



## The Role of Media in the Coverage of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) of Malakand Division (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa)

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**Abstract:** *The Taliban rule in Swat and the adjoining districts of Malakand Division was a major threat to the democratic stability of Pakistan. In consequence, the state had to mobilize the army and to curb militancy through force after all peaceful measures had failed. During the military operation, about 3 million people became IDPs (internally displaced persons) with no food and shelter. The only means of bringing the problems of the IDPs to the notice of public was possible only through media. The present research study is undertaken to highlight the role of media mainly the print in representing the IDPs, the language they used to describe the events and the experience of senior journalists (Bureau Chiefs) in the field. The study concludes that media performed in a commendable way to highlight the problems of IDPs, to glorify the army and to downplay the anti-state narrative of the Taliban. Further, it is found that despite all efforts, the media personnel felt torn between the various sides' expectations. On the one hand, they were pressed hard by the government and the IDPs to give them more coverage while the militants would also issue threats to them in case their views were not properly.*

**Key Words:** Role of Media, IDPs, Malakand Division.

### Introduction

The 21st Century brought with itself new challenges in the form of terrorism and militancy and the attack on the World Trade Center is a hallmark towards terrorism and militancy in the modern era. The gloomy atmosphere of such havoc also brought various socio-cultural, economic, political and religious impacts in Pakistan. The research scholars, i.e. Ahmad (2013);

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Naz *et al.* (2012) and Daraz (2012) consider the issue of 9/11 as central in bringing a shift towards military operation, and it laid down the foundation of defining and delimiting terrorism linking it primarily to religious, political, personal and economic factors (also see Ziemke, 2006; and Ali, 2010). Consequently, such activities brought damage to schools, colleges, hospitals, banks, NGOs (working in the area) and to some extent discouraged the government employees to continue their duties and services. Further, many of the citizens lost their lives while the lives of living people became miserable (Rashid, 2002). Kemp (2008) expounds that the rise of radicalism/extremism in Afghanistan and Pakistan is rooted in the disintegration of tribal (in both countries) and state (mainly in Afghanistan, but increasingly in Pakistan) structures; and the increased influence of religiously orthodox foreign elements who assumed prominence during the long, drawn-out conflict in Afghanistan (Dyer *et al.*, 2007; Fair, 2008, Hoffman, 1999; Hashmi, 2009).

The wave of terrorism and militancy has multifaceted impacts on the social, economic, political and religious aspects of the population across the country (particularly atrocities and loss of lives) have brought changes in the social, political and psychological aspects of the country. The basic institutions of the country and lives of the people, property, businesses have been at stake for a quite long time and has further weakened the social fabric to a large extent (Nadeem & Paracha, 2010). A considerable rise has been there in the last nine years in suicidal attacks, bombing etc. by extremist organizations leading to many serious consequences as well (Abbas, 2007). Studies have indicated that the socio-political and security aspects of Pakistan's Tribal areas (adjacent to Afghanistan) have been in a constant state of flux since the Afghan Jihad of the 1980s (Abbas, 2011). According to statistics, 2590 terrorist incidents took place till the end of 2010 in which 5840 people were killed and 11597 injured. Thus, these statistics indicate that the average number of incidents remained at 76 per year, where an average of 173 people killed and 341 injured annually (Ahmad, et al.2010). The people killed and wounded per incident were 2.25 and 4.48, respectively. The median number of the incident was 36, with a median number of 106 people killed and 261 wounded (Hussain, 2007). Further, during the last two decades, the country has received multiple negative impacts due to militancy and war on terror in the form of human, socio-cultural, economic and political as well as huge displacement in the form of IDPs (Barro, 2001). Pakistan became part of the global alliance in 2001 and paid a huge price for it including the killing of 50,000 soldiers, innocent civilians while many more wounded, while the economic losses have been reached to 1 trillion marks and militancy has not only decreased agricultural productivity but also have an impact upon the lowering of per capita income of the people associated with agriculture as well (Ali, 2012). Resultantly, the country is declared as a dangerous place and is in line with countries like Iraq and Afghanistan with regard to internal order (Shpiro, 2000).

In a climate of years of terrorist activities causing thousands of casualties, Pakistan's the government initiated a military operation in various parts of the country, i.e. Rah-e-Rast operation (Correct Path) in Malakand Division (Farooq, 2009) and "Zarb-e-Azb" The Hard Blow-in Orakzai Agency, while the Rahe-Nijat, i.e. Operation Salvation Path in Waziristan as well as Operation

Khyber One in Khyber Agency. Such operations were necessary for the restoration of peace and order; however; these operations also displaced 1.9 Millions of people from their own homeland.

