



A Media Framing Analysis of Political-Military Narrative on Pakistan's Military Operation Zarb-e-Azb

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Abstract: *The language, structure and undertone using which the media frame an issue influence, formulate public opinion. A manifestation of this is the largest - in scale, intensity and impact-military operation conducted by the Pakistan army since the country's explicit involvement in the global war on terror. "Zarb-e-Azb (ZeB)", Pakistan Military's flagship operation against militant outfits operating predominantly from erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Areas, (FATA) was launched in June, 2014. The initial successes of the operation could be attributed to the whole-of-the-nation approach deployed by the Pakistan army reflecting a national consensus to extricate terrorism. Media is a strong driver of public opinion and ZeB could prove to be ineffective without public consensus and support. Therefore, any understanding of the causal effects of ZeB's outcomes must begin from an analysis of the media frames, developed through opinion making in print journalism, that have done to form, or in certain cases unformed, a certain public opinion.*

Key Words: Media framing analysis, Operation Zarb-e-Azb, National Action Plan, Inter Services Public Relations. National Counter Terrorism Authority, Financial Action Task Force, Raad-Al-Fasad

Introduction

The key role of media is to impart essential information to the public having public importance. In International conflicts, the journalists not only seek truth, they pass the information to the stakeholders for an informed decision making. Media is a powerful tool that ignites emotions and simultaneously brings sense of security in public in times of war and conflicts. It is the large media corporations, such as *TheNew York Times*, *-Washington Post*, *Wall*

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Street Journal, *ABC*, *CNN*, *CBS*, *NBC*, *Time Magazine* and additional media organizations which cover human minds with the images and news on deaths and destructions when they occur in the conflicting regions such as Afghanistan, Yemen, Mexico Pakistan and Iraq etc. This is as comparable to any other setting where media act as an influencing factor when during such operations, military establishments and governments send signals of war to the public; news media hence act as a transmitting channel to shape and drive the public opinion to its support. While news media create synergy in efforts such as, in humanitarian interventions and military operations, spin doctors are the real actors who manipulate the media while presenting desirable facts, concurrently building dark spots during military operations around complicated issues which are identified particularly from military-civilian perspectives. As an important pillar of the state, media generally manufacture national security culture in the public through visuals and war reporting during peace. This being said, it is critical to understand the motivations of government and military leadership in defining parameters of military operations and ways and means to disseminate such messages in the current and future interventions.

The Operation Zarb-e-Azb(ZEB) was the first military operation which expanded to the North Waziristan to eradicate terrorist elements from Pakistan. The operation took place after the law and order situation shattered the country particularly, after Tehriq-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) attacked the soft targets such as Karachi Airport incident and Government's attempts that failed to bring TTP to negotiation (<https://www.ispr.gov.pk/zarbeazb>). The operation was launched on June 15, 2014. With larger goals such as hitting the radical clusters in erstwhile Fata; hitting far-off terrorists who were operational in FATA; securing the masses from TTP and restoring the IDPs, and at large ensuring sustainable peace and internal security (<https://www.acaps.org>) The operation had a unique feature unlike the earlier operations i.e. wide media spectrum approach adopted is considered the best public relations bid from the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR). Pakistan's success in Operation Zarb-e-Azb was also credited to a unified dissemination of a narrative that helped in unifying the public beforehand. This approach was adopted during the operation. This national media policy had so far achieved results in achieving its short-term objectives, lot needed to be done. The media savvies however, termed it an "over-marketing" stunt to build up positive narrative around the results. The promotion of national security culture requires coordination of all of its stakeholders including military and civilian government in ensuring secure borders and securing home front, having both interlinked and inter-dependent, Husain says, it demands for a strong and well-coordinated relation between military and civilian authority too. Media's place in this scenario cannot be overlooked. [David Gergen, Sarah Sewall & Graham Allison](#) mention that transforming the national security culture have factored in media as a critical factor for transforming the national security culture among people. Thus, by design, military campaigns do require a complementary media strategy and collaboration of different non-state actors to mark the success in befitting manner (<https://www.smallwarsjournal.com>).

