

## Analysis of Civil-Military Relations in Pakistan: Evidence from Leading English Newspapers

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**Abstract** *Civil-military relations in Pakistan are always in search of common ground. Historically, military forces and civilian leadership in Pakistan struggle to find the right balance and the civilian leadership has hardly commanded the gun. This study is intended to analyze that how the two selected daily English newspapers of Pakistan, i.e. Dawn and The News covered the major developments in civil-military relations, particularly during the regime of Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Raheel Sharif, followed by the most sensitive event i.e., Zarb-e-Azb. The study employed the method of discourse analysis and has used the theoretical notion of agenda-setting and framing. The results of the study revealed that the slant, style, themes, and discourses used in the news stories of both the newspapers almost remained the same, appreciating the military institutions positively. Whereas condemning the civilian leadership for their lack of concern towards implementing the already approved Nation Action Plan.*

**Key Words**  
Discourse Analysis,  
Tahrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), North Waziristan,  
National Action Plan (NAP), Civil-Military Relations (CMR).

### Introduction

The historical facts of Civil-Military Relations (CMR) in Pakistan are diverse and tricky since the time of independence because of various reasons. The first reason is the dominance of armed forces on the heels of civilian organizations due to anomalous security settings since the start of the journey for transforming the country into an independent state. Another reason stated relates to the troubled relations of Pakistan with Afghanistan and India on the issue of the territories occupied formerly that belonged to Pakistan, which led to some serious threats to local security as well as the regional security, that lead to the distribution of a large number of local resources to the armed forces (Rizvi, 2000).

In 2013, when the government of PML-N took over, Pakistan was facing an intense security situation and the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) propelled the comprehensive operation against the national and international terrorists who were covering in North Waziristan (the tribal belt of Pakistan). This operation was named as “Zarb-e-Azb”. It was a mutual decision taken by the Pakistani democratic government as well as Pakistan military forces to begin this operation and to clear the soil of Pakistan from terrorists, as these terrorist were using the soil of Pakistan for their vested interests. The most under fire, terrorist groups within this operation were identified as Haqqani networks, Al Qaeda and Tahrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) (Wolf, 2015).

During the operation both the military forces as well as the political organizations planned structural measures to ensure the security and well-being of local inhabitants. In this regard the special care was provided to internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in order to provide them with better opportunities for education, health, and economic stability. COAS very firmly said that the Pakistani forces would attack all extremists on equal grounds irrespective of any discrimination. No matter it is TTP or Haqqani networks. Further, he added that the success of this operation lies in the strong civil-military relations and speedy implementation of the National Action Plan (NAP) (Ganzanfar, 2016).

The success of the operation was dependent on the collaboration between the democratic government and armed forces; both joined hands against the terrorists. The operation was successful but the victory came at an overwhelming cost, as the 488 brave officers and men of

Pakistani armed forces were martyred. Overall, the operation was considerably supported by the political segments, defense analysts, and general public. Moreover, the world also appreciated the actions taken by Pakistan against terrorism and the international media, in particular, acknowledged the actions of Pakistan Armed forces to eliminate terrorist (Ispahani, 2016).

Based on the above discussion, the current study has problem statement which deals with examining the role of the Pakistani press in covering CMR during the most significant event OZA which was initiated by COAS on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2014. The news stories of the two most widely spread English newspapers Dawn and The News were selected for the discourse analysis. The current study will examine the slant (positive, negative and neutral), the style, themes, and discourses of the news stories of the selected newspapers.

This thorough examination of the media discourses and utilization of styles by the selected daily English newspapers of Pakistan would be extremely useful in interpreting the role of the Pakistani press in the relationship between civilian government and military. Moreover, this study would be academically helpful in extending the current literature on CMR in the context of Pakistan.