Internal displacement of people from their localities may be classified into three kinds. They include internal displacement induced by either conflict or natural disaster or development. The same views were also expressed by Shad Begum, a humanitarian activist and social worker in her personal communication on December 31, 2013, in Dir lower. As this study focuses a conflict situation, internal displacement is the outcome of a military operation where the locals had to flee their houses to avoid a life-threatening situation because of the battle between the army and the Taliban. The displacement is to the adjoining districts and safer places in the country. With reference to the study, the people of district Swat, Dir Lower and Buner were displaced to other settled districts mainly Mardan, Charsadda and Peshawar in 2009. Likewise, a similar phenomenon was observed in 2014, when the people of North Waziristan temporarily settled in Bannu on account of the government-led military operation, “Rah-E-Rast” (English: Correct path) and “Zarb-E-Azb” (English: blow of Azb- or the sword of the Holy Prophet of Islam placed in Jamia Hussain in Cairo, Egypt). In yet another instance, the in-fight between two militant groups, i.e. Lashkar-i-Islam and Ansar-ul-Islam in Khyber Agency also forced the locals to flee the area to safer places in Peshawar and Pabbi (Tribune 2012). Furthermore, the military operation “Khyber-I” against militants in Bara of Khyber Agency also led to the displacement of thousands of people in 2014. The military operation, “Rah-e-Nijat” (English: Path of deliverance) carried out in South Waziristan against the militants forced the people to the adjacent district of Dera Ismail Khan and Bannu (Ali, Personal Communication, August 7, 2012). In the province of Balochistan, the same phenomenon of displacement was noted when the government decided to curb the militant activities of a banned outfit famously known as Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) (Anwar Nawaz Baloch Personal Communication, May 6 2011).

It is observed that in every part of the world, innocent people become the victim of armed resistance by the militants or the subsequent decision of the government to counter the anti-state elements. The reason being that such militants are always in the minority, but they use local people as a human shield to resist the state machinery. Imran Ahmad, a resident of Tarakai IDP camp in Swabi, told in an informal personal interaction during the visit of the camp that people fled from those conflict zones because the state apparently provided them shelter and food in the IDP camps but the intelligence and law enforcing agencies always watched those IDPs with open eyes. The mindset of the state authorities, in most of the cases, questioned the loyalty of those IDPs towards the state (Imran Ahmad, personal communication, July 16, 2009).

## **Research Questions**

Following are a few of the research questions that will be analyzed during research:

1. How Pakistani media represent IDPs?
2. What are the main linguistic strategies used by media to report on IDPs?

3. What are the key professional factors/features that abstract the news reporting of IDPs in Pakistani media?

## **Research Methodology**

The study was applied both quantitative and qualitative methods to find answers to the questions. It includes a content analysis of selected media and interviews with researchers. In the content analysis phase, the researchers selected content published in the daily newspaper since 2009 in the month of May, June and July, dealing with the issues of IDPs. Moreover, electronic sources of data and libraries were searched for a collection of the relevant data. Two national-level newspapers Daily Mashriq (Peshawar) and Daily Jang (Rawalpindi) will be selected. In order to evolve a procedure for the data, a selective sample of all reports of 3 or more columns shall be analyzed. The selection of particular months in the year 2009 is significant as these days, militancy was in its peak period, and the government decided to order the army to curb them in all its forms. In the said period, the military operation started, and as a result, millions of people were displaced from their parental homes to other parts of the country.

With a view to ascertain the findings of the study obtained from the analysis of the newspapers and the secondary data available in the form of literature, the study will benefit from the views of a field journalist who were actively engaged in the coverage of IDPs for print and electronic media. A total of 5 qualitative interviews will be conducted from Bureau Chief belonging to Malakand Division. As the landscape of the division is very wide; therefore only the press club of district swat will be approached which is the oldest in the division and has the highest number of field journalists associated with it. Further, the selection of the interviewees will be based on purposive sampling. In other words, those senior journalists will be interviewed who are willing to share their views and who had served in the time of the military operation. The interviews will be recorded on a tape-recorder and will be kept confidential.

As mentioned above, the population of the target people is unknown; therefore a sample of 60 people, including journalists, reporters, filed worker, and newspaper publishers, would be selected through snowballing and convenience sampling technique. In addition, twenty IDPs belonging to the area will be selected for analysis of the actual situation as well.

## **Research Findings**

H<sub>0</sub>: Media has no association with the rehabilitation of IDPs in regard to strategies.