The Operation ZEB later transformed into Operation Raad-Al-Fasad with a wide scope on implementation of National Action Plan (NAP), it is important to see how media covered the Operation ZEB itself in the news coverage. While the NAP was signed by the civilian government in consensus with all political parties, emerged after a fatal attack of Taliban on school children in Peshawar on December 2015 (<https://www.dawn.com>.) debates continue over the seriousness of the civilian government over a full spectrum implementation of NAP in the context of civilian-military equation. The editorial of *The News* highlights that 20 points of NAP have remained a question as far as implementation is concerned since its inception during Operation ZEB and continues to appear in media debates even after it was replaced with Operation RAF. The analysis however identifies communication gap among the institutions for being not on one page and lacking concerted efforts of stakeholders (<https://www.thenews.com.pk>). As quoted by the *Express Tribune*, the Military Wing also indicated this gap as the Gen. Raheel Sharif was critical how actions taken under NAP were essential to the achievements of objectives, and its slow progress affected the Operation Zarb-e-Azb, raising speculations over apparent inaction of the former government led by the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) political party (<https://www.expresstribune.com>).

Similarly, the ideology behind the Operation ZEB was different from earlier military operations where a deliberate move was to keep the statistics out of media's reach. This operation was launched with a "whole of a nation" approach with civilian government was to take the front lead on media and public appearance, the endeavor to raise public awareness must have come mainly from the civilian Government not from military platforms as done in earlier operations with controlled behavior. The successes in result of sharing information and shortcomings therefore, appear as a joint and unified message by the civilian and military establishment. Educating the public against present and future security threats is also a long-term objective of such operations to promote national security culture in the country. In this cycle, the news media, nevertheless is an independent entity, plays a critical role to project policy positions and cascade the strategy through better perception management mechanism. Thus, if this channel is not exploited well, it fills the vacuum by its own means. The news media though cannot change or reverse the direction of policy unless that policy is not crafted and disseminated well by the executive branch to gain public support (p.9). This argument proves that in case of Operation ZEB, the news frequency of analysis and reports has remained higher than earlier operations of same nature.

Due to higher intensity of media coverage, the foreign media also covered the operation in its world editions. However, certain questions are also raised over the restricted media access employed by the Pakistan's Inter Service Public Relations (ISPR) to the regions where operation was carried out. The Foreign Policy Magazine published a report on the Pakistan Army's role for restricting independent public inquiry of ZEB operations through controlled media access to the war areas (<https://www.foreignpolicy.com>). Though this study does not cover the scope of foreign media, it refers to how the public relations wing of military establishment is perceived by the international media being the only single source of information during the military

operations. The foreign media coverage has therefore an element of forming a global perception of Pakistan's efforts in eliminating terrorism. Pakistan has been blamed continuously in international media for not doing enough to satisfy the International community on the matter.

Framing analysis of Operation ZEB has not been conducted before while most of the framing analysis has been done on country's image by the International media particularly after 9/11 scenario. While Pakistan has been explored in this scenario, ZEB is a first-ever military operation and the largest offensive of Pakistan Army on terrorists within its territory, and specifically where there is no external involvement. This entails not only its value on crafting Pakistan's world view, but explores the internal dynamics as offensive has been transformed into RAF. The framing of Operation ZEB in Pakistani media is aimed to find out trends of news coverage; how Pakistani news media presented frame over the military and civilian government towards the culmination of operation and highlight issues dominant in the political and military discourse. The media frame analysis of leading newspapers place recommendations for a more effective media management of Operation RAF that was launched in 2017 at a larger scale than the Operation ZEB. This continues till present.

Media Frame Analysis

[Zizi Papacharissi and Maria de Fatima Oliveira](#) highlight the significance of frames application particularly in terrorist attacks. Here they say, frames may act as a strategy that find out the cause and effect channel, picking out agents, make moral judgments, and, finally, to suggest policy responses to the event (p. 56). As Entman reflects this connection in his cascade model amongst main agents, and thus show a clear moral evaluation. In the sphere of agenda setting, McCombs and Shaw suggest media and its coverage setting the public agenda to debate a certain political issue which by specifying dimensions and awarding meanings to a particular event. Framing therefore, is an important area for influencing its target audience. Driving people's thoughts are the main job of journalists as actors. The selection of topics is made by reporters or editors and the manner in which such information is delivered to people takes the form of media frames with different classifications. Thus, the media framing theory explains to frame is the tool that is used by media gatekeepers for arranging and reflecting the incidents in a particular perspective and compel the public to believe and interpret the information (p.124). Similarly, [Kosicki \(1987\)](#) says, such preferences selected by journalists form "framing while reporting the facts in turn, frame the stories (p. 57).

