

WAR AGAINST TERRORISM IN THE TRIBAL AREAS OF PAKISTAN: A STUDY OF NEWS COVERAGE AND THE CHALLENGES FACED BY THE WORKING JOURNALISTS

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ABSTRACT

War against terrorism is not a new phenomenon. However, the tragic even of Sept. 2011, 2001 occurred in New York, USA, brought Pakistan into a very important country for reporters, correspondents & journalists of national and international media organizations. In this war people's dependency is increased to its maximums while gathering and dissemination of information process became highly challenging job for media news reporters who have never reached to the conflict areas for on-spot coverage of events. This research paper aims at to investigate the whole phenomenon that includes normative set-up of the tribal people, geographical mosaics of the tribal areas, nature of a complex war against terrorism, Pakistan's policy against the Afghan Taliban and the activities of different terrorist groups named as Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). The work is done in form of case study related to bring the facts on surface to the war-zone media coverage. Exploring the nature of challenges and hardships faced by the working journalists, especially the correspondent is the core of this research paper. The work concludes that covering war events objectively is a highly challenging job to the extent of life threats from different warring groups. It also concludes that news reporters with higher experience have higher level of life threat.

INTRODUCTION

This research paper deals with the topic "War against Terrorism in the Tribal Areas of Pakistan: A Study of News Coverage and the Challenges Faced by the Working Journalists". The basic purpose of this paper is to analyze the journalistic reporting about conflicts among terrorist groups and Pak-Army in the tribal areas of Pakistan. American invasion in Afghanistan and Pakistan's changed policy towards Taliban made Pakistan a center of terrorist activities and national challenge to deal with the situation. Killing, sabotage and suicidal attacks were started by TTP in the settled areas of Pakistan had become the gravest challenge for Nation. The tragic events of killing innocent people and military personnel in the settled areas of Pakistan made every Pakistani deeply interested to get as much objective information about the issue from the national media as possible. Information consumers appreciate only the news media that can maintain 'fairness doctrine' to the best of their abilities. Reporter's lives rest with risks all the times that makes

the job very challenging to cover the war events. Exploring the nature of challenges and hardships being faced by the working journalists, especially the correspondents, is the core of this research paper.

In 1994, Taliban united, stood against the war-lords and captured Kabul. This new orthodox force of the Islamists establish a government system hardly acceptable to any modern political system, especially the West. This was a period of chaos that brought the Taliban and other Muslim Mujahedeen together, and another Jihad inside in Afghanistan. TTP is a combination of different groups settled in tribal areas of Pakistan after the Soviet Union was defeated in Afghanistan. About 13 different groups joined together to form TTP under the leadership of Baitullah Mehsud. The main objectives of TTP were to fight against the American and her allied Pakistan and to impose self-designed Sharia in Pakistan. This research paper focuses on a complex issue of war against terrorism and the coverage of war events to bring the facts on surface. In this regards, primary attention is given to the hardships and challenges a news reporter has to face and confront within the time of his professional duties up to the extent life threats and death.

LITERATURE REVIEW

When one looks at the history of mankind it becomes evident that no part of the globe has ever been existed a place of complete peace and tranquility. Fighting between and killing of human by its own kind has been a phenomenal reality along with its reporting through the ages in different forms and scopes. Modern war technologies and resources have also enlarged the scope and effects, sometimes with unthinkable magnitude of destruction and collateral damages of human lives and properties. Modern wars and horrible weaponries are very different from the ancient wars and means fought and used in the ancient Near East, Greece and Rome, China, India, Byzantine, the Arab world, Persia, Ottoman Empire of the 14th century, Magnolia and Central Asia etc. (Chaliand, 1994). The two global conflicts the World War 1st and 2nd were given sizeable space by the existing media of the time. This is worth-considering that the early 50's and with the establishment of the United Nations, extended wars and conflicts emerged into zonal wars and conflicts under the new global divides in form of Capitalism and Communism led by the US and former USSR.

War reporting includes different problems for the stack-holders of varying interests. Philip.K (1975), in this regard, has provided historic information in his famous work, 'The First Causality: From Crimea To Vietnam: The War Correspondent as Hero, Propagandist and Myth-Maker'. To him, war reporters 'play the role of a propagandist through fabrication and rumor-mongering as they did during the American Civil War'. This usually happen because warring parties, media owners and the public have different views and interests that creates problems for the news reporters. Since the dawn of media technologies

and vast expansion of communication means, news coverage from a war-zone have become an issue of major concerns of the warring parties, public right to know and in terms of access to the area under war and reporter's physical protection as well. Writers and analysts like Robinson, (2004) look at the war-zone reporting in the context of 'News Frames Analysis'. To him, from Crimea War (1854) to Afghan War (2001) and the US invasion of Iraq (2003) are the examples of 'News Framings'.