H<sub>A</sub>: Media has a significant association and utilized proper strategies in the rehabilitation of IDPs.

The above-mentioned hypothesis measures the relationship between media strategies and rehabilitation of IDPs taking media as independent variable and rehabilitation as the dependent variable. The hypotheses are tested with the help of secondary information using daily Mashriq and daily Jang as the independent variable. The tables below indicate that daily Mashriq has published more stories than Daily Jang in regard to IDPs rehabilitation which provides solid

ground for alternative hypothesis which focus that media has a significant association with the rehabilitation of IDPs. In addition, daily Mashriq published stories, articles, column to highlight the issues and strategies for the rehabilitation of IDPs. The content analysis elaborates that daily Mashriq published 510 (54.37%) stories reflecting the issues of IDPs in regard to rehabilitation, whereas Daily Jang 428 (45.62%) stories reflecting IDPs issues. It has been concluded that there is a strong relationship between media and rehabilitation of IDPs in other words Daily Mashriq in particular and daily Jang plays a vital role in the rehabilitation of IDPs and authenticate the alternative hypothesis of the study (see Table-1)

**Table 1.** Comparison of Daily Mashriq and Daily Jang published stories on IDPs issues

News Paper	N (%)
Daily Mashriq	510 (54.37)
Daily Jang	428(45.62)
Total Stories	938

### Hypothesis-II

H<sub>0</sub>: Media did not report the rehabilitation of IDPs.

H<sub>A</sub>: Media play a significant role in reporting the rehabilitation of IDPs.

The researcher in the null hypothesis focus that the media did not report the issues of IDPs in regard to rehabilitation, whereas the alternative hypothesis stresses that media regularly reported the issues of IDPs. In addition, the Daily Mashriq and Daily Jang reported the issues of IDPs on a regular interval by publishing stories on the front page to attract the issues of IDPs and stress on the government to work for their rehabilitation. The ground realities disclose the fact that Daily Jange has published more stories, i.e. 180 (58.63%) on the front page concerning the issues and rehabilitation of IDPs. However, Daily Mashriq published 127 (41.36%) stories focusing on the issues and rehabilitation of IDPs. The mentioned realities bare the fact that media play a significant role in reporting the rehabilitation of IDPs which proved the alternative hypothesis of the study (see Table-2)

**Table 2.** Comparison of Daily Mashriq and Daily Jang, Published Stories on Front Page

News Paper	Front Page Stories N (%)
Daily Mashriq	127(41.36)
Daily Jang	180(58.63)
Total Stories	307

### Hypothesis-III

H<sub>0</sub>: Media has not highlighted the issues of IDPs through media reporting.

H<sub>A</sub>: Media plays a vital role in highlighting the issues of IDPs through media reporting.

The researcher formulates both null and alternative hypotheses for the study to establish relationship media and IDPs issues and rehabilitation. The null hypothesis concern that media has not highlighted the issues of IDPs through media reporting, whereas alternative hypothesis focus that media plays a vital role in reporting the issues of IDPs through media reporting. The collected information demonstrates that Daily Mashriq reported more than double or triple stories than daily Jang on IDPs issues. The content analysis described that on the second column Daily Mashriq has published 228 (47.59%) stories whereas on the same column Daily Jang published 251 (52.40%). Similarly, on the third column Daily Mashriq published 208 (69.10%) stories whereas Daily Jang published 93 (30.39%) stories on the same column reporting the issues of IDPs and their rehabilitation. In addition, on the fourth column daily Mashriq published 9 (56.25%) stories and Daily Jang published 7 (43.75%) stories in analyzing the issues of IDPs. The facts and figures authenticate the alternative hypothesis that media play a vital role in reporting the issues of IDPs through media reporting.

**Table 3.** Daily Mashriq report more double or Tipple stories than daily Jang on IDPs Issues

<b>Newspaper</b>	<b>2 Column</b>	<b>3 Column</b>	<b>4 Column</b>
Daily Mashriq	228(47.59)	208(69.10)	9(56.25)
Daily Jang	251(52.40)	93(30.89)	7(43.75)
Total Stories	479	301	16

### **Hypothesis-IV**

H<sub>0</sub>: IDPs are not satisfied with media reporting and their rehabilitation.

H<sub>A</sub>: IDPs are fully satisfied with media reporting and their rehabilitation.

