

Op-Ed Coverage of TTP: A Comparative Analysis of Daily Jung and Dawn

Anam Hameed

International Islamic University, Islamabad

Dr. Zafar Iqbal

International Islamic University, Islamabad

Haseeb ur Rehman Warriach

Institute of Media Sciences, Islamabad

Author Note

1. Dr. Zafar Iqbal is Professor/ HoD of Media & Communication Department of International Islamic University, Islamabad Pakistan

Email: drzafar.iqbal@iiu.edu.pk.

2. Miss Anam Hameed has done her MS in mass communication from Department of Media and Communication Studies, International Islamic University, Islamabad.

Email: anumhameed@live.com

3. Haseeb ur Rehman Warriach is CEO of Institute of Media Sciences and PhD scholar at Department of Media and Communication Studies, International Islamic University, Islamabad.

Email: haseebwaraich79@gmail.com

Abstract

The study aims to analyze the portrayal of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan in leading Urdu and English dailies of Pakistan (Jang & Dawn). Through content analysis of the editorials, sub-editorials, columns, articles and letters to editor involving issues related to TTP, framing of coverage, and slant as being favorable, unfavorable and neutral were studied. Chi-Square test for data analysis was used for correct finding of results. The study after its completion provided a clear picture of the way Pakistani media portrays Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan and sets agenda for Pakistani society. The paper concludes that the image of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan is negative in media. However mixed slants and frames observed regarding TTP. The coverage of Jang & Dawn strongly criticized the role of TTP. It is observed that TTP has always been involved in violent activities. Both newspapers look Talibanization in Pakistan as a threat to the overall system of the state. And they do not see the issue of TTP particular to an area but in broadest level.

Key Words: Framing, Types of Frames, TTP, Comparative Analysis

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Introduction

Talibanization is an obscurantist ideology aiming at capturing power through violent means for reconstruction of State and society in the name of Islam. Violence and fear are major tactics to further this cause. The whole idea is wrapped in the Islamic concept of Jihad tailor made with the Pashtun and Arab tribal traditions. Madaris(Seminaries) by providing intellectual base and battleground fodder are at the core of movement though Muslim intelligentsia at large denounces such interpretation of Islam. The term Taliban is used in Pashto for the students of religious school or institution. It is pertinent to note that Taliban movement is controlled by followers of Deobandi sect if not limited to it. The Deobandi scholars have been vigilant in refuting deviant sects and erroneous thought (*Shirk and Bidd'a*). The Deobandi movement and particularly the Dar-ul-Uloom system was established to provide structure in the areas of education and politics for the Muslims of the subcontinent. Strict obedience to Hanafi fiqh was strengthened to create religious discipline and eliminate the evils in Muslim communities. Deobandi sect makes the majority of Pashtuns in Afghanistan, Fata and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. Talibs of Deobandi madras in the region are predominately rural and poor. Tribal traditions, vagaries of cold war and deprivation of worldly studies or religious discipline contribute in their strict and extreme interpretation of Islam and formed a peculiar world view. In the 80's these century old Islamic institutions were introduced to militarization in the wake of Afghan Jihad. Heavy funding from the gulf Arab states draws their version of Islam close to Wahabism. They had no political program at hand and relied on foreign fighters mostly Arabs from Al-Qaeda for intellectual input. Though they preached Shariah but there were no coherent writings on sharia from Taliban leaders. There were different groups of clerics dominating their respective areas without common set of objectives or political philosophy. They were

clueless what type of nation they want to bring in to existence by executing their specific Shariah. In the mid 90's, Sufi Muhammad started a violent movement in Malakand region to establish then and there justice system locally. His son in law Fazlullah famed Mullah Radio resumed it in post 9-11. He captured Swat in 2008 before taken to task in 2009 and he fled to Afghanistan. Currently he is the Amir of TTP.

According to government agencies more than 90 percent of Madaris are not directly involved in militancy. But there is no denying the fact even if Madaris were not linked to militancy directly; they helped provide an environment sympathetic to the Taliban mindset. People of other religions and even from other sects are portrayed as infidel and threat to the religion. This breeds intolerance. Brutal killing of Christian couple in Kasur is most recent example. Similarly mass executions of religious minorities had taken in many areas of the country in recent times.