'News Framing' in media during war time reporting makes it further challenging and difficult for the reporters to face individual as well as institutional influence and pressure on framing the media, (Ryan, 2004). Nature and types of conflicts may be and are different in various aspects. These include: the parties involved; their aim and objectives; geographical location of war; and fighting resources and training of warring parties. However, all the armed conflicts in media coverage perspective have the common objective of providing the latest information to the public. Unlike the media coverage in normal situations, war coverage is the most challenging job for a working journalist. Many writers in the field have identified the ways and means the powerful interests groups frame news stories influencing the journalists, especially during the armed conflicts. But unlike the past where news were not much different from editorial opinion, news and views in today's media have become technically easy to separate objective reporting from political propaganda (Robinson, 2004).

Tribal Areas of Pakistan

Geographically, tribal areas of Pakistan consists of 5000 square miles mid of river Kuram and River Gomal. It has two major parts, i.e. North Waziristan and South Waziristan of seven agencies looked after a Political Agent in each agency as the Chief Administrator. Federally Administrated Area (FATA) is a semi-autonomous tribal region, closely bordering Pakistan's Province Khyber Pakhtoon Khuwa (KPK) and Baluchistan to the East and South, and Afghanistan's Province Kunar, Nangarhar, Paktika, Khost and Pakistan the West and North (Rehman, 2004).

Mujahedeen and Terrorism

Terrorism in the tribal areas of Pakistan, according to Kathey (2005), is a direct result of the US invasion in Afghanistan. 'Afghan Mujahedeen fought against the Soviet were the freedom fighters' and Regan Administration supported them very strongly in a 'Proxy War against the USSR' 'Cold War Enemy'. But later on the same freedom fighters became the worst adversary of the US and of the West.

Taliban

Infighting among the war lords resulted in bringing Taliban who captured Kabul on 27th of September 1996, under the leadership of an Imam-e-Masjid, Mullah Umer, who also fought

against the Soviets. Historically, as Kathey (2005) concludes, Taliban movement was to bring peace in Afghanistan along the lines of orthodox Islamic way of life.

Taliban and Al-Qaeda

Taliban took control of Kabul in September 1996, and Osama Bin Laden shifted from Sudan to Kabul much earlier than the emergence of Taliban to train Mujahedeen as a friend of Northern alliance like the Taliban Sayyaf and Dostam. He met Mullah Umer after Taliban captured Kabul. Bin Laden was wanted person for his terrorist activities against the US and the West. Interestingly, in Dixon (2001) view, Bin Laden was the creation of Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) who turned against the US policies on Saudi Arabia and has 'simply continued the job he was asked to do in Afghanistan during the 1980s –fund, feed and trained'.

Emergence of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)

Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) came into being in Dec. 2007 as a large organization of different Jihadi groups. The organization was spread over all seven agencies of tribal and in some settled areas of Pakistan, linking with Afghan Taliban. The founding leader of TTP was Baitullah Mehsud who was later killed in a US drone attack in 2009. Many journalists and political scientists consider the emergence of TTP a result of some historical developments in the region including the presence of the US-led coalition forces in Afghanistan, socio-economic backwardness, the US drone attacks in the tribal areas and Pakistan Military operation in FATA. From 2007 onward, TTP extended its terrorist activities in all parts of Pakistan killing thousands of innocent civilians and military personnel. The organization also started attacking military and security installations including Frontier Constabulary (FC) Training Center, Pakistan Naval Base, Karachi, Criminal Investigation Division (CID) building in KPK (Sidiqui, 2010).

Terrorism, Media and Tribal Areas of Pakistan

The Western border areas of Pakistan known as FATA have transformed into a war-zone since the US invasion of Afghanistan. 'Global War on Terrorism', as mentioned earlier badly affected Pakistan, and of course, the news correspondents of different news media organizations working in Pakistan are also affected. Many journalists, local as well as foreigners were lost their lives since 2002 (Aidan, 2002). Journalists, political scientists, researchers and war correspondents are agreed that war reporting, especially wars of 21st century driven by the most sophisticated war machines is a risky job where a war reporter has to confront with multi dimension challenges and threats including manifold interests of the warring parties and the news consumers (Allan, Stuart et al, 2004). This work describes the commonality existed in war reporting as physical danger, resourcefulness, maintaining objectivity, sense of national responsibility and to avoid information gate-

keeping imposed by the state and military. In a very complex war against terrorism, news reporters with least war reporting experience and facilities have to face unimaginable challenges and difficulties in their professional performance. Most of them have confronted with and face physical torcher, abduction, kidnapping, and death.