The researcher formulates both null and alternative hypothesis to analyze the relationship between media and IDPs satisfaction regarding their rehabilitation. The collected information verified that Daily Mashriq reported more stories on the lower half of the back page than daily Jang on IDPs issues. The facts disclose that Daily Mashriq published 136 (68.34%) stories than daily Jang, which published 63 (31.65%) stories on the issues of IDPs. The facts support the alternative hypothesis of the study that media work as a catalyst for the rehabilitation of IDPs (see Table-4).

**Table 4.** Daily Mashriq reported more stories on the lower half of the back page than Daily Jang on IDPs Issues

<b>Newspaper</b>	<b>Frequency N (%)</b>
Daily Mashriq	136(68.34)
Daily Jang	63(31.65)
Total Stories	199

## **R.Q.2. What are the main linguistic strategies used by media to report on IDPs.**

The analysis of the newspaper data, the researcher, examined the validity and appropriateness of the language used to report various events and incidents relevant to the IDPs. In this connection, it was noted that several specialized words had been employed in the analyzed reports that add to the effect of the intended message.

One of the research questions of the study is to find out the linguistic strategies used by media to report on IDPs. For the purpose, the selected newspapers as described in the section of research methodology were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. Here, a discussion is made over the linguistic strategies used by these newspapers with reference to internally displaced persons. To start with, during the analysis of the newspaper data, the researcher examined the validity and appropriateness of the language used to report various events and incidents relevant to the IDPs. In this connection, it was noted that several specialized words had been employed in the analyzed reports that add to the effect of the intended message.

### **General Overview**

The research data in almost all the reports reveal that the IDPs are primarily addressed as '*mutasereen*' (English: affectees) of (*Daily Jang*, July 2, 2009) the military operation. It is a neutral word and does not bear any connection with militancy or terrorism. It also implies that the IDPs are innocent and they are suffering for the peaceful future of the country. The same newspaper also creates contrast and employs the word, '*dehshatgard*' (English: terrorists) for the Taliban who have challenged the writ of the state. In another instance, the word '*panahgazeen*' (English: refugees) (*Mashriq*, May 13, 2009), which too is a neutral word and indicates the homelessness and miseries of the IDPs. It can be said that every effort is made in ensuring the neutral and unbiased status of the IDPs in the wake of the Taliban propaganda. Such linguistic labels also carry a message for the public at large to be at good terms with them. Apart from the above overview, the analysis reveals that the following terms occur in contrast that point to the strategy, approach and purpose of the reporting. They are discussed in the given headings.

### **Dead versus Martyred (Urdu: Halaak versus Shaheed)**

The analysis of the newspaper data reveals that dead and martyr frequently occur in the newspapers in the narratives built around the military operation and the reported killings of the army, IDPs and the militants or the Taliban. The newspapers use the word martyr for a killed army soldier or an IDPs while the word dead is used for the Taliban. To interpret the difference between the two words, it is revealed that the word dead or Halaak is a word devoid of any religious connotations and is a simple description of death. In other words, it does not refer to the event in glorious terms in the context of religion. The word may also indicate the event of death as irreligious at times, particularly when it is used in comparison to the martyr. One the other hand, the word martyr or shaheed is ripe with religious meaning and says a lot about the grandeur of the one who embraces death. In the context of the religion of Islam, martyrdom is



the essence of a pious and altruistic man who does not care about his own life for the sake of fellow human beings and sacrifices his own life for the sake of others. Such people are described in glorious words in the Holy Quran, and they are rewarded both in this world and the life hereafter. In the context of media reporting, the use of the two words implies that the army is on the right side while the Taliban are fighting for a wrong cause having nothing to do with religion and even against the tenants of Islam. Thus, they die without any reward either in this life or the life hereafter. While the army and IDPs are fighting for a noble cause and their death is for them a glorious event. To note, the same was also revealed in the qualitative interviews that the reporters would be pressurized by both the army and the Taliban while using such contrastive words in their reports. From the point of view of either side, the Taliban would always use the word shaheed or martyr for their men and halaak or dead for the army men and vice versa.

### **Terror Forces Versus Security Forces (Urdu: dehshatgard versus Bachanaywalay)**

Another contrasting pair of words found frequent in the analyzed newspapers was the intermittent use of addressing the Taliban and the army as two forces. The Taliban are addressed as terrorists (Urdu: Dehshatgard or askariatpasand or shiddatpasand) which implies that they are spreading terror, unrest and anarchy among the masses. Their activities are anti-state, anti-religion and inhuman. They are therefore worthy of hatred and their ultimate end must in the form of their death or killing. Similarly, the Pakistan army, which was fighting against these Taliban, is also represented as a force, but it is described in the opposite sense. Their fight against the Taliban is glorified, and they are addressed as rescuers and saviors in the shape of providing security to the masses against the Taliban. In other words, the use of the words, terror forces versus security forces, the media conveys the hidden message of clarifying the national objectives and fate of the country. It informs the masses that siding with the army is their only hope of finding a peaceful future for their generations in the country. On the contrary, their sympathies if driven towards the Taliban, would ruin and destroy the peace and prosperity of the country.

