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Article:	Construction of Balochistan Province in Pakistani Newspapers: A Peace Journalism Perspective
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ABSTRACT

The biggest of all Pakistani provinces, Balochistan comprises 44% of the entire landmass of the country. The geo-strategic vitality of the province manifests in its longest coastal belts, active borders with Afghanistan and China and Persia, and its location at the neck of Central Asia. Such features make Balochistan, a treasure in the eyes of national and international actors. Abundant in natural resources, the province unfortunately has been facing chronic unrest for decades. The succeeding federal governments have taken multiple steps to identify and resolve the causes of unrest in Balochistan through various socio-economic and political measures plus the deployments of law forces. But the instability persists and the conflict rises to new heights. This study explores the dimensions of unrest through the coverage of national news media by employing Critical discourse analysis with the essence of peace journalism theory. Results show that the province of Balochistan is marginalized by the media and construction of Balochistan, is e.g., out of reach, dangerous place, stop developing Balochistan, in the national press.

Keywords: CDA, PJ theory, National Pakistani press, the province Balochistan, General Pervez Musharraf regime

INTRODUCTION

The media is thought to be a window through which outside world is observed. Their unstopped coverage, everywhere presence and access to everybody have shrunk the world into a global village. Living in seclusion and without interaction is no longer having been a tenable idea because of the characteristics of media (Tarique, 2017). Moreover, the implosion of modern media technology has affected people, cultures, beliefs, faiths, and productivity. Researchers believe that “separate political and financial structures unintentionally come into expanding contact with each other” (Castells, 2000; Ellul, 1980; Falk, 1999). But what do all such expansions, and contacts mean for the villagers of the global village? The result is however unfortunately unsuitable! That the village, which is usually considered everybody’s place of meeting, rights, happiness and enjoyment has lost such characteristics due to the mess of the news of the global village (Tehrani, 2002).

Generally, media uphold public awareness regarding governments’ role to deal public and inform both at a societal level, for the best of public affairs (Hjarvard, 2008). As in today’s circumstances “no country, ethnic gathering, a class, or a general public can forgo ‘informative interaction’”, and communication breakdown augments disagreement, dispute, and rivalry (Anastasiou 2007, p. 63). With such defining moments, where media were found to be the center stage between ‘villagers’ of the global village, they became the party in sort of affairs of states, particularly in the conflict(s) by giving inhuman and sordid portrayal. Like in the division of the world in WWI and WWII media had been seen as propagandist (Bohling, n.d). Media were additionally used as another weapon of war, to commit crimes, besides the real war front. Rather than presenting data and information, news organizations administered data for disinformation, which was usually seen by the powerful sides, especially in the WWII period (Shrivastava, 2003). The present negative connotation of the word ‘propaganda’ emerged in that period which was a positive word before that (ibid).

Why do media entail such propaganda which is never their cause? And how has hate propaganda been ingrained in conflicts? Why do media attract violence, wars even if it has no attraction for lives and human beings? Since then and with the passion to resolve conflict(s), scholars of media laws and reforms have been proposing the media houses to fix their criminal competition by the propagandist-journalists.

Prioritizing the education and training of journalists

Peace Journalism is a passion! It advocates for journalists as well as advocates journalists. PJ aims at the resolution of conflict to its feasible conclusion (Benn, 2015; Dahlgren, 2016; Hackett 2017; and others), and for journalists to intervene the conflict proactively (Fawcett 2002, p. 213), as well as a third-party intervention (Fisher 1997). In the vast Pakistani journalism landscape, the presence of journalism educational institutions, national, regional and local media outlets, journalists’ associations and existence of their clubs at arm’s length are found everywhere, and yet the majority of news reports of the Balochistan conflict are gone violent, due to the reason that journalism is not followed in its spirits (Shaheen & Tarique, 2022a; Tarique, 2017; Tarique & Shaheen 2021a; Tarique & Shaheen 2017; Ullah 2018). The news reports are skewed due to the journalists’ lack of composite thinking and un-tended

learning of their beats reporting knowledge. By declaring the entire province (which is more than 44 % of Pakistan) as a fighting arena, instead of mediating, they have become the spokesmen of violence (see the analysis section below). Reports reveal that, as a result of such pattern of their reporting, nearly all politico-religious or racial conflicts augment the confrontations among parties for which they have gone unresolved (Musa 2011; Scharrer & Ramasubramanian, 2015; Wolsfeld, 1997; and others).