Literature Review

For any successful military intervention, coordination among the institutions is critically important to achieve desired results. The successes or outcome are measured through major factors such as policy direction, strategy to achieve political objectives, professional handling, acceptability in general public, ability of the political leadership to exploit the window of success provided by successful military operations, and finally how the strategic environment

shaped by military operations helps regain the stability and economic wellbeing of the people. In this context, a strong connection between the civil society and state is ensured through both institutions and a political will. The state takes the main responsibility to inculcate a sense of security in citizens, thus helps in promoting a unified security culture in the country; media comes as an indispensable part to transmit this through well-crafted messages.

As it is argued that the Operation ZEB's over-marketing of its successes changed the Pakistan's world view in eradicating terrorism from the country and created a massive popularity of Pakistan's military, it is important to examine the political discourse to find out the response and competence of the civilian government in addressing the issue of extremism and taking the country out of terror menace covered in the popular media coverage. [Zafar Ali, Mirza Jan, and Noshina Saleem, \(2013\)](#) say, Pakistan is often covered in the International media through the lens of fundamental Islamic state, a politically unsteady state and haven of Islamic radicals (p.97). Within internal dynamics, [Yao \(2010\)](#) says, political discourse is important because it is a dominant factor for the country to deal with a diverse public, internally and externally. Most of them are fundamentally political in nature; therefore, such media frames are keenly analyzed in internal settings (p.5).

The significance of this study is important because Pakistan's global image is already tarnished in the wake of 9/11 attacks, Pakistan was an ally in the GWOT, but ZEB is Pakistan's solo fight; its media reporting would tell the world of ZEB as a success story and Pakistan winning in the fight against terrorism. Yousaf says the communications frame has fixed the term "terrorism" so disturbingly and provocative in the U.S. media's coverage that once a country like Pakistan is framed in the US media, its spillover effects are to be seen in the overall news framing of Pakistan (p.10). From the beginning of this operation international media has also reported the gap between the political and military stance.

The study also identifies the portrayal of NAP which for the first time appeared as a country's unified strategy to counter terrorism. How media plays in conflict situation particularly study will provide the brief information about implementation of national action plan and role of Pakistani newspapers to present the national action plan. According to 5th Point of NAP, the media's role is identified critical with regard to its dissemination of objectionable literature by magazines newspapers that promote intolerance hatred, extremism, decapitation and sectarianism. Therefore, the flow of the media's role in crises situation and particularly, in complying with NAP is also important to analyze ([Haq, 2016](#)).

Research Questions

- Q.1: What issues are identified in media coverage from military and civilian perspective?
- Q.2: How balanced is the media coverage on Operation ZEB?
- Q.3: Is there any difference with respect to media frames in The News and Dawn?

Method

This study focuses on the media frame analysis of *Dawn* and *The News* coverage and analyze in their major discourse to examine the pattern of coverage on Operation ZEB in news reports and articles from September-November 2016. The leading and widely circulated English newspapers are selected for the frame analysis having presence of extended web editions. Both papers possess considerable influence in political and military circles. The study focuses its samples on articles, reports about ZEB published in their national city and opinion pages. The reason for selecting news articles/editorials/opinions and news reports is to identify the political and military frames and journalists' perspectives covered within the "media frames present in opinions and editorials. The overall tone on military operation and government policy was assessed in form of political and military frames respectively.