### **Suicide Attackers versus Fidaeen (Urdu: Khudkash versus Fidaeen)**

One important phenomenon that is observed and found among the Taliban in their fight against the state of Pakistan is suicide bombers who kill their own selves by blowing themselves in crowded places resulting in the mass killing of others as well. This has happened many times in the recent war on terror. In Malakand Division also, several suicide attacks occurred that killed hundreds of people, including the security forces. While analysis the language of the media, it was found that whenever we see such reports, it is found that they are described as suicide bombers and suicide attackers by the army and the government while the Taliban describe them as Fidaeens. The word Fidaeen is an Arabic word with religious connotations. It refers to a person who sacrifices his own life for a noble religious cause which will be rewarded and compensated in the life hereafter. The analysis of the newspaper reveals that such suicidal attacks are ripped off their religious significance when described by the state forces of Pakistan which implies that such



deaths are punishable in religion and that they are against the true spirit of Islam while the Taliban justify such tactics as effective means of suppressing state terrorism. Thus, we see that in many cases, the newspapers also toe the line of the army and the federation and address such attacks as suicidal while every report directed from the Taliban leadership describe them as Fidaeens. By the use of these two words, a clear line is drawn between the two forces. A message is also conveyed to the general masses that speaking the language of the terrorists is harmful to the national peace and that all suicide attacks are against the spirit of Islam. Further, we also have observed that several renowned religious scholars have also issued fatwas against suicide attacks of the Taliban in the name of religion. According to these scholars, all such attacks are deadly and anti-religious. As true Muslims, we should not indulge in such tactics that result in the killings of other Muslims and that those who support or advocate such tactics must be condemned in harsh words.

To conclude, the analysis of the newspapers reveals that the media also differentiate between the nature and scope of the objectives of the Taliban and the state of Pakistan linguistically. The strategies used by the media clearly identify and draw a line between the two forces.

### **R.Q.3, What are the Key Professional Factors/Features that Abstract the News Reporting of IDPs in Pakistani Media.**

#### **Key Factors that Determined the News Reporting on IDPs in Pakistani Media**

With a view to investigating the key factors, interviews were conducted from Bureau Chiefs of print and electronic media in swat district. The reason for selecting the swat district was that it was under the direct control of the Taliban before the military operation. Further, the Taliban headquarter (Imam Dheri) was also located in the district. Keeping in view the influence of the Taliban, Swat was at the hit list and centre of activity during the military operation. The reason for conducting the interviews from the Bureau chiefs was their position and responsibility. They had to report all over the district and also to monitor the activities of the field reporters. Further, they were more experienced and more exposed to the dangers of militancy. Furthermore, they had attended high-level media talks and press briefings both of the army and the Taliban hierarchy. Before discussing the interview data, a brief profile of each of the interviewee is given to understand and appreciate their positions. The key focus of the researcher during each interview was to be relevant to the area of research. For the purpose, a list of questions was prepared with a view to remain to the point and to guide the interviewee about the nature and scope of this research study. With a view to systematically analyze the interview data, each question has been dealt with separately to make it reader-friendly. However, it is important to point out at the onset that most of the replies of the respondents were similar in nature. There were other areas where the interviewees had differences in their views, opinions and experiences that are specifically highlighted under each heading.

## **Importance of Issue of IDPs for Media Person**

In reply to the question, all the interviewees agreed that it was on the top of the agenda of all reporting agencies to highlight the problems of IDPs and to give full coverage to the events and incidents. The response of media houses was also praiseworthy as they did not take into consideration the financial burden and provided DSNG vans to allow live coverage of IDPs. As reporters, the interviewees were of the view that the migrating people were their own people and it was their sacred responsibility to show it to the rest of the world as to miserably they were placed amid the onslaught of the Taliban on the one hand and the huge military deployment on the other. Shehzad Alam, in his interview, pointed out that he had to remain on air for about two hours continuously to cover the IDPs from the field. Fayaz Zafar was of the view that the whole process had dismantled the image of Swat as a safe haven for national and international tourists and had posed a threat to the very survival of the local people who mostly survived through hoteling industry. Based on this reason, the military operation and the IDPs were always a prime focus for media reporting. As a media person, how important was it to focus on the issues of IDPs?