In the Balochistan conflict, this research restricts the construction of the province as a source of unrest. As has been seen that the journalists exceedingly raise an insensible voice about the province as dangerous for living than other provinces (Tarique 2017). By doing this, the newsmen not only put pressure on directly involved authorities but also misses the opportunity to resolve it (ibid, 2017). By giving such a marginalized portrayal of Balochistan rather than introducing it to people of other parts of Pakistan for a better place to live, they commit a journalistic crime rather than giving a service that the potential of PJ is striving for. Giving such a portrayal creates dread in the minds of the people living in the province as well as the people of the rest of the country (ibid 2017). According to the author that by giving reports of the conflict zone the journalists uphold the War Journalism (WJ) propaganda features enunciated by the PJ theory, apparently due to ignorance of journalism education (ibid 2017).

Mass communication science is a complex system of understanding. For reporting conflicts, PJ educates journalists to adopt rules and regulations. Reporting conflicts now is not the job of ignorant pressmen, who merely report events objectively. It is also not the job of the so-called mediemen who hold degrees other than mass communication sciences. In a complex system of media reports, it is claimed that media discourses represent distinct political acts (Petrović, 2015), hence lack a conformed society. Conflicts are not generated overnight. They have their complex histories. In conflicts, media reports (discourses) influence to reformulate “a community’s past and present, in a story they told about themselves to themselves and others” (Landsman, 1987, p.10). Different regions are attached with emotions (Fahmy & Neumann 2011, p. 19; Lichtenstein & Eilders 2019). Whereas, the reality is influenced by the journalists between information, misinformation and disinformation trichotomy.

In peace-war reporting, the journalists’ performance is also compromised. The real picture misses the inclination of the minds of the journalists (Neumann & Fahmy 2016), their passion to become the 3rd party in the conflict without thinking that they should be the peace facilitators in the conflict (Peleg 2006, p. 15), and their passion to see the conflict as a problem without its resolution (Pauly 2009, p. 17). Boskin claimed that “stereotyping beyond rational thinking” (1980, p. 141) and “irrationally pursuing the theories of neo barbarism that distant parts are irrationally populated”, without knowing much about that part of the land (Bau 2010, p. 23), are overwhelming features of theorizing today’s journalism (Tarique, 2017b). And such agendas “promote the division of responsible reporting” (Kamalipour 2010, p. 93), and form an unnatural, unworldly condition.

New York University professor Jay Rosen had assessed the same situation as:

“Is airing conflict a commendable mission, useful for its purpose? Unquestionably the conflict of interests, identities, and gatherings is a piece of an uproarious open square. However, covering clash doesn't let you know what your reporting ought to fulfil. Taking note of the persevering objections from newspaper readers around an abundance of ‘shocking news’ & partiality in the reported segments, news content selectors and correspondents’ question regarding the ‘deformed representation of life’ which the newspaper portrays: conflict is news since news is concerned with clash” (ibid., p. 146).

The research paper here endeavours an in-depth analysis of news reports during the Musharraf regime by taking mainstream national English (*Dawn & The Nation*) and Urdu (*Jang & Express*) dailies. For this purpose, a variety of genres among the selected newspapers are taken, i.e., a lead story, an editorial, an editorial note, and a front-page news story. To investigate the construction of the province of Balochistan as a restive place, the period of the Musharraf regime (1999 to 2008) has been selected for the reason that a major insurgency was fought during the regime. Since the unrest affected the province of Balochistan, content from newspapers about the unrest is selected. The research purposes to observe the peace and violence discourses given by the PJ paradigm, the qualitative framework of CDA by “Fairclough’s (1995) critical approach and van Dijk’s (1988a) socio-cognitive approach” are applied (Tarique, 2017b). PJ can direct and “resolve violent conflict to peaceful settlements” because of its roots in “conflict resolution” theory and other multi-faceted techniques for dealing with violent situations through peace journalism (ibid). Fairclough’s critical approach to CDA describes “a form of social practice” and viewed it as an approach of taking action (2001a). For him, spoken and written expressions constitute the performance of speech acts (ibid). Speech acts, for him mean; asking for, asserting to, warning against etc. For Fairclough, discourses study language as integral part of society and there is a necessary dialectic association, where language is a social phenomenon to further produce and reproduce texts (written, verbal, oral) through interpretation (2001a). In the same vein, like Fairclough’s critical approach, van Dijk’s socio-cognitive approach connects the “micro-structure of language to the macrostructure of society” (Kintsch & van Dijk, 1978).