Another manifestation of Talibanization in the country is sectarian violence. Groups involved in sectarian violence have direct links with the militants operating in the FATA. According to HRCP (Human rights commission of Pakistan) 687 people have been killed in more than 200 sectarian attacks in 2013 alone, a rise of 22 per cent on 2012, while 1,319 people were injured, a 46 percent rise on 2012. In big urban centers like Karachi and Lahore criminals linked with Taliban are involved in extortion and kidnapping for ransom to finance their war against the state. So far ten major military operations have been launched against Taliban. It includes Operation Al-Mizan in SWA (2002-2006), Operation Rah e Haq in Swat (2007), Operation Zalzala in SWA (2008), Operation Black Thunderstorm in Buner- Dir (2009), Operation Raah-e-Raast in Swat (2009), Operation SherDil in Bajaur (2008- 09), Operation Rah-e-Nijat in SWA (2009), Operation Koh-e- Safaid in Kurram (2011), Operation Sirat-e-Mustaqeem in Khyber (2014) and Operation Zarb-e-Azb (2014). Operations in NWA

and Khyber are underway. These operations has forced Taliban fled Afghanistan though ideology remains to be defeated.

Problem Statement

The purpose of the study is to analyze frames given to Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan in leading Urdu and English dailies of Pakistan (*Jang & Dawn*) and the extent of coverage by the selected newspapers during the selected timeline by assessing relevant contents of Editorial Page, sieved by purposive method of Sampling, through Content Analysis. Difference between extent of coverage and framing of the issue will also be measured between the selected newspapers by using Chi-square statistical test.

The objectives of the study are:

- 1- Find out the extent of coverage given to the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan during the selected timeline in *Jang* and *Dawn*.
- 2- To explore how the newspapers framed the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan.
- 3- To find out the difference in the extent of coverage and treatment given to TTP by the selected newspapers.
- 4- To investigate the frames and slants given on Op-Ed pages of the selected newspapers about the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan.

Literature Review

Pakistani society is undergoing a fear of terrorism since 2007. Terrorists have attacked political leaders, tribal leaders, the military and police, Shia's and schools. In many countries, clear majorities of Muslims reject violence in the name of Islam. How media frame the issue of Taliban in past and in present and how it would frame it in the future is important to understand. The news of Taliban has been covered worldwide by all media outlets. The Taliban image in Pakistani newspapers has been constructed negatively over the last few years (Malik & Iqbal, 2011). Most of the Op-Ed coverage of the major English and Urdu

newspapers portray negative and violent image of Taliban. The paper describes the editorial discourses of Dawn and The News from 1st February 2009 to 31st march 2009. The method used to investigate the discourses of TTP in both the newspapers was discourse analysis. According to the paper, The News presents the image of Taliban in national context and in more violent ways than Dawn.

Media cannot detach itself from the development going on across the country. The Taliban groups may have been outlawed in Pakistan but it could not stop them of getting coverage in media (Yusufzai, 2008). Print and electronic media continued giving ample space and on-air time to TTP. They carry out blasts and suicide attacks and quickly claim responsibility of such attacks in the media. TTP doesn't need any help to spread its message. Both print and electronic media blatantly promote the Taliban. The Article, "The difference between the Taliban and Al-Qaida" states that the Taliban and Al-Qaida are two different organizations having very different and distinct goals (Schott, 2012). The article examines how and why both groups started, their goals, operations and cultural, ethnic and geographical background. The policy of Afghan Taliban is just to limit their fight to Afghanistan's territory while Al-Qaida is intended for terrorist attacks in foreign countries especially against America and its allies.

Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan is also defined as a guerrilla insurgency by emphasizing on socio-political disturbances prevailing on Pakistani society and a sense of inequity prevailing in the areas where Taliban have a major influence (Siddique, 2010). The security situation in Pakistan is worst in connection with terrorist activities across the country including attacks on military installments, target killings and suicide bombings in major cities. Since the formation of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, the law and order situation in a developing country like Pakistan has always been alarming (Sheikh, 2009). TTP claims the responsibility of all such attacks, and validates its activities as being lawful. A few interviews

in 2010 with the vigorous Taliban commanders have stated that during 2004–2006, its spy masters had actively encouraged the revival of Taliban in the region and assisted their war struggle against the US-led NATO forces (Waldman, 2010).