Hypothesis of the study

The following hypotheses were developed to ascertain the level of challenges and prospects of media in war-zones:

- H1: Journalists working in different tribal areas are facing different levels of life threats;
- H2: Life threats face by journalists is negatively related with the on-spot reporting;
- H3: Access to conflict areas is positively related with on-spot reporting;
- H4: A life threat faced by journalists is negatively related with objective reporting;
- H5: Access to conflict areas is positively related with objective reporting; and
- H6: Journalists are not much hopeful about future prospects of peace in tribal areas due to ineffective initiative by the government.

Theoretical Framework

This research study can be seen and analyzed under a cluster of theoretical framework. How news objectivity can be maintained in a conflict or war-like situation where warring parties have different interests and intend to make the public mind favorable to their objectives. It leads to keep the importance of propaganda and agenda-setting (media effect theory) which finally leads to ‘news framing processes. In this study Propaganda Techniques in the World Wars’ carefully defines propaganda. It refers to control of opinion using symbols, stories, rumors, reports and pictures.

The work under study is partially related to ‘Gate-Keeping’ concept of news flow. ‘Gate-Keeping and Information Control’, in a war situation, not only civil and military authorities play the role of information gate-keeping but within news organizations factors like national interests and patriotism play the role to select or to reject news information coming from the news reporters (McComb & Shah, 1972). Media coverage of war against terrorism enabled the masses in Pakistan to think and to understand the national issue and crises. Walter Lippman (1965) sees the mass media as primary source of information about public issues. Killing in Pakistan by TTP and other terrorist groups has been the gravest public issue and concern which significantly influence individuals and the public at large.

METHODOLOGY

This research study is related to both conceptual and practical issues of a complex and difficult subject, i.e., War against Terrorism in the Tribal Areas of Pakistan: A Study of

News Coverage and the Challenges Faced by the Working Journalists. Keeping the nature of the study, a logical process in form of literature review is made the primary source of research data, and survey method of data collection is adopted. How and to what extent the media coverage in war-zone expressed by the reporters and editors and what are the challenges and prospects they are facing analyzed by serving two different questionnaires to the population, i.e. the reporters and editors. Questionnaires are formed in two different types, close-ended and the open-ended.

Research Design

Research design includes the basic method of outlining of the work under study. In this research study relevant data is collected using three means of sources. These are: the news reporters working in the tribal areas of Pakistan; media editors; and research studies and literature already done in this area. The study also designed using statistical analysis to draw inferences. Precisely, research design for this study is framed as a blue print in order to collect maximum amount of information used in analysis. (Wimmer & Dominic, 1983).

DATA ANALYSIS

	N	M	SD
Bajuar Agency	12	2.25	1.545
Momand Agency	12	1.83	1.586
Khyber Agency	14	1.79	1.311
Orakzai Agency	13	1.62	.870
Kuram Agency	12	2.67	1.435
North Waziristan	17	1.88	1.111
South Waziristan	20	2.35	.813
Total	100	2.06	1.238

Out of 100 respondents 12 reporters working in Bajur Agency, 12 Momand Agency, 14 Khyber Agency, 13 Orakzai Agency, 12 Kuram Agency, 17 North Waziristan and 20 from South Waziristan.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
2 to less than 4 years	17	1.76	.831
4 to less than 6 years	22	1.55	.671
6 to less than 8 years	14	2.29	1.437
8 to less than 10 years	16	2.81	1.940
More than 10 years	31	2.10	1.012
Total	100	2.06	1.238

Data tabulation reveals that reporters with higher experience have higher mean of life threat. Group: 3 with 6 to less than 8 years' experience (N= 14, M= 2.29, SD= 1.437),

Group: 4 with 8 to less than 10 years of experience (N=16, M= 2.81, SD= 1.940) and Group: 5 with more than 10 years of experience (N= 31, M= 2.10, SD= 1.012) have higher mean of life threat compared to Group: 1 with 2 to less than 4 years of experience (N= 17, M= 1.76, SD= .831) and Group:2 with 4 to less than 6 years of experience (N= 22, M= 1.55, SD= .671).

	F	%	Cf%
Yes	21	42.0	42.0
No	29	58.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	

Data tabulation shows availability of financial support by the media organizations to their journalists in case of any mishap. Data in this respect indicates that media organizations of 42% reporters working in tribal agencies provide some kind of financial support to their reporters, while remaining organizations with 58%, reporters of tribal areas do not provide such kind of financial support.