## **Literature Review**

Civil-military relations can be defined as the relationship between the military of the state and the society at large, the way they keep up a correspondence, collaborate with each other, and the way limits between both are defined and is in synchronization. Samuel Huntington proposed a theory on CMR in which he argued that the main purpose of the military is to safeguard the national security of the country without interfering in the prevailing democracy of the country. During the cold war, it was believed that the United States armed forces are becoming immensely powerful and are interfering with the political ideologies that were traditionally prevailing in the US. This led Huntington to propose a powerful theory on CMR that served as a powerful explanation for the isolation of the military from the politics and minimum or no interference in the political system and in the political affairs, while serving the most important objective of the military i.e. to protect the national security of the country. There were two distinct features of Huntington's theory. The first feature deals with the strict mechanism for obedience and conformity in the military environment. He argued that the spirit of the effective civilian rule lies in the appreciation of professionalism that the independent military accomplishes, the equipped military that can serve as a weapon to serve the national interest of the country. Therefore the success of the civilian government must be independent of the military establishment. It is important that military leadership should stay in their defined role, i.e. to advise the government on security issues, if they go beyond their defined limits it can cause problems for the civilian government (Huntington, 1956a).

In new democracies the biggest challenge is to develop democratic civilian authority, this challenge of influencing the democratic civilian authority over the military forces remained critical. Finer (2017) stated that instead of asking the military why they participate in politics one should ask why they do not do something else. At first glance, the military acquires primarily the civilian organizations and then later acquire the weapons. There exist numerous examples of such regimes, for instance, Egypt, Mali in 2012, Eritrea, Thailand in 2006, Honduras in 2009, and the Central African Republic in 2013, and Russia's takeover by Vladimir Putin and the FSB since 2000.

In the discussion of CMR, the role of media is extremely important especially during the wartime. Media, democratic leadership and armed forces during the time of attacks develop a link which offers armed forces and democratic leadership with support from the media. Moreover, press can build a narrative that affects the views of the general public positively, particularly towards the actions exercised by both democratic leadership and the armed forces (Korn, 1948). Especially it is true for the style of government-owned media outlets that have a supportive inclination towards policies of the local democratic leadership in the context of international events. In light of the above details, McQuail (1994) stated that it is true for both government-owned news outlets as well as autonomous news media outlets.

Williams (2003) observed that during the "9/11 incident", reporters surrendered their skills of objectivity and emerged as the trusted representative of the United States. Similarly, in 1990 and 1991 during the Gulf war crisis, the daily newspapers and television portrayed the role of president of the United States of America positively. The US Press encouraged and appreciated the actions of the President, and in comparison the daily newspapers, television gave less serious treatment to the issue due to demand for vocational theater and storytelling.

In order to develop the theoretical foundations, the present study employed the concept of agenda-setting theory. In mass media, agenda setting acts as a filter when making choices for different issues. For example, the repeated coverage of any issue makes a path for public perception. Such issues are highlighted and coverage towards those issues are more significant apart from others. In the agenda-setting there exist two levels which are used in the present study. At the first level, it is emphasized that how much importance has to be given to a particular issue. Whereas at the second level the focus is on the term framing as recommended by Weaver,

McCombs, and Shaw (2004) in which the impact of prominence, or the qualities, connections, properties, and characteristics of the issue are observed.

It is important for the scholars to keep in mind the identification of the frames, the different styles highlighting the meaning, comparison of the coverage via different media channels, and to investigate the diversity through different media outlets. Entman (1993) one of the notable researchers in framing theory research cautioned that the absence of unified framing theory is important in order to clarify that how specific frames are developed and how they are expressed in the media text. The heterogeneous conceptualization has brought with it an awfully diverse methodological approach, both with respect to the recognizable proof of frames (frames related to media and a gathering of people and the socio-cultural settings) and the measuring of their influences on audiences and gatherings of audience. Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) explain that since the past era the existence of communication frames is the most vital concern underlined in the language discourse.