Mehboob Ali of the view that the Issue of IDPs was of vital importance for me as well as for other journalists. In the history of mankind, it has been a huge migration during the conflict. Though the people of down districts have been very kind and sympathetic with the IDPs from Swat, as a journalist, reporting in Mardan, Peshawar and Nowshera, I always tried to bring up the miseries and problems of the helpless people. During this converge, on the one hand, I had an internal satisfaction, but on the other hand, it has deep psychological effects on my personality as well. This tragic incident shattered everyone, and I still remember when during coverage, I used to weep and have been depressed after watching the dilapidated conditions of the IDPs. I supposed that had media ignored this event; it would have never got state consideration on this level; therefore, everyone is of the view that during this hard time, media played a very positive role.

## **Importance of Reporting Conflicts**

The interviewees were unanimous in their view that it was always newsworthy to report in conflict zones at different times. Although there were fewer facilities available to the journalists, they found it worth reporting even risking their lives as the whole area was fraught with danger. It was indeed a newsworthy event as almost two billion people were compelled to leave their home town with a short notice from the government. These two billion people had two billion different stories as the IDPs included women, children, orphans and old citizens as well. There were reports that many members of a household lost their communication with the rest of the members of the family; So many tragic incidents diverted government attention to this issue.

## **Freedom in Reporting**

In reply to this question, all the respondents admitted that they were free in reporting and that there was no pressure from their media houses in this regard. However, Fayaz Zafar was of the view that he had been asked by his organization to monitor and report activities specifically of

disabled persons and school-going children. He also pointed out that he had been directed to report the condition of a lady from the royal family of Swat whose husband had been among the IDPs while she was left behind at her home. During this conflict, but according to Mehboob Ali, my organization use to send reporters on a daily basis to various districts and usually assign them to work on different issues. For example, female reporters were mostly assigned the duty to highlight issues related to women and children and male reporters use to work on issues related to food, sanitation, shelters etc.

### **Internal and External Pressures in Reporting**

Regarding pressure, the interviewees were of the view that they had been caught between the two powerful and well equipped rival forces, the army and the Taliban. Reporting in such a situation was always a challenging task. Everyone was feeling the threat from both military and militants during coverage of this conflict, but the fact is that militants were more dangerous as compared to the military. The respondents pointed out that they would be arrested by the army when they would attend media talks of Taliban leadership and vice versa. They had to remain diplomatic and careful in dealing with and reporting about the two forces. Shehzad Alam narrated that he had been to the Taliban hideout (Gat Peuchar) to cover their press conference. On the way back, he and his friends were arrested by the army. He also said that one day he had used the word ‘khudkash’ (English: Suicide Bombers) in his report, and thereafter he received several phone calls from Taliban leadership condemning my vocabulary. To note, the Taliban use the word ‘fidaeen’ instead that has religious connotations and correspond with martyrdom and glory in the life hereafter. Similarly, Shahabuddin said that a fatwa (English: Religious order) was issued against him by the Taliban leadership for his death on account of reporting the famous but gory incident of the public beating of a lady by them.

### **Neutrality as a Journalist**

To interviewees were of the view that as they were themselves among the IDPs and it was too natural for them to empathize with them. However, as professionals, according to them, they took every measure and stepped to ensure that each report and event is accurately reflected in media. One should always remain neutral, but the fact is that during this conflict, Mehboob Ali narrated that I personally feel that being the resident of Swat, I had more sympathies with the IDPs, and therefore, I use to stress and even asked the management of my organization to send senior anchors for the coverage of this issue

### **Security Risks in Reporting For/Against Militants/Army**

References to the question, the interviewees were of the view that they were warned at different times not to report events contrary to the interest of the army. During the mass movement of IDPs, they had to face curfew and transportation problem, the reporting of which would amount to question the role of the army. Initially, some reports were published in media but later on the

media houses under the guidance of the government-issued clear directives not to report incidents that might harm the interest of the army action against the Taliban. Further, we were advised to refrain from using the ideologically loaded words favored by the Taliban like ‘fidayeen’, ‘mujahid’, ‘freedom fighters’ etc. Mehboob Ali narrated that I feel that reporting objectively is never a threat for militants and military. Though both sides did not welcome fair and objective reporting, the best policy for a journalist during any conflict is to remain neutral and objective. People have the sense that if the military continues operation for the well being of the general public, then there should not be any problem for anyone.

