while the indicators of “Partisan” stories belong to the WJ approach. Findings from the Times of India showed that when national interests are at stake, the media become overly patriotic and partisan, putting quality journalism on the back burner. By comparing the coverage of the Afghan conflict in the Daily Dawn, we notice that the former supports peace talks and takes a more peaceful approach to journalism. (Nadeem, 2017; Zahid et al, 2018; Gouse & Nyamwange, 2019; Siraj, & Mahmood, 2021).

H1a. The regional Countries such as Daily Dawn from Pakistan will be supportive of US-Taliban peace process when examined from a peace journalism perspective. However, in the international press war frames (5%) are higher than peace frames. Previous studies on war and peace reporting have found that journalists' "normal mode of operation is to cover tension, conflict, and violence," therefore these results are at odds with what has been found. It was found that the media still favors war framing over reconciliation frames even when reporting on peace discussions. The study suggests that the media may be counterproductive to efforts to restore calm after national wars. This result supports previous findings that Western or foreign media like USA and UK tend to focus on violence and conflict when reporting stories in developing countries (Wolfsfeld, 2004; Shinar, 2004; Myint, 2017).

H1b. The International media such as the Independent from UK, will be more supportive of US-Taliban peace process when examined from a war journalism perspective.

International news coverage also regulates the cultural and geographic differences among countries (Galtung & Vincent, 1992).

In response to the RQ4. To what extent do framing indicators of regional press significantly differ on US-Afghan Taliban peace talks? Results of the study confirmed that the national political situation, the political leaning of newspapers, and the stage of the conflict can all account for a significant portion of the difference in attention to the issue and how it is reported (Vliegenthart & Schröder, 2010). The same variation was found in my results as shown in table (4.7) the key PJ indicators of the New York Times, Moscow Times and the independent, focused on “Multiparty involvement” While, Prominent WJ includes “Elite oriented”. In addition, “Here and now” and “Elite oriented” are the most important indications of WJ from China Daily Whereas, from PJ China used invisible effects of war. Similarly, Independence mainly gave prominence to “Visible effects of war”, WJ in high figures. So, we can say that to some extent international press frame PJ abundantly except for The Independent where they gave more prominence to war indicators. Studies revealed that British media adopted a balanced approach during coverage of the Iraq conflict and mostly supported the nation’s stance (Robinson et al., 2009; Safdar & Budiman, 2014). Workneh evaluated the framing of the US and British press from the war and peace perspective. The Results revealed all American and British newspapers analyzed a higher degree of war journalism framing. They indicated that journalists and particularly international journalists rely on ritual and elite sources. They don’t bother about the importance of peace journalism (Horvit et al., 2018; Workneh, 2011). Yang investigates that newspapers can play a critical role in shaping social and political reality because most editors and publishers belong to the elite class (Fong, 2009). Wanta et al. (2004), Zahid et al. (2018), Zahid and Zia (2013), and Shahghasemi, (2011) also endorsed that US media give coverage of any event and country according to the American core values and themes of strength and power whereas simultaneously demonizing the enemy or opponents (Coe & Neumann, 2011; Davis & Sosnovskaya, 2009). It was argued that the US media-sensationalized war by focusing on victories (Graber, 2003). One of the analyses of international news coverage reported considerable closeness in coverage of the Elite press, including the US and Russia (Sola, 1952). In this way, these findings are consistent with my findings and supported the hypothesis (**H3**), where countries' press is taking a stance as per their national policy.

War and Peace Framing by Sources on US-Taliban Peace Talks

Several studies have found that numerous media outlets reported on national and international conflicts independently and preserved their independence by refusing to advocate for their agendas on a global scale. As shown in (Table 4.8) a study relating to the story sources used to cover the US-Taliban talks findings show that national news sources produced the most news stories connected to the peace journalism frame (264), followed by journalists (199) and foreign news sources (199). (154). While international news media published (144) articles on peace journalism, (103) articles about war journalism, and (332) articles about neutral journalism. Locally generated stories relating to war and peace journalism accounted for 496 (40%) of the total. Similarly, 332 (26%) foreign-produced items dealt with war and peace reporting. In addition, 411 (33.2 %) journalists wrote stories about war and peace. Overall peace journalism frames (617) were more prominent by all sources than war journalism frames (379), and neutral frames (243). In response to RH6. Peace Journalism stories are prevalent more in National news sources as compared to war journalism. Supported the hypothesis but, Statistically, the difference is not significant (5.221, P= .265). Findings of the

other studies related to news sources suggest that news media mainly rely on official sources during conflict reportage, which makes the media narratives very much tuned to the consideration of national interests. In this way, the media also influences the policymakers and the government for making policies on the issues and this linkage also has great importance for the stakeholders (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014; Voltmer, 2013).