DISCUSSION

Literature relevant to war reporting and data of this research study reveal that war reporting in any parts of the world has always been a challenging and very difficult job for a working journalist. War front includes a number of problems for a news reporter starting from access to the life threat. War on terrorism is an insurgency where insurgents are usually unknown as enemy. Hit, run and hide strategy is the most important technique which the insurgents use during their activities. War against terrorism in the tribal areas of Pakistan is almost the same nature of conflict where regular security forces have been launching attacks on the insurgents. Public at large intends to know the causes and motives behind these activities and actions taken by the security forces. National media have the responsibility to provide objective information in order to fulfill the public demand to know.

Data relevant to the issue and subsequent analysis reveal that life threat to reporters working in different tribal areas is the most challenging factor they have to face. Different statistical tests are used to measure the threat frequency both of the journalists working in the field and editors sitting into the organization office. Military, very often tries to restrict the information flow during conflicts for the sake of 'operational secrecy' while news reporters want together operational strategies and actions because they think that gathering objective information is their right and receiving information is the public 'right to know'. This struggle is not a new phenomenon but existed throughout the history and remained continue in every armed conflict of nay natures. This can also be seen in Crimea War

(1854), American Civil War (1861-1865), World War 1st (1914-1918), World War 2nd (1939-1945), Vietnam War (1954-1975), Iraq War (1990-2003) and Afghanistan War (2001), as reviewed in the literature.

Life threat is found as major obstacle in objective reporting. However, on the other hand, access of the reporter to conflict areas has strong relationship with their objective reporting. It indicates clearly that when reporters do not have access to the conflict areas they have to depend on other sources of information which do not fulfill the need of objectivity. In regard to the journalist's perception about the cause of terrorism and future prospects of peace in Pakistan, they agree that US invasion of Afghanistan is the major cause of terrorism in Pakistan. Importantly no difference was found in life threats index to reporters and editors. Both categories of journalists, whether working in offices or in the field face nearly similar life threats. But when differences to life threats were measured on the basis of experience of journalists, results reveal that the journalists with more experience face higher life threats. The financial support available to journalists in case of any mishap cannot be termed satisfactory, organizational incentives given to the reporters are discouraging, particularly for the reporters working in the War-Zone.

CONCLUSION

Review of literature, data collection, data analysis and personal interaction with news reporters covering war-zone clearly indicated that life threat to reporters as well as access to the war-zone areas have no direct relationship with their ability of on-spot reporting. The results of investigation did not support the second and third hypotheses of the study, which respectively stated that, "Life threats faced by journalists is negatively related with on-spot reporting" and "Access to conflict areas in tribal agencies is positively related with on-spot reporting". Reporters may have different sources for gathering news from these areas, as well as they can also use official security help for reaching the warring areas.

The results also suggest that life threat to reporters have no relationship with ability of reporters to report objectively from the war-zones, which did not supports the fourth hypothesis of this study. This pursuit of objectivity could be one of the reasons for killings of journalists in tribal areas of Pakistan. On the other hand, the stronger positive relationship between access of reporters to conflict areas and their ability to report objectively indicate that with no access to these areas, fact gathering can be hampered and journalists have to rely on secondary sources of news rather than getting firsthand account from the spot, which could affect their ability of objective reporting. These findings supported the fifth hypothesis of study.

Majority of the journalists considered the US invasion as major cause of terrorism in Pakistan. It seems in line with the historical evidence that the current spate of violence in tribal areas of Pakistan was started when the US forces pushed Taliban and their supporters from Afghanistan towards the border region of Pakistan in 2001. Though majority of the journalists were of the view that government and military in Pakistan are on the same page in war against terrorism, but disagreement can be observed among the perceptions of journalists in regard to the timing of very crucial military operation against militants in North Waziristan; operation Zarb-e-Azb.

Review of literature, data relevant to the issue and data analysis also opens some important areas for future investigation. War reporting and information carry special interest not only for general public but also taken very important for the warring parties. War against terrorism, according to the study, has been a unique experience for the reporters to cover. Reporters with no facilities on the one and constraints in various form from the warring parties on the other made it further difficult rather challenging for the journalists and reporters. The study also reveals that the warring parties are always intended and interested in news information that serves their purpose. To warring parties, news media are to be used as propaganda tools to achieve their desired goals. The study is left open many areas to investigate in future keeping various aspects of war coverage by the media and public perception of objective reporting.

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