## **Methodology**

The current paper is intended to address civil-military relations by identifying the frames with reference to the important event Zarb-e-Azb. Moreover, different discourses will be analyzed by utilizing the narrative of print media, especially the news stories from two daily English elite newspapers Dawn and The News. The selection of the two daily English newspapers was based on the following reasons:

- 1) These newspapers signify the dominance of print media throughout Pakistan and they are considered as major media giants as compared to others.
- 2) Both newspapers have large distribution networks and have a huge audience. In order to fulfill the objectives of the current study, the utilization of different discourses will be identified and it is termed as the unit of analysis and the study is conducted accordingly.

In order to analyze the framing related to CMR in Pakistan, specifically during the regime of COAS Raheel Sharif, the event OZA has been selected. The main reason of choosing this event is to understand that how military for the very first time got its permanent position in the cabinet committee, especially on the issue of Pakistan security as already General Head Quarter (GHQ) was in complete control over the national/foreign policy of Pakistan during the Sharif government from 2013-2017. Moreover, the selected time period is significant due to the fact that the military was interfering not only in the security issues but also in terms of economic management and good governance.

## **Research Questions**

Based on the above discussion following research questions were formulated:

- RQ 1: Does the coverage of slant shows the difference in the news stories of both the selected daily English newspapers, i.e. Dawn and the News in the context of OZA?
- RQ 2: Does the selected daily English newspaper Dawn constructed different themes in comparison with The News in the context of OZA?
- RQ 3: How the news Stories of the selected daily English newspapers, i.e. Dawn and The News framed civil-military relations during the Gen Raheel Sharif regime in the context of OZA?
- RQ 4: What are the discourses constructed by the daily English newspapers in the news stories in the perspective of OZA?

## **Results**

The following section shows the results of the study.

RQ 1 stated that does the coverage of slant shows the difference in the news stories of both the selected daily English newspapers, i.e. Dawn and the News in the context of OZA?

**Table 1.** OZA: Slant of the News Stories

<b>Newspapers</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Total</b>
Dawn	12	3	2	17
The News	13	11	1	25

Table 1 constructed above shows that Dawn has published total seventeen (17) news stories. Out of 17 news stories, twelve (12) were positive, two (02) were negative and two (02) remained neutral during the coverage of OZA.

Whereas The News has published more stories with a total of twenty-five (25), out of which thirteen (13) were positive, one (01) was negative and eleven (11) were neutral.

RQ 2 of the study inquired that does the selected daily English newspaper Dawn constructed different themes in comparison with The News in the context of OZA?

**Table 2.** OZA: Themes of the News Stories

Themes	No of news stories in Dawn	No of news stories in The News
Self-reliance in defense production	0	1
Lack of NAP affecting Zarb-e-Azb	5	5
Resettlement and rehabilitation of people	4	4
A virtuous passage for durable peace in Afghanistan	5	5
Resilience, professionalism, and sacrifices of troops	1	4
Permanently eliminate terrorist networks	0	2
Failure of negotiations between government and TTP	2	4
Total Number of news stories	17	25

Table 2 shows the results of the analysis of themes of news stories. The results revealed that both newspapers gave desirable coverage to OZA and covered diverse themes. The table constructed above shows the massive coverage of themes in the stories published by both newspapers. Both newspapers in this regard published 42 news stories. (17) Stories were published by Dawn and the findings show that the themes used in the stories were in favor of CMR. The News also covered diverse themes on this operation and (25) stories were published by The News during the coverage of this operation. After the analysis findings show that the themes constructed in the stories more or less were appreciative towards the actions and policies of COAS. The table indicates that The News also covered the same themes as of Dawn predominantly the positive themes with respect to OZA.

RQ 3 of the study asks about how the news stories of the selected daily English newspapers, i.e. Dawn and The News framed CMR during the Gen Raheel Sharif regime in the context of OZA?

**Table 3.** OZA: Framing related to news stories

Units under analysis	Total no of news stories in Dawn (17)	Total no of news stories in The News (25)
1 Epistemology	7	7
2 Style		
a) Condemning/ Critical	2	02
b) Suggestive	-	-
c) Questioning	1	-
d) Appreciative	6	9
3 Adjectives	2	2
4 Metaphor	6	8

Table 3 shows the frames used by both newspapers in their respective news stories on OZA. The results show that both newspapers followed different styles when narrating the news stories. Dawn followed an investigative style of writing, whereas The News followed more constructive style of writing. Both the newspapers used the appreciative style of writing with the same ratio. On the other hand, the focus of the newspapers related to epistemology, adjectives, and metaphors also remained the same in the news stories of both the daily English newspapers.