Presently, Pakistan faces frightening infrastructural tribulations with grave threats to already an awkward law and order situation. In terms of security there has been always a perception that if not a failed state, Pakistan can become a failed state at any time (Panwar, 2010). With the TTP uprising in the country, a faction of them, the Punjabi Taliban prominently appeared on media screens after 2008-2009 terrorist attacks in the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi, and Lahore, the capital of Punjab province. Tribal belt of Pakistan has been a sanctuary for most of the local and foreign terrorists and their activities across the Durand Line.

According to various studies, Pakistan is the most dangerous country in the world. But during last one decade, Pakistan has also been criticized for accommodating terrorists including Al-Qaida chief Osama Bin Laden who was killed by the US Special Forces sting operation in Abbottabad near Pakistan Military Academy. Pakistan's then President Gen. (R.) Pervez Musharraf not only supported and joined hands with U.S and NATO forces in their so-called War on Terror in Afghanistan against Taliban and Al-Qaeda, but also started to launch military operations against terrorists in FATA. He was not limited to it and also conducted an operation against Lal Masjid in Islamabad and Jamia Hafsa, a religious-education imparting school of girls adjacent to Lal Masjid, perceived to be as supportive of the terrorists. After the Lal Masjid Operation, the Pakistani Taliban appeared to be as more powerful force that challenged the writ of state. It is necessary to comprehend the connection flanked by religion, confrontation, lawlessness across the country and the political and social actions and reaction in the society during that era.

The study is based on the framing theory of mass communication. After 9/11, the media reported extensively about extremism, fundamentalism and terrorism. This changed the opinion of people regarding different Jihadi movements. This also resulted in defamation of Islam. Goffman (1986) was the first to define the framing theory. According to him people understand what is going on around them through their primary framework. This framework influences the choices people make about how to process that information. Media make and unmake the events. Mass communication are mobile spotlights, not passive mirrors of the society, perception is the instrument of their action. Any news story assumes a certain frame and rejects material that is contradictory (Gitlin, 1980). In communication there can be positive or negative Framing. It depends on how the information is presented. Frame building refers to mechanisms that deal with message building and not with media effects. According to (Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes, & Sasson, 1992), media discourse is part of a procedure by which people build meaning, and public views are part of the process through which reporters construct and crystallize meaning in individuals discourse.

Types of Frames

There are various types of media frames which journalists employ in coverage of any issue. Episodic frame explains an issue by presenting specific example or report (e.g. poverty by presenting a story on the plight of a particular poor child). On the other hand, Thematic frame presents an issue in broader context; the issues which affect the whole society context (e.g., covering illiteracy by reporting on the latest illiteracy figure and offering commentary by educationists or public officials on the impact of illiteracy on society). These are the ways of telling the readers about the issue and make them understandable. Gamson et al. (1992) defines such frames as a lens by which people receive and see the images of the surrounding world.

Frame Themes

TTP as Extremist

Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan is perceived as Islamic extremists. Because they consider Sharia (Islamic law) to be the only truly legal form of governance and refuse democracy and human rights values.

TTP as Terrorists

Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan is portrayed as terrorists because TTP is a major threat to Pakistan's national security and its territorial integrity. They are responsible for the suicide attacks in the country, killing people and spreading anarchy in the country.

TTP as Friends

TTP have been helpful in accommodating and furthering the cause of Afghan Taliban by providing sanctuaries and foot soldiers for the war against anti-Pakistan elements in Afghanistan. Some countries of the regions have been alleging Pakistan for using non state actors as foreign policy tools.

TTP as Global Threat

Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan considers themselves as Jihadists without honoring the territorial integrity of the nation states. They have pan Islamic agenda. They have been harboring jihadists from across the globe. Jihadists from China, Central Asia, Europe, sub-Saharan, Middle East and as far as America are attracted to the regions under their control to further the global cause of Al-Qaida.