### **Reporting after the IDPs were Sent Back Home**

According to Shehzad, Alam was of the view that we need to move forward and forget it as the worst nightmare that we had in our lives. We need to focus on tourism and other aspects of our area and should not keep on repeating this sorrowful event. While Sherin Zada, FayazZafar and Shahabuddin were of the view that as part of our history, the event needed to have been discussed and analyzed in greater detail once it ended so that our coming generations would learn from it. All the interviewees were of the view that the event after it had ended remained in the news for a while, but it soon lost its taste and was forgotten. Mehboob Ali said that even after the return of the IDPs, the story is not ended as the rehabilitation process needs to be covered. Sometimes it takes months to focus on the same issue so that to force the government to help out the oppressed and helpless people.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of this research study concluded that the event of IDPs was a major event in the history of Pakistan and at the global level. As many as 3 million people were displaced due to military operation against the Taliban in the Malakand Division in general and Swat District in particular.

Regarding the scope and nature of the study, it is concluded that media agencies sufficiently reported the events at national and international level. The reports were part of a well chalked out script with a meaning and message for the public. The media reports highlighted the miseries of IDPs and projected them as innocent in need of help. Major hurdles to rescue and rehabilitation were addressed through these reports. At the same time, the role of the government was presented in lofty words and the Pakistan Army was projected as the savior and rescuer of the IDPs. Similarly, the Taliban were projected as villains and not worthy of apology for the actions they had committed against the state.

Linguistically, media reports took great care in the employment of words and expressions to describe the actions and events related to the army or the Taliban. The print and electronic media refrained from reporting any such event that would either demoralize the army or exalt the Taliban.

With reference to the field interviews, the data concludes that journalists were faced with all sorts of dangers and received threats from both the army and the militants. They performed their professional responsibilities with great care even risking their own lives. They had to face detention or threats from both sides. Overall, the journalist community emphasized with the IDPs as they were among them but ensured transparency and justice while reporting in the field. After the event had ended, the interviewees were of the view that we should not forget that episode and we need to save it as part of our history.

The findings of the study were based on newspaper reports that were divided into several categories. The first category included those reports that were from the government side at federal and provincial levels. Such reports pointed to the measures undertaken by the government in relation to the rescue and rehabilitation of the IDPs. They also pointed to the role of security forces on the ground to appreciate the problems of IDPs. Further, the reports alluded to the role of NGOs that worked under the supervision of the government in areas like health, education, sanitation and food supplies. All such reports were mostly based on official briefings and media talks of various federal and provincial rulers.

Other reports were from the perspective of the IDPs that were mainly based on the observations and interviews of IDPs mainly reported from rescue camps. To note, during the military operation, several representatives of the newspapers were frequently reporting from the IDPs camps. Such reports are a direct instrument to voice the problems and needs of the IDPs and to highlight it in policy circles. Such media reporting serves as the prime source of bringing the otherwise less known problems to the fore and serve the sacred purpose of informing the officials to timely react and address the pressing needs of the IDPs.

Apart from these broader categories, a micro-level analysis was also made in which it was found out that the reports mostly reflected the role of the army as savior and rescuer. During the conflict, the people had to face severe problems, particularly health and transportation in the periods of curfew. The Pakistan Army was deputed to carry on the operation on the one hand and facilitate the IDPs on the other. Several media reports point to the heroic role of the forces in the rescue and rehabilitation process. The newspapers thus represent the army as heroic, patriotic, and people-friendly who has, as an institution, feelings for the sufferings and sorrows of the displaced people. Such reports also give the message that the army must be respected and loved for all good reasons and should be seen as a major if not the only source of future peace in the country.

The newspaper also projected the Taliban as the Villains In contrast to the heroic role of the army, the Taliban who challenged the writ of the state and attempted to establish a parallel setup, are projected as the real villains and threat to the stability of the country. They are condemned for their uncivilized approach to life and barbaric way of governing the country. As a threat to the modern democratic ideals of the country, such reports are aimed at educating the masses and to raise public awareness about their anti-state activities. Further, the reports also attempt to purify the military offensive of any un-Islamic motives as propagated by the Taliban.

In addition to the portrayal of the army and the Taliban, the reports also highlighted the historical display of the virtue of sacrifice by the IDPs. It must be noted that amid public places and residential areas, it was extremely difficult to identify and target the militants. Further, any military action would have led to the death of so many innocents, mainly those who were to be used as a human shield by the Taliban. It was, therefore, necessary for the army to have a clear ground to carry on the offensive. With a view to facilitating the army, the IDPs had to take the tough decision of leaving their homes, properties, cattle, shops and other businesses at the mercy of God and to allow the government to take effective measures to wipe out the militants. At another level, this step was also in the larger interest of the country to nip the evil in the bud before it spread to other parts of the country. There are several reports that appreciate this sense of sacrifice, and the government officials are heard promising every support and facility to the IDPs. Further, the whole country acknowledges this sense of sacrifice of their personal belonging for future peace and prosperity.