RQ 4 of the study stated that what are the discourses constructed by the daily English newspapers in the news stories in the perspective of OZA?

Following analysis was conducted to identify the discourses of both newspapers.

### Construction of Discourses by Dawn

During the coverage of OZA the news stories have used the following discourse: *Launched a comprehensive operation, Vowed to not to allow, Aims at eliminating all the terrorists, Significant Progress, Enduring Peace and*

*Stability, To Clear the Remaining Pockets of Terrorists, Met their Fate, A fight for Survival, Epitome of Barbara, Complimentary Initiatives.*

### **Construction of Discourses by The News**

*During the coverage of OZA the news stories have used the following discourse: Logical Ends, Elimination of Terrorism, Vowed to Rid the Country, Doctrine of Clarity, Achieve Objectives, Heroic Role, Reforms and Administrative Measures, Implementation of NAP, The Technological Up-gradation.*

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

The findings of the current study indicate that both Dawn and The News have written positively about OZA and positively framed the actions of military institutions and their actions, but slightly framed negatively the civilian institutions for their delayed response on NAP and stated that “*Gen Raheel expressed satisfaction over the gains made during the operation so far and praised the high morale of troops in the fight against terrorists in the rugged terrain. The Pakistan Army has claimed that 90 percent area of North Waziristan has been cleared of militants and terrorists have been squeezed into small pockets. Officials claim that more than 2,700 militants have been killed in the operation*”. Security forces launched the operation on June 2014 and it led to displacement of over one million civilians. Return of the displaced people to the area is underway but at a slow pace.” *Final Stages*”, (Aug 13, 2015), *Dawn*.

Dawn has written negatively about civilian institutions and their delayed response for the NAP and quoted that *The army chief’s blunt criticism, which came a day after civilian and military leaders held a two-day deliberations on NAP’s sluggish performance, reflected the disappointment within the armed forces over the government’s response to their reservations over the plan’s implementation. “COAS expresses dismay over slow NAP execution”*, (13<sup>th</sup> August 2016), *Dawn*. On the other hand, The News stated positively about the actions of military institutions and particularly quoted General Raheel Shareef stated “*The armed forces of the country have gained ‘magnificent achievements’ during Operation Zarb-e-Azb. The army chief said successes achieved in the military offensive have created a favourable atmosphere for an actual and long-lasting conclusion of the war against terrorism*”. “*Stability Returning After Zarb e Azb*, (April 29, 2015), *The News*.

These findings indicate the competence of the military institutions towards the peace and national security of Pakistan. For example, The News stated that “*terrorists would not be allowed to reorganize, adding more it said that the operation will ensure the establishment of peace in Pakistan and the whole world “Ensure Peace”*, (July 29, 2015), *The News*. This particular result indicates that the way media has narrated the operation positively and negatively, the perception of civilian and military actions shall be made accordingly. This finding is similar to the study of Weaver et al., (2004) in which it was clearly mentioned that the way media make the choice for the projection of any issue and the way the media cover the issue by telling the attributes, properties and its characteristics affect the perception of the general public on that issue. Consequently, people build up their opinion on the issue based on the basis of the narrative built by the media.