TTP as Sectarian

Anti-Shia militants provide an organized network to TTP across Pakistan. Sunni extremist militant groups linked to Taliban and Al-Qaeda terrorist groups are involved in attacks on Shia communities. TTP attack Shia scholars, Pilgrims, Imam bargaha's and processions of Shias.

TTP as Anti-State

TTP violates state sovereignty and security. They openly challenge the writ of state. They attack on defense institutions and installations of the state. TTP actually want to take over Pakistan by interfering in the internal affairs of the government. TTP threaten government for its alleged support to US in the region.

Conceptualization of Frames

TTP as extremist

Extremist is a person who holds highest level of immorality and extreme political, religious and social views especially one who supports immoral, illegal, unconstitutional and violent actions.

TTP as terrorist

An individual who use aggressive action in order to attain political aims by forcing government to take action are called terrorists.

TTP as global threat

The term has been defined as a warning by a person to cause pain, damage, injury or other unsympathetic action on someone in revenge for something done or not done.

TTP as friends

A person with whom one has a bond of mutual affection, a person someone knows well and like.

TTP as sectarian

Sectarian refers to sect. People who rigidly follow the doctrine of a sect or other group are known as sectarian.

TTP as anti-state

A person opposed to a particular policy, activity or idea.

Operationalization of Frames

TTP as extremist

In this study the researcher used the frame 'extremist' and operationalize it as TTP carry out suicide attacks and blasts and kill innocent people to implement their own ideology based on Shariah in Pakistani society.

TTP as terrorists

The researcher defines the frame 'TTP as terrorist' in the way that TTP is spreading anarchy in the country by rejecting peace talks with the government. They are responsible for all the suicide attacks and killing of innocent people and military personnel.

TTP as global threat

Taliban consider themselves as Jihadists. They provide sanctuaries to other militants outside Pakistan to achieve their purpose globally.

TTP as friends

Pakistan's establishment has always been interested in establishing Pakistan's strategic depth in Afghanistan. Taliban supported Pakistan to achieve this task by providing sanctuaries to Afghan Taliban and in furthering the cause of war against anti-Pakistan elements.

TTP as sectarian

TTP specifically target Shia community of Pakistan because they are extreme believers of Deo- bandi&Wahabi ideology. They also claim responsibility of such attacks on shias.

The study attempts to test the following hypotheses:

H1: The slant of *Dawn* is more favorable towards Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan than the *Jang*.

H2: The slant of *Jang* is more unfavorable towards Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan than the *Dawn*.

H3. There are more foe frames in the coverage of *Jang* on the issue of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan than friend frames.

H4. The overall coverage given to TTP is light in *Dawn* than in *Jang*.

Methodology

Content analysis is used as research method to examine coverage of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan in the two selected newspapers; *Jang* and *Dawn* from Sep 02 to Dec 2013. Media content analysis is a reputed research methodology. Kerlinger (2000) defines Content analysis as a systematic method of studying and analyzing any communication in objective, systematic and quantitative manner for the purpose to measure variables (Entman, 2007). Content analysis has been described as, “the primary message centered methodology” (Neuendorf, 2002). Content analysis is the analysis of content produced by the media including transcripts and the editorial and advertising content of newspapers and magazines.

Jang

The Daily Jang was founded in 1939. It is the oldest Urdu language newspaper of Pakistan. The daily Jang has a circulation of over 800,000 copies per day. Current Group Chief of Daily Jang is Mir Shakil-ur-Rahman. Daily Jang is considered a radical, open and a bit progressive newspaper. Daily Jang has the distinction to be teamed by the most experienced journalists of the country. The head office of Jang is located in Karachi with Bureaus in all other stations of Pakistan.

Dawn

Dawn newspaper was founded by Muhammad Ali Jinnah on 26th October 1941 as being the mouthpiece of Muslim league. Now it is extensively read English language newspaper, mostly read by elites and diplomatic circles due to English language. It is published under the flagship of Dawn group of newspapers. Dawn has neutral, moderate and

suggestive editorial policy. The Dawn is read by the highly educated class and policy makers. Dawn has been at the forefront of many events that constitute Pakistan's history.