Prominent Topics Used in Intra-Regional and Extra-Regional Press

The above table (4.14) shows that In Intra-Regional Countries Afghan reconciliation was covered extensively by Daily Outlook Afghanistan (37%), daily Dawn (35%), followed by Tehran Times (22%). Whereas the Times of India only covered (07%) of stories about Afghanistan's diplomatic and political growth. Surprisingly, the percentage of conflict themes received little coverage from all of the countries' press. These findings are consistent with previous research that the press reported stories of violence during the violent situation and the dialogue position press coverage was dominated by this issue. According to scholars, the function of the media in conflict resolution is largely influenced by events and facts on the ground. The less the media had a role in dispute resolution processes, the higher the level of violence. On the contrary, the greater the role of the media in conflict resolution procedures, the more peace discussions were held (Acayo & Mnjama, 2004; Asemah & Edegoh, 2012; Carlsson-Paige & Levin, 1992; Haque & Hossain, 2012; Hettiarachchi, 2011; Imtihani, 2014; Jawad, 2013b; Rahman & Eijaz, 2014; H. Shabir, 2016; Siraj & Hussain, 2019).

According to **RQ7**. Which themes/topics are most prominent in Intra-Regional and Extra-Regional press on US-Taliban peace talks? Overall, findings illustrate that Intra-regional countries gave maximum coverage to Diplomatic & Political development followed by fight and talk, then Economic and human assistance and least towards conflict. Findings show a significant difference found in the P value (19.981; P=.018). In Extra-regional countries, China Daily brought out a high percentage on Diplomatic & Political development (43%), While the New York Times covered (32%), followed by The Independent (20%). The Moscow Times in this way did publish only (06%) of stories in favor of peace talks. The New York Times press was more focused on the fight-and-talk strategy followed by The Independent press. The New York Times, The Independent and China daily covered the topic of humanitarian assistance (42%, 31% and 25%) respectively. Contrary to the Intra-Regional press, the Extra-Regional countries more focused on conflicted and violent events (553) news stories i.e., bomb blasts, attacks, injuries and armed skirmishes followed by Diplomatic & Political development, fight and talk, and Economic and human assistance. Here, a significant difference was found in the Chi-square value (86.494 P=.000). A study also highlights that media generate more conciliatory and peace-oriented content when both countries participate in diplomacy and generate more conflict-oriented content in opposing situations between them (Siraj & Hussain, 2019, p. 8). In other words, the role of the press in the settlement of conflicts was mainly influenced by the situations and facts in the region (Imtihani, 2014). Researchers believe that the media enhanced peace after the crisis by reporting and monitoring the implementation of key agendas of the peace accord. The peace accord called for long-term solutions for historical and political conflicts in peace-building efforts (Radoli, 2011). According to Jawad, (2013) In fact, media coverage on this subject (negotiation and peace talks, and economic development) is considered very critical to Afghanistan, and the more positive frame and frequent coverage the better effect it will have on the issues (Jawad, 2013a). The above findings are quite consistent with my findings and support the hypothesis **(H5)**.

Conclusion

This study, like most others, recommended prioritizing peace journalism alongside war journalism during conflict and reconciliation. Thus, media impartiality will not be accomplished until regular issues are addressed consistently and impartially. The US withdrawal was also considered as a crucial step towards intra-Afghan dialogue, where all factions, including the Taliban, would convene and plan the country's future. The US-Taliban deal was signed after major Afghan political organizations pledged peace. A hard-won victory deserves respect and preservation. In Afghanistan, all parties should seize the chance and work together to overcome challenges. Terrorist groups should be stopped by all peace process parties. The international community may assist Afghan military in capacity-building. All stakeholders must cooperate and not denigrate each other to create a stable, pro-peace Afghanistan. Afghanistan's allies and regional powers—China, Pakistan, Iran, and Russia—should form a global peace council to seek a peaceful resolution. Regional rivalries have slackened the development of a council to restore peace in Afghanistan. The blame game between Kabul and Islamabad, together with a lack of trust between the US and Russia and Iran, has prompted them to hold private talks, which have failed. Therefore, Afghanistan and its international partners must sign a solid military accord with Afghanistan for regional security.

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