

# Framing Of US Talks With The Taliban: Analyzing Its Impact On The Region After US Withdrawal

Javeria Karim<sup>1</sup>, Saima Kausar<sup>2</sup>, Mudassar Hussain Shah<sup>3</sup>, Shabana Asghar<sup>4</sup>,  
Saima Butt<sup>5</sup>

## ABSTRACT

*This article explores and discusses research findings derived from two research methods while examining journalism practices in various countries. A total of eight newspapers were selected from eight different countries. i.e., Afghanistan: (Daily Outlook Afghanistan), Pakistan: (Daily Dawn), Iran: (Tehran Times), India: (Times of India), United States: (The New York Times), United Kingdom: (The Independent), Russia: (The Moscow Times), and China: (China Daily). These countries have directly or indirectly concerned with the Afghan situation. For making a comparison among these eight countries, the press of selected countries was divided into Intra-Regional and Extra-Regional. First four countries press belongs to Intra-Regional press and others belongs to Extra regional press. Furthermore, to deeply understand the journalism practices in selected countries about conflict resolution (specially the Afghanistan conflict) this analysis encompasses two critical scenarios: first, the peace talks between the US and Taliban. Ans the time frame for the first situation was started from (1st July 2018) to (30th August 2020). The evaluative criteria specifically centered on the framing of war and peace journalism derived from distinctions in the Peace Journalism model devised by Johan Galtung. Second situation started from, When the Taliban's assumption of power in August 2021 after the United States' withdrawal from Afghanistan. For the second scenario, qualitative research methods were employed, involving the examination of previously published sources, including media reports, policy documents, and expert commentaries, shedding light on the implications of the US exit from Afghanistan on the entire region specifically the role of Pakistan. Findings of the quantitative reveals that media represent national stance and giving voice to the Elite, also keep priorities their national interest on any conflicting resolution time. Findings also highlights that media generate more conciliatory and peace-oriented content when both countries participate in diplomacy. Furthermore, results revealed that news can play a positive role in building a constituency for peace—but only if aid interventions ensure that media are not left to operate on a purely commercial basis. Findings of the qualitative analysis show that all the regional and global powers have their interest in Afghanistan but have no clear policies for peace and development in the region. Finally, the research study will highlight policy options of Pakistan in the wake of this withdrawal as Pakistan needs to devise a policy with a sensible solution to the Afghan problem to avoid further damage to the state and its citizens.*

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<sup>1</sup>Adjunct Faculty in Department of Communication and Media Studies, University of Sargodha, Sargodha, Pakistan and can be reached at javeriakarim12@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor in Department of Communication and Media Studies, University of Sargodha, Sargodha, Pakistan.

<sup>3</sup> Chairman and Associate Professor in Department of Communication and Media Studies, University of Sargodha, Sargodha - Pakistan.

<sup>4</sup> Assistant Professor in Department of Mass Communication, Lahore College for Women University, Lahore - Pakistan.

<sup>5</sup> Assistant Professor in Department of Political Science, Lahore College for Women University Lahore-Pakistan.

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### **A Historical Prelude on the peace process between the US and Taliban**

Before the signing of the Doha Agreement, there had been several attempts at peace negotiations. The Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme (APRP) was the initial significant initiative, beginning in 2010, but it was stunted by internal strife and external attacks. In 2010 and 2011, the US and the Taliban had informal talks to discuss the potential of negotiations. The nature of these early talks was low-key and exploratory. In June 2013, the Taliban launched a political office in Doha, Qatar, which was viewed as a key development for prospective talks. The office was supposed to be a place for negotiations with the world community (Shinn & Dobbins, 2011; Majidiyar, 2014; Qarqeen, 2015; Dobbins & Malkasian, 2015; Sargana & Sargana, 2019; Mastoor, 2020)

In July 2015, peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban were held in Murree, (Pakistan) which also included representatives from the US and China. After the death of the Taliban's commander, Mullah Omar, became public, the negotiations, however, broke down. In 2016, there were fresh efforts to restart peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban. Meetings were held in Qatar and other locations, but no substantial breakthroughs were achieved. All these talks were less formal and less regimented than those in Doha that followed. Primarily held in neutral nations like Qatar and Pakistan, these first informal talks were a crucial first step. The first formal rounds of talks between the United States and the Taliban started in September 2018 in Doha, Qatar. Taliban (Wormer, 2012; Ruttig, 2013; Hamidzada & Ponzio, 2019; Tariq, Zaman, & Ahmad, 2020).

These talks were aimed at negotiating a political settlement and putting an end to the long-running conflict. President Trump appointed Zalmay Khalilzad to negotiate a peace deal with the Taliban. In December 2018, Khalilzad met with the Taliban's political leadership in Abu Dhabi, and they agreed to hold further talks. The talks in Doha proceeded into 2019 and early 2020, culminating in the signing of the "Doha Agreement" or "U.S.-Taliban Peace Agreement" in February 2020. which called for the removal of all US troops from Afghanistan within 14 months. The agreement also called for the Afghan government to release thousands of Taliban prisoners and established a deadline for intra-Afghan negotiations to achieve a durable truce and a power-sharing agreement (Farmer & Sabur, 2018; Zargham & Adler, 2018; Clayton, 2020; Ouwens, 2020).

This component of the agreement, however, proved much more difficult to implement. therefore, the main issue was that the agreement only involved the Taliban and the United States. The Afghan government was not actively involved in the negotiations, and many of its leaders were against them. The Afghan government was also dissatisfied with the release of Taliban prisoners, as many of them were suspected of major crimes. Furthermore, many Afghans were concerned about the likelihood of a return to Taliban rule and the human rights violations that occurred under their previous tenure. President Biden stated in April 2021 that the United States would withdraw its soldiers from Afghanistan by September 11, 2021, complicating the situation even further. This revelation increased pressure on the Afghan government and the Taliban to reach an agreement, but negotiations were slow and difficult (Basit, Bashar, Siyech, Mahmood, & Gunasingham, 2019; Ouwens, 2020; Hakimi, 2021).

The Taliban then launched a strong onslaught in the summer of 2021, making significant gains across Afghanistan. By August 2021, the Taliban had gained control of Kabul, and the United States was preparing to evacuate its embassy. As a result, Kabul's collapse was chaotic and spectacular. On August 