PJ theory and CDA

A vast set of theories are available for dealing in conflicts i.e., mass com theory (Hanitzsch, 2004), conflict theory (Richmond 2010), theory of violence (Scheff, 2011), social system theory (Fuchs, et al., 2014), normative theory (İrvan, 2006) and others. With the passion that the portrayal of a certain place, a person or a group can be peaceful, PJ has given the option to journalists to apply for their peaceful solution. Most outspoken critics of PJ even couldn’t ignore such passion for conflict reporting for their peaceful measures (Benn, 2015; Hanitzsch, 2004; Kempf, 2003 and others). Whereas “CDA claims that discourse dependably includes power and ideologies, and intends to investigate regularly murky connections among, texts, events and discursive practices” (Tarique, 2017b, p. 40). The CDA researchers express the socio-political position of the text generated by the journalists and “CDA sees itself not as a

dispassionate and objective social science, but as engaged and committed; it is a form of intervention in social practice and social relationships” (Fairclough & Wodak 1997, p. 258). Bhatia & Bremenr, assert that “CDA successfully analyzes social structures and relations and investigates them in a manner that the examination highlights the use of power and domination to represent oppressive actions in unequal social settings” (2014, p. 9). It is said that discourses bring opportunity, optimism, and hope for peace (Mandelziz, 2007). It is also said that cultural differences ensue conflicts (Shinar 2003, p. 7). Baker et al., (2008), highlighted that CDA is “a way of analysing from a critical perspective which frequently centres on hypothetical ideas, like power, ideology and domination” (p. 273).

Analysis of Stories

Title: 7 missiles hit Balochistan (The Nation; August 16, 2000, News Item, FP, Correspondent, Lead Story)

Is it possible that ‘7 missiles would hit the entire province of Balochistan’ which is 44% of Pakistan? It is not only “impossible” but also a journalistic failure by missing the opportunity to probe the real matter of their facts of “*missiles hit*”. Giving undue attention to the minds of the investigators that the **entire province is the territory of terrorists and necessarily be treated as terrorists**. Also, the newsman “*confirmed*” through reporting “*Knowledgeable sources*” shows that the journalist does not rely simply on the ‘sources’ of confirmation of news but a step forward by stressing of his confirmation of news through ‘reliable sources’ which has ‘no source’. Halliday (1985) described ‘**intonation**’ as the nucleus of the story. van Dijk & Kinstch (1983) stated that “discourses may use intonation and stress to underline important or prominent concepts” (p. 202). To its “**homogeneity**”, the title ‘7 missiles hit Balochistan’ shows that missiles target everywhere in the entire province, which is not possible. **Synonymisation** has also been used to make the province of Balochistan parallel with neighboring war-torn Afghanistan- protected by the US led forces. It authenticates the belief that the province **must also be surrounded and protected by such forces**. In such type of reporting, the journalist also put an extra burden on the shoulders of Pakistani military forces to unnecessarily prepare themselves to use their force against the province- the part of Pakistan. “*Some people took it as a missile attack against Afghanistan*”. In the same news item, the content as “*an air attack by the US on Afghanistan*” the “**synonymisation** of such attacks to the attacks by the US on the terrorists that the US should come to handle the acute situation and merely the national law enforcers cannot alone handle the situation” (Tarique, 2017b, p.139). Although the news entails a **vehement violence-oriented approach**, it is still ambiguous. Like, even if the knowledgeable resources have confirmed the news. The news describes “*However the sources said that no report about the casualties was so far received*”.