Similarly, it was also found during the study; the reports spoke volumes of the host families who provided shelter to the IDPs are praised and applauded for their spirit of hospitality. The IDPs were projected as national guests worthy of respect, and every single family of the country was encouraged to provide food and lodging to them. These reports are at three levels. First, there are reports in which the government officials had taken the initiative and had exhorted others to be hospitable in this hour of difficulty to the IDPs. Second, there are reports that are based on field reporting by media journalists. Third, there are reports based on the incidents and events directly reported by the IDPs or the host families. All such media reporting is meant to inculcate the spirit of brotherhood, national unity and hospitality in the people at large.

Likewise, it was also found that the government was actively involved in facilitating the IDPs as is reflected in the reports. Mainly based on press briefings and media talks, they point to the measures of the government. For instance, they included the up-gradation and extension of services of NADRA to ensure swift registration of the IDPs for food supplies, various civilian organizations for providing facilities of health and education, provisions for cash payment to the IDPs to overcome their immediate problems, vehicles for transportation, mobile dispensaries to overcome epidemic and other problems and provision of electricity to the camps to ward off environmental and weather hazards. All such reports serve many purposes. At one level, they are meant to inform the public in general and the IDPs in particular about the interest of the government in the problems of IDPs. At another level, such information is meant to encourage and raise the spirit of the homeless and shelterless and to impress upon them that they were not alone in that hour of difficulty. Similarly, such reports also encouraged other well-to-do individuals to come to the front and support the government.

It was observed that media, in the whole process, acted as a watchdog of the problems of the IDPs. It is revealed that despite several measures of the government as highlighted above, the newspapers keep a ready list of the problems of the IDPs and leave no chance of bringing them into the notice of the government. There is no denying the fact that the newspapers have space for the steps taken by the government, but still, it is not that simple to solve all the problems of

those people who have whole families without food and shelter. In this connection, several reports are based on direct observations of journalists visiting the camps where needs and problems of IDPs are highlighted. In this sense, the reporters serve as eyes and ears of the government and watchdog of public interest. Such reports prove pivotal in fuelling the energy of the government and shape and reshape their priorities. Without exaggeration, such kind of reporting is key to solve the less noticed and more personal problems of IDPs families.

One major theme contained in the reports was the international sense of unity against barbarism and militancy. As referred to earlier, the IDPs were mainly the outcome of the military operation, and the phenomenon of Taliban was more international than local to Pakistan. Almost all the countries of the world had shown a sense of unity against the Taliban and their way of life. Originated in Afghanistan, it had the tendency to spread to other countries as it did to Pakistan. In realization of this threat, the whole world was supporting the government of Pakistan in their step to curb it and dismantle the so-called Islamic concept of government as claimed by the Taliban. In this regard, when millions of people became IDPs, several developed countries provided direct funding and support to Pakistan and to rehabilitate the IDPs. Other countries also did their best in financing the country. In the list, the USA is at the top that provided funding, intelligence, food and war equipment during the military operation. Several media reports highlight these international contributions to boost the effort of the government. Reporting of such events has several implications. First, it displays a sense of international unity. Second, it highlights the contribution of other governments in facilitating a human cause. Third, it also raises the spirit of the IDPs, the military and the people at large that they are not alone in promoting peace at the global level.

Last but not least, the most important theme of the newspaper reports was the impression that IDPs are not militants but true citizens of the country. This theme, as reflected in the newspapers is to impress upon the nation that the IDPs are honourable people, and they must be treated as such. This theme is important as earlier the Taliban had attempted to create an impression that all the locals of Malakand Division supported them and that they were one in their demands against the government of Pakistan. This propaganda has created an impression in the mind of some people that the IDPs were supportive of the Taliban, and they, therefore, deserved discriminatory treatment. Further, some people doubted the integrity and ideology of the IDPs and doubted their anti-Taliban stance. Nurturing of such sentiments would have added to the miseries of the IDPs and would have made life worse for them during their displacement. It was, therefore, mandatory to highlight their sacrifice as discussed above and to motivate people to embrace them. It was the prime responsibility of the government to ward off the propaganda of the Taliban through media. In this connection, the analysis reveals that several media reports encourage the people not to count the IDPs among the Taliban and extend all possible support to them.



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