To examine the words frequently used in the articles of *The News* and *Dawn*, text search query of NVivo 11 is used for the coding process. As per the provided scales of NVivo 11, coding (also referred as auto-coding) is initiated by using the key terms and words frequency of research questions i.e. which issues are identified in media coverage from military and civilian perspective? With a specific focus on the words: Army, Military, Government, Political, Civil; it is attempted to find out the exact location and context of the words with certain impressions left behind by the newspapers. This process facilitated in extracting related sentences out of the articles. Text was searched based on the exact matches containing narrow context of the usage so that the amount of data after coding may not lose its meaning as well as exceed. Via running this query, the main idea of the data and the tilt of newspapers towards certain aspects is easier to get. This coded data afterwards is used to produce a visual analysis of the data according to its usage and percentages in a certain newspaper.

Qualitative analysis is more about researcher's interpretation and analysis and relay less on the usage of any such software but NVivo 11 helps researcher to understand the incline of data on certain key aspects. The qualitative analysis is divided in three parts; first, the civilian frames second, the military frames and third, the media frames. The classification shows the dominant framing of issues by both newspapers along with specific highlighting certain issues covered by *The News* and *Dawn* coverage. The media frames present an analysis of civilian and military coordination in dealing with perception management and addressing the last two questions.

The rationale of time period is important as the Operation ZEB was ended with the retirement of COAS General Raheel Sharif on November 29, 2016 which generated an intensive media coverage concerning extension of General Raheel Sharif, military-civilian divide/stance with a highly controversial news that appeared in *Dawn* getting media hype from internal and international sources.

Political Parties /Civilian Government Frames of The News

In a statement, the Chief Ministers said the Pakistan Army has weakened the terrorists through its successful operation Zarb-e-Azb. The chief minister highlighted that action taken under the National Action Plan (NAP) resulted in fruitful outcomes. Now Pakistan is greatly protected and violence is controlled. (Nation stands united in war against terrorism: Shahbaz.2016, September 17).

Minister for Interior Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan on Wednesday said the armed forces played a commendable role in making the National Action Plan (NAP) to counter terrorism successfully. However, the sacrifices of police should not be forgotten. (Police sacrifices must not be forgotten, says Nisar, 2016 September 8).

It became possible due to collective efforts of the law enforcing agencies, political parties and all other stakeholders,” the minister said. (Police sacrifices must not be forgotten, says Nisar.2016September 8).

Qamar Zaman Kaira, on Saturday expressed the hope that General Raheel Sharif would not accept an extension in his tenure as Pakistan Army chief after he had himself announced earlier that he would retire on the scheduled date. (Gen Raheel should not accept extension in tenure: Kaira.2016, September 26).

The members agreed that concerted efforts at Federal and Provincial stages were required to strengthen the benefits in NAP and focus on areas where development had been insufficient. (Timelines for NAP enforcement agreed.2016 October 5).

Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan on Friday said Dawn’s story was not a security leak but a fabricated news and he had asked the newspaper’s editor to call Cyril Almeida back from the US. The minister said the investigative committee had decided to hear the reporter’s position. (Editor asked to call Cyril Almeida back from US: Nisar. 2016, November 12).

Opposition Leader in National Assembly [Syed Khursheed Shah has said, General Raheel Sharif](#) has spent a historical period and the post of COAS should be given to the senior-most officer of Pakistan Army and a senior officer should be appointed Chairman Joints Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCSC). ([COAS spent historical period, says Khursheed. 2016, November 22](#)).

The civilian frames on Operation Zarb e Azb appear very few in the time period. This reflects a casual tone and trend of civilian government towards Operation. It can be seen as this is considered to be the main job of military set up of Pakistan. The pressure of Military on working over all 20 points of National Action Plan it is also debated casually by the politicians. The frequency after October also decreases compared to Dawn which heavily debates over exclusive news.

Political Parties /Civilian Government Frames of Dawn

Addressing Gen Akhtar, Shahbaz Sharif complained over the defensive attitude by security set

up of the country in saving certain groups which had been arrested by the civilian establishment. Observers portrayed a stunned environment as it was aware of the unusual, extraordinary scope of this conversation. (Exclusive: Act against militants or face international isolation, civilians tell military, 2016, October 6).

The Government machinery is at odds to say whether Nawaz Sharif's venture will get a beneficial outcome. As one of the officials describing over Gen Akhtar responded: for the ISI DG's commitments, "This is what we prayed to hear all our lives. Let's see if it happens." Another government official offered: "Wait till November to see if action will be taken. By then a lot of things will be settled." (Exclusive: Act against militants or face international isolation, civilians tell military, 2016 October 6).