So, it has been overall depicted in the news story, the **presupposition** that if ‘the US bombs Afghanistan, it should bomb the neighboring Pakistani province too.’ In the mind of the newsman that Balochistan should also be considered a threat to the peace and progress of Pakistan. Even if the rocket attacks have not caused any casualty and considerable damage, the news has been picked as a lead story by the publisher which necessitates the direction to a foreign power- the US, that how much important it is to attack Balochistan to ‘purify the land

from the Balochs' sins.' For this, not only by 'Us' to save the ammunition of the country forces but by the US carpet bombing as Balochistan is a 'bad viruses on the surface of the planet.

Title: Unrest in Balochistan (The Nation; February 7, 2006, Editorial Note)

The effects of **immediacy** are found here. In the **opening lines** of the editorial, it has been emphasized that even if the military operation has been decided but not needed. "*The security forces continue to persist in armed action in Balochistan, the situation has taken a turn for the worse*" shows that somehow it is emphasized that the Balochistan operation will be considered further unrest in the province and the security forces should not persist on the military operation rather taking another option to think over it. But **immediately, the lines afterwards blatantly blamed** 'the province Balochistan' responsible for the situation, and have sidelined the effects of the opening lines. The lines have made a stance by saying "*Rocket attacks and bomb blasts causing deaths and disturbance of life have become a daily feature and as the two trains derailments of last week showed, acts of sabotage are ominously beginning to encroach on the rest of the country*". Here, the **presupposition** that the complete control over 'the province of Balochistan' by the security forces is necessary otherwise the situation would become '**beyond the usual limit**' and it would be '**unprecedented**' to control otherwise. Again, the journalist has mistaken put an extra burden on the Pakistani military forces. Next to these first two lines, the remaining fifteen lines of the whole paragraph narrated the situation '*all burning Balochistan due to their acts*', except a single and the last line. The line has said as "*Both sides must show restraint and the points of contention are thrashed out through peaceful means*". The last paragraph with very few lines, however, depicted "*the reconciliatory parliamentary committee's recommendation*" should be implemented in a true sense to prevail peace in the province.

Title: Restive Balochistan (Dawn; December 16, 2005, Editorial)

The **attack on four missiles** did not result in any damage, but it drew press attention due to the reason that it happened during President Musharraf's few-hour visit to one of Balochistan's small villages (Tarique, 2017b). comes under **violence opening** with the **Presupposition** that 'they' want undue attention even if the province of Balochistan depicts calm with nothing to do with the conflict. The **Argumentation+ Relevance** is found in the lines "*The incident follows several other acts of terrorism in Balochistan and outside including the car-bombing close to the PPL offices in Karachi on September 22*". **Local Coherence+ Semantic moves** have been found as "Two phenomena are seemed [sic] to be running parallel: some mega projects are underway in Balochistan; at the same time Balochistan restlessness seems to be increasing". The semantic moves are also found in the editorial item where 'apparent empathy' one can see "even though the situation is not at all as grim as it was in February this year- when there was an eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation between the security forces and the militants in the Sui area, where the situation is far from politically normal". Another of the lines say "*they reject Kalabagh dam even though Balochistan is marginally affected*". The presupposition that their opinion on any the public issues is not important and it is only the right of 'Us' to decide, and that the progress of the country is synonymous to get rid of Baloch Sardars. Also, the presupposition that even the mega projects cannot make peace with 'them' and the government should not pay heed to the

development of the province through these projects and only appropriate for ‘them’ to let ‘them’ learn a lesson through barrels of guns.

Title: *Strike marks Bugti’s death anniversary (Dawn; August 27, 2007, News item, FrontPage, Sub Lead Story)*

On the same page, another news article illustrates nearly the same situation in and in the vicinity of the lead story. The photograph shows the artillery gun without the law enforcement personnel shows that ‘do not forget that we are around with arm and ammunition’ **Lexical Choices** are given as “A complete strike was observed ... at least eight people were injured in a clash with police ... government vehicles were pelted with stones ... ‘law enforcement agencies’ arrest people [*they are criminals*] ... police ordered the closure of all shops for security reasons ... activists of nationalists and students organisations [*they are security risk*] blocked national highways ... strike call was ignored in many areas [*they are useless*]”. Here all negative acts by ‘them’ have been brought forth. Here, the presupposition is that law enforcement agencies are the real survival of the province of Balochistan.