Testing of Hypothesis

H1: The slant of *Dawn* is more favorable towards Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan than the *Jang*.

In the two selected newspapers overall 463 stories were found from the editorial pages including editorial, sub-editorial, columns, articles and letter to editor. *Dawn* led in the coverage of TTP by publishing 242(52.3%) stories, followed by 221(47.7%) stories by *Jang*. Chi-square statistics were used to test the hypothesis in question. The calculated value of chi-square has been found to be $\chi^2=3.950$ at $\alpha=0.05$. The calculated value is lower than the critical value of χ^2 which is 5.991 at $df=2$. This indicates that our collected data do not support our hypothesis. Hence, hypothesis stands disapproved.

H2: The slant of *Jang* is more unfavorable towards Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan than the *Dawn*.

Most of the stories of the study carried unfavorable slant towards Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan. Out of 463 stories 386(83.4%) stories were unfavorable towards the issue of TTP whereas 15(3.2%) stories appeared favorable to TTP and 62(13.4%) stories were neutral. The difference between the coverage of both newspapers i.e.; *Jang* & *Dawn* is insignificant. The calculated value of chi-square is $\chi^2=3.950$ at $\alpha=0.05$. The calculated value is lower than the critical value of χ^2 which is 5.991 at $df=2$. Our tabulation indicates that both the newspapers have somehow same stance towards TTP. In other words, there is visibly some degree of difference in the measured instances of slant of the two newspapers, but their percentages as per the proportion of the data collected have not been found to be at difference.

H3: There are more foe frames in the coverage of *Jang* on the issue of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan than friend frames.

The calculated value of χ^2 is lower than the critical value of χ^2 which is 5.991 at $df=2$. Overall 463 stories were studied, out of which 160 foe frames (TTP as terrorist) given to Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan in both newspapers than friend frames (TTP as friend) which is given only in 25 stories. Thus the hypothesis 3 is supported.

H4. The overall coverage given to TTP is light in *Dawn* than in *Jang*.

The overall coverage of TTP in English and Urdu dailies of Pakistan (*Jang* and *Dawn*) shows that English newspaper i.e.; *Dawn* exaggerated the image of TTP more than Urdu daily i.e.; *Jang*. Out of 242(52.3%) stories on TTP in *Dawn* during the selected timeline (Sep 02 to Dec 2013) 82 stories frames 'TTP as terrorists'. *Jang* contains 221(47.7%) stories on TTP. Out of which 78 stories frames 'TTP as terrorists'. Total 160(34.6) stories frame TTP as terrorist. Out of all stories 386(33.37%) stories from both newspapers consider TTP as unfavorable in their coverage. In the overall publication of both newspapers, out of 463 publications, 160 stories frame 'TTP as terrorist', 82 stories which frame 'TTP as terrorist' appears on *Dawn* while 78 stories appear in *Jang*. According to the calculated value of chi-square which is $\chi^2=3.950$ at $\alpha=0.05$ and is lower than the critical value of χ^2 which is 5.991 at $df=2$. The ratio of TTP stories in *Dawn* was higher than *Jang*. *Dawn* gave more unfavorable slant to TTP stories than *Jang*. This shows that our collected data did not support our hypothesis.

There are many dominant metaphors appeared in the Op-Ed coverage of both newspapers i.e. *Jang* and *Dawn*. These metaphors include religion metaphors, legal metaphors, human metaphors and other metaphors used for Taliban as global and security threat. It seems that all the dominant metaphors used by both newspapers in their Op-Ed coverage are negative towards Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan. The metaphorical statements used for Taliban indicates that media see TTP as a threat to the whole world and humanity.