Further, the themes covered in news stories of Dawn and The News give the idea of diversity, but nevertheless both the newspapers focused on the same themes that were based on the factual information. The themes covered by both newspapers again showed that military actions lead to peace at home, moreover, they emphasized that the task of the military institutions is to protect the state and its citizens. The most significant themes deduced from the news stories by both the newspapers in the context of OZA are labeled as “*Resettlement and rehabilitation of people “IDP’s return*, (Dec 19, 2015), *Dawn*. Another theme as *Resilience, professionalism, and sacrifices of troops “Last Phase”*, (April 3, 2016), *The News*, the third theme to be termed as *lack of NAP affecting Zarb e Azb operation. “COAS expresses dismay over slow NAP execution”*, (13<sup>th</sup> August 2013), *Dawn*. The result showed that COAS paid a high-level tribute and stated “*Our success is the result of our martyrs and ghazis”*.” *Army fully able to tackle*”, (Sep 6, 2015), *Dawn*. The News labeled the same theme and said that “*He paid tributes to the resilience, professionalism, and sacrifices of troops during the ongoing fight against terrorism*”. “*Stability Returning After Zarb e Azb*”, (April 29, 2015), *The News*. The findings of the study remained consistent with the previous literature as Travis (2017) stated that the military forces should have the strength to win the wars and work for the protection of their citizens, simultaneously their actions should not be concerned with wiping out the society which they have the intent to protect.

Further, the findings of the current paper examined the style of the narrative utilized by print media during the coverage of OZA. Both the newspapers followed different styles when narrating the news stories. Dawn followed an investigative style of writing, whereas The News followed more constructive style of writing. Dawn when followed an investigative style of writing framed the narrative and stated that Pakistan has no favorites now

and operation Zarb-e-Azb is against all militant groups in North Waziristan” *No favorites: Operation is against all militant groups, COAS tells US*, (18<sup>th</sup> August 2015), *Dawn*.

Whereas *The News* followed constructive style in their news stories and comprehensively quoted that “the PM said the government would provide all resources for the resettlement and rehabilitation of the internally displaced persons, according to a statement issued by the PM House. “He lauded the sacrifices of the army Jawans and officers, particularly during the ongoing operation, which he said, were unparalleled in recent history. He said since the armed forces were fighting the war for the country’s future, so peace and stability were its destiny “COAS briefs PM on operation Zarb-e-Azb”, (17<sup>th</sup> July 2014), *The News*. These results are also in harmony with previous study of Entman (1993) in which he argued that framing is to identify some features of the issue, present them in the form of interactive styles for writing narrative, giving more prominence to issue which indicates the explanation of the problem as well as the leads to the treatment given to the news story.

The study further examined the discourses constructed in the news stories of both the newspapers with reference to OZA. The discourses constructed by *Dawn* appear to be more captivating as compared to *The News*. The most captivating discourses by *Dawn* were Epitome of Barbarity “Army fully Able to Tackle”, (Sep 6, 2015), *Dawn* and another as Vowed to not to allow “Corps Commander Satisfied with Operation in NWA”, Aug 11, 2014, *Dawn*. *The News* appears to be more precarious when constructing the discourses for example Doctrine of Clarity “Doctrine of Clarity”, (Oct 9, 2014), *The News* and another as Vowed to Rid the Country “Corps Commander”, Oct 2, 2014. *The News*. The results are in accordance with previous research conducted by Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000 in which they also stated that the diversity in communication frames lies in the language discourse. It was examined that frames constructed have diversity because the different news outlets use different styles and ultimately they provide the reader a different meaning to the frame constructed.

It was observed that the print media gave positive coverage to OZA in the context of CMR. Both the newspapers used positive discourses and also used the appreciative style of writing to inform the readers that the leadership of both the institutions were on the same page particularly during OZA. This analysis shows that for restoring peace and development in Pakistan healthy CMR is a requisite. Because both the army and the civilian government have to take equal/ similar and related measures to sustain peace and bring back stability in the region. If the CMR would be strengthened only then we can bring all the stakeholders to the table for peace, development and most importantly economic stability. It is concluded that media has the power to maximize or minimize the coverage related to issues, the role of media in creating an impact on the people is vital. The media should not misguide, misinterpret and overemphasize any issue which can create some serious threats to the sovereignty of the state. In this regard, there is a need for journalistic standards determined by the government and the information ministry of Pakistan so that the passage of fruitful information could be streamlined with high standard of freedom of expression

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