Military Frames of The News and Dawn

General Raheel said he realized that the courageous tribal people had left their houses and settlements bearing the tough time in displacement for the peace of the state. He added that army is robustly working to make arrangements of IDPs better and facilitating. They are concerned for the tribal people and their future generation. Hopes are high that soon tribal people will go back to their homes. With the cooperation of nation Pakistan Army has achieved great success with in a very short period. Now we are proceeding towards the solutions instead of new hitches, he said. (Reforms needed in system: COAS 2016 September 7)

While Army is sacrificing their lives to bring end to the actions of enemies those facilitating and financing terrorism in Pakistan. Moreover, these state adversaries are creating an atmosphere of distrust between nation and army, he said. General Raheel said notwithstanding all these uncertainties and allegations the Army's self-esteem for the national cause is elevated. (Reforms needed in system: COAS, 2016 September 7)

Corps Commander, Peshawar, Lt Gen HidayaturRehman, and senior military officials attended the meeting. The meeting discussed the overall security situation and recent terrorist attacks in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Fata, the outcome of the now-concluded military operation Zarb-e-Azb and the rehabilitation of displaced people. About the slow pace of rehabilitation process of the internally displaced persons, he said it was discussed during the meeting. He pointed out that 75 percent of uprooted people had returned to their villages and towns. He added efforts were being made to complete the repatriation process by end of November. (Army busy on western border but also vigilant on eastern border: ISPR 2016, September 28).

The corps commanders' meeting lately had expressed serious concerns over the breach of national security by feeding of false and fabricated material about a high-level huddle held at the PM House on national security. The prime minister said that the inquiry into the matter had been started and it will be completed in a few days. The PM House issued a 21-word release about the meeting between Nawaz Sharif and General Raheel Sharif. (Feeding of false fabricated news, Army chief informs PM of commanders' concerns 2016, October 18).

Gen Akhtar offered that the government should arrest whomever it deems necessary, though it is unclear whether he was referring to particular individuals or members of banned groups generally (Exclusive: Act against militants or face international isolation, civilians tell military, [Cyril Almaeda, 2016 October 6](#)).

If analyzed in light of Government's policy, the media also shows a wide gap in Government's ill will on NAP implementation. The military frame shows COAS's statement in publicly lamenting over the performance of Civilian Government on NAP implementation. The military frames also raise concern over the rehabilitation of Internal Displaced Persons which is not discussed by the civilian government or for that matter the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has not even surfaced the issue except a single story that appeared in. Nevertheless, the national action plan did include that in its 20-point agenda.

Media Frames of the News

No matter who leaked the details, the content of the discussion is crystal clear, and uncontested: Pakistan faces an unprecedented challenge at home, and abroad. At home, we must prevent violent extremism from undermining rule of law. Abroad, we must prevent our enemies from defining us through the lens most suitable to them (Avoiding the allure of false binaries.2016 October 16).

International health experts have said that operation Zarb-e-Azb against extremists have helped in the goal of eradication of polio from Pakistan as areas like North Waziristan have become accessible to polio workers (Operation Zarb-e-Azb helped purge polio in tribal areas: health experts.*The News* 2016,October 26).

The terrorist networks appeared to be on the run and had weakened following the operation Zarb-e-Azb. However, terrorists still have the muscle to attack taking advantage of security lapses.

Security forces though need appreciation for what they did during the recent years to check terrorism, yet they should still review their overall security strategy to ensure that terrorists can't even get near to any site or installation belonging to defense and security, intelligence or any other law enforcing agency. (Abbasi, A.Despite repeated security lapses, we fail once again 2016, October 26).

His speech in GHQ on the Defense of Pakistan Day was the speech of no army chief. It was a tour d' horizon, a state of the nation review, encapsulating the achievements of the armed forces in retrieving the spaces of national sovereignty lost to the forces of terrorism. There was not even a remote reference to the role of the government, perhaps rightly so because in the reclaiming of the lost spaces the role of the government has been zero. Democracy purists, fighting democracy's battles heroically from their armchairs, would take umbrage...for these were words more apt on the lips of a national leader.([Amir A.The making of Pakistan's Putin.2016, September 16](#)).