Metaphors like ‘jihadi militants’, ‘Islam dushman anasir’, ‘saffaq qatil’, ‘perpetrators of violence’, ‘enemies of peace’, and ‘killers’ etc. Fall in the category of religious metaphors. Islam disallows any act of terrorism in the name of religion. The metaphorical statements like ‘offenders’, ‘extortionists’, ‘enemy of the state’, ‘jangjoo group’, ‘bandooq bardar Taliban’, ‘qaladam tanzeemain’ comes in the category of legal metaphors. The in-depth meanings of all the above mentioned metaphors show that they are used to define illegal acts. According to the constitution of Pakistan, any organization who works as a military organization is illegal. The labels or metaphors such as, ‘target killers’, ‘terrorists’, ‘insurgents’, ‘militants’, ‘rebellious terrorists’, ‘enemy of the state’ etc. in *Dawn* and ‘intiha pasand’, ‘shidat pasand’, ‘shar pasand’, ‘Pakistan kay dushman’ etc. in *Jang*, shows Taliban activities as a global threat because the impact of such incidents is globally.

Editorials of both newspapers also used some other metaphors with negative connotations for Taliban and which fall under the category of metaphors which have human tendency. This include metaphors like: ‘aatishmizaj Taliban’, ‘wehshi Taliban’, ‘saffaqqatil’, ‘bayhiss dehshatgard’, etc. and ‘cruel killers of humanity’, ‘enemies of humanity’, ‘killers’, ‘çriminals’ etc.

Discussion and Conclusion

The study discussed the coverage of the two leading newspapers (*Jang* & *Dawn*) on the issue of TTP from Sep 02 to Dec 2013 (the most important time when the activities of TTP in Pakistan were on the rise) by using framing theory of media.

In the overall coverage, TTP received more unfavorable slant and framed more as terrorists than friends. *Dawn* published more unfavorable stories to TTP as compared to *Jang*. Both the newspapers have not only been more unfavorable but also they gave more coverage to the issue of TTP on Op-Ed pages during the selected timeline. It is also worth mentioning that the TTP issue was the most frequent topic appeared in the newspapers which

conforms to the previous study of (Yusufzai, 2008) who concluded that the Media cannot keep itself away from the ongoing developments and events across the country. Nothing could stop Taliban of getting coverage in media. Print and electronic media continued giving ample space and on-air time to TTP. Taliban quickly claim responsibility of their activities by appearing or providing statements on media.

In current study, we see the coverage of Taliban in both newspapers as almost same. There is no big difference between them. But somehow *Dawn* gave more coverage to the issue than *Jang*. The portrayal of TTP issue in *Jang* is more Episodic while *Dawn* seems more Thematic towards TTP issue. The unfavorable slant about Taliban in the newspapers was more as Taliban have brought many areas under their control over the last few years by violating the writ of the state. Thus the study conforms to other studies undertaken by various researchers using the same theoretical model like (Malik & Iqbal, 2011) who concluded in her study that Pakistani media has been given negative coverage to Taliban over last few years.

According to the scholars most of the Op-Ed pages of leading English and Urdu newspapers construct negative image of Taliban. Thus the previous study supports the current study. As far as type of piece is concerned, the total number of articles and letters to editor were higher in the coverage than editorials/sub-editorials and columns. The English highlighted the issue more than the Urdu press.

In the present study, the most frequently appeared frame was 'TTP as terrorist'. Other five frames used to analyze the stories were 'TTP as extremist', 'TTP as friend', 'TTP as global threat', 'TTP as anti-state' and 'TTP as Sectarian'. The friend frame contained stories in which Taliban appeared as friendly to Pakistani state. But out of 463 stories in both newspapers, only 25 stories contained friend frame like (Siddique, 2010) used the term 'guerrilla warfare' to define Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan by emphasizing on socio-political

disturbances prevailing on Pakistani society and a sense of inequity prevailing in the areas where Taliban have a major influence. Not surprisingly Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan viewed as unfavorable. Both newspapers portrayed more unfavorable stories on TTP.

The analysis of the current study concluded 'TTP as terrorists' as claimed by (Sheikh, 2009) in their research that TTP activities include attacks on military installments, target killings and suicide bombings in major cities. The researcher also concluded in his study that the security situation in the country has always been alarming since the formation of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan. It can be concluded at the end that the image of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan is negative in media. However mixed slants and frames observed regarding TTP. The coverage of *Jang & Dawn* strongly criticized the role of TTP. It is observed that TTP has always been involved in violent activities. Both newspapers look Talibanization in Pakistan as a threat to the overall system of the state. And they do not see the issue of TTP particular to an area but in broadest level.

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