Title: *Balochistan our mulki halaat par amriki byan khush aind hai: Akbar Bugti [the US statement on the situation of the country and the province Balochistan is welcoming: Akbar Bugti] (Jang; April 8, 2006, FP News, LH)*

In the backdrop of the story mentioned here that Nawab Akbar Bugti was the person- the main player who fought insurgency during President Musharraf regime] **Sub Title (1):** *Amrica ne BLA ko dehshat gardo ki fehrist se nikal kar haqeqat pasandi ka muzahira kia [the US gives good gestures to declare BLA out from the list of terrorist organizations]*

As Cotter (2010), “the connotation within and behind our interactions, used strategically or not, that allow us to affiliate with, orient to, and establish social meaning and group membership” (p. 256). As the province Balochistan has a strong saradri system, it is **presupposed** that the news item is connected with the local system of Balochistan with insurgency. The Baloch sardars are considered the guardians- the clans head, the news item has placed **the entire local administrative system** equivalent to the sardari system of Balochistan province causes **the reason of conflict**.

Title: *“Vazeer e Azam ki kharee kharee batain [The Prime Minister (of Pakistan) speaks straightforward]” “unhon ne lagee liptee rakhay bghair ... Balochistan mein apnay agenda ka izhaar kia ... [Without hiding anything, ... He was talking his government’s agenda on Balochistan issue]” (Express, Jan 15, 2006, Editorial).*

Lexical Choices, Local Coherence vs. General Coherence, and Semantic Moves are frequently found in the title. “*lagee liptee rakhay bghair [He was so straightforward in his address]*”. It also comes under the **local coherence versus general coherence** where the editorial moves from the most positive things by ‘US’ that overall editorial gives the meaning of that very semantic move. “*Iqtsadiat qaumi zindagi ka aik aisa pehlu hai jiske asraat der baad samany atay hein aur der tak qaim bhi rehtay hain [the consequences of the economic progress is gradual and fruitful for longer]*” (Express, Jan 15, 2006, Editorial). With the supposition that whatsoever ‘we’ would take time, it is not a problem (in fact, everybody knows that the late-done means half-done and consequently, a waste in resources). But as ‘such a late

done projects' is 'our duty' so it can't be questioned and 'We' shouldn't be made responsible for the conflict. It is also **presupposed** that 'the time is not a thing to think in the works in progresses. It is 'Our' free will to do whatsoever 'We' want to do. With the **presupposition** that 'the people should not take care of the daily matters of the government works of common utility and it is not their/ the Balochistan inhabitants/ locals' job to think' as 'Us, Pakistanis as in-group' whereas 'they, Balochs are considered as out-group'. It is also a common phenomenon in developing countries especially that of the present government always involves in the blame game of the previous government without take care of the public utilities. Here in the editorial line, it has been cleared that 'people should relax and don't bother the follies of the government because it's not 'Their' job to think over'. Here the **presupposition** is that the province lacks progress and it's again due to the province Balochistan.

Conclusion

News media shape public perception and this study discovered that the selected press made implicit and presupposed assumptions about the province Balochistan. Hyperboles are used to emphasise the current situation. Even when there were no casualties, the news was prominently displayed. Balochistan was negatively painted with biased discourses. It was portrayed as a violent and trouble-making region. Because of the gloomy and pessimistic tenor of the discourses, even a little occurrence was blamed on the entire providence. Semantic Moves were frequently employed to create the impression of "others" such as referring to other Pakistani provinces as "Us" and Balochistan as "them/others". Lexical choices were crucial in making discourses more real and powerful, such as "*a total strike was seen*". Such linguistic methods compel readers to believe the same things that have been presented. The word "sources" is frequently used by the writer to create the appearance of reality to the readers. Except for turmoil, the province's fundamental concerns are scarcely mentioned. Furthermore, the Urdu press appears to be more negative than the English press. Balochistan concerns are frequently addressed when they get worsened owing to unfavourable factors; otherwise, the national mainstream press remains mute on the subject.

Recommendations

The research intends to serve as suggestions for officials, media policymakers, media outlets and their editors, and journalists covering conflict region(s), especially Balochistan conflict. The results endeavors to manage and resolve conflicts, especially Balochistan unrest.

Acronyms

FP: Frontpage

LH: Lower half

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