The response, despite the fourteen months lapse since NAP was first conceived, has been woeful. Instead the politicians relish in their shenanigans. We fail at NAP; we fail at this war. This country will never be the way we have wanted it to be. NAP is fundamental to breaking and fighting this nexus of radicalism, extremism, militancy and terrorism. Add to it the essence of good governance and rule of law and then only can society and state reorient themselves to a more sustaining normalcy. NAP, and more, will have to be enacted to reclaim this country from the dark forces that have shadowed its future for long (Chaudry, S.2016 September 16. Policy and protocol).

That perception seemed to have partially changed over the past couple of years following the North Waziristan operation and the crackdown on militant networks operating on the mainland. But the continued activities of some banned militant groups and their alleged involvement in cross-border terrorist attacks raises questions about our resolve to eliminate all kinds of militancy. ([Hussain, Z. Change of army guard. 2016, November 9](#)).

The Government committed that the investigating team would not take any action against Dawn's for publishing the story on Oct 6 story. It should even pursue the paper to reveal its source. (A, Malik, Dawn shouldn't be asked to reveal source: 2016, November 6).

The media management of army adopted a different angle under Gen Sharif by exploiting social media avenues such as facebook and twitter accounts handlers #ThankYou.at different points, General Raheel Sharif was portrayed in local bodies elections by the candidates. He would occasionally also make it to posters put up by the banned Islamic groups. But under his leadership, the media set up of Army appeared to overlook the six agencies cleared under Gen Kayani's time and advertised the North Waziristan operation as a cure all option.(Syed, B.S., Countdown to a new army chief begins. 2016, November 22).

There is a whole slew of challenges before our civilian and military leaders. They'd be best advised to focus on delivery in their respective spheres and not lock horns pointlessly with each other while Pakistan's adversaries have the last laugh ([Abbas N. Challenges for the new army chief.2016, November 26](#)).

Interpretative Analysis

The dominant issue that prevailed in the media was that General Raheel Sharif's media's management was an overwhelming factor which is why, coverage of military wing took lots of space. On the contrary, in-depth analysis of presented facts show that Operation ZEB got airtime because there were successes that resulted in huge fan following of army chief as national hero. However media also reported over the selective region of Army by taking North Waziristan, also reported that army under Raheel Sharif vigilantly generated positive public opinion despite the fact that previous army chief also worked in the North Waziristan. Another incident came after Cyril Almeida's story which vividly highlighted the logic of media frames revealing a serious gap between military and the government which created a hype of criticism and debate in policy circles. The Dawn story appeared in a time

when the Operation ZEB was at its height shows this divide in the narratives from the two state agencies conforming to international criticism on Pakistan not working enough to ban Haqani Network. The media framed the story titled. "Exclusive: Act against militants or face international isolation, civilians tell military October 6, 2016", expressed it as a "Call for Action" for military after Foreign Secretary's Aizaz Chaudry's presentation and former Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif's heated debate. The media leak was considered as a planned move by the former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's team, making way for the decision to send out the ISI DG for country wide visits and sending a public message with a rift between army and civilian government. *The Dawn* has shown this divide with intensity and critical as compared to *The News* in military discourse.

The media frames identify the gaps which show an official image of Pakistan engaged in military operation while showing sympathy to the militant groups. This is vividly shown in the Cyril's exclusive story. Before Operation Zarb-e-Azb was launched, there was tremendous pressure on Pakistan to crack down against the militant wings in North Waziristan, and Pakistan often was accused of harboring and shielding the military wings of the Haqqani network, terming it a "veritable arm" of Pakistan's intelligence agency (Qazi, 2012). The story has shown the same divide by disclosing the conversation between military and civilian officials. Dawn's coverage was distinctly negative for military than *The News* that remained positive towards Military's performance and covered the conflict with less coverage.

Interpretative Analysis

The dominant issue that prevailed in the media during the time period was a perception that ISPR's media management strategy gained bigger space in the media discourse. On the contrary, an in-depth analysis of presented facts by the journalists show that the Operation Zarb-e-Azb got airtime and newspaper space because the successes were presented in consistent manner that in fact resulted in an unprecedented positive public opinion for the Army Chief as a "national hero". However, some reports also reported over the selective choice of Army by taking North Waziristan that the army under Raheel Sharif vigilantly generated positive public opinion despite the fact that previous army chief (General (retd). Ashraf Kiyani) also worked in the North Waziristan.

The media frames over Cyril Almeida's story highlighted the logic of media frames revealing a serious gap between military and the government that created a hype of criticism and debate in policy circles. The Dawn's exclusive appearing at a time when the Operation Zarb-e-Azb was at its height shows a divide in the narratives from the two state agencies conforming to the international criticism that Pakistan was not working enough to ban Haqani Network. The media leak was considered as a plan by the Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's team. This resulted in deputing former Director General Rizwan to start a countrywide visit. *The Dawn* reflected the split with intensity as compared to *The News* and critical towards military discourse.

The media frames identify gaps which show an official image of Pakistan engaged in military operation while showing sympathy to the militant groups. This was evident in Cyril's exclusive story. Before Operation ZEB was launched, there was tremendous pressure on Pakistan to crack down against the militant wings in North Waziristan, and Pakistan often was accused of harboring and shielding the military wings of the Haqqani network, terming it a "veritable arm" of Pakistan's intelligence agency (Qazi, 2012). The story has shown the same divide by disclosing the conversation between military and civilian officials. *Dawn's* coverage was distinctly negative for military than *The News* remained positive towards Military's performance and covered the conflict with less coverage. As compared to *The News*, a high magnitude of media analysis was evident in *Dawn* in the month of November with 9 versus 17 news reports respectively. This shows that *Dawn's* consistent angle remained critical for military over Operation Zarb-e-Azb. In total, *Dawn* published 42 reports and *The News* covered 38 news reports showing a convergence in media frames in both newspapers.

This study reveals implications for the state agencies which have to be on one page to achieve desired goals internally as well as externally. An effective media management is required that determines an influential factor because of its power to shape the world's opinion, particularly during military interventions when media's access is highly restricted from the war fields. Since 2001, Pakistan's image as an ally in the global war on terrorism was framed how it was fighting against terrorism. It should make it certain to build up a positive narrative for positive image globally.

The media analysis presented by the news analysts in *Dawn* and *The News* accounts for lack of political will from the former civilian government that was negatively portrayed in media discourse. It is dreadful for the national security apparatus of which efforts are underway that later transformed into Raad-ul-Fasad, may continue or transform in another operation as need arises. The military-media-civilian conflict in Pakistan has remained detrimental towards achieving results through NAP.

It also affected the sustainability of political and democratic establishment of Pakistan. Pakistan after a long hiatus, witnessed the strengthening of democratic system taking its roots but, *Dawn's* news story resulted in jolting the system through political turmoil in the former PML (N) government. The study therefore, stresses the successive governments to create synergy in the institutions and calls for effective media management in overcoming terrorism menace with a close watch over the implementation on NAP by the civilian government and improving world view of Pakistan.

Conclusion

This study explores the media framing of political and military narrative on Operation ZEB Pakistan is criticized and its role debated in the international media for its efforts in eliminating terrorist outfits. The analysis indicates that media frames show clear inclination on military's

narrative as compared to political government as well an imbalance over the frequency of news media coverage. While both newspapers show positive framing over the Operation Zarb-e-Azb, there are gaps showing lack of leadership's vision and measures towards a long-term solution of curbing militancy in Pakistan. *Dawn* particularly, shows a critical and in-depth coverage, indicating the political-military divide appeared towards the end of operation. Such gaps in media frames reflect half-done efforts in the war against militancy in Pakistan by the political leadership.

Because of huge gap identified between the coverage on military with respect to civilian government, it shows that military fought a solo war during the Operation ZEB. The Government either published a smaller number of stories or remained silent showing inaction on its part most of the time instead of declaring Operation ZEB, a collective success. The media coverage has reflected this gap between two agencies which has to be minimized and termed crucial for the success of this military operation. Therefore, a need for effective media management of both military and government is important to show the ongoing Operation Raad-ul-Fassad in the country. At the same time, implementation on the NAP collectively from the civilian circles would result in better media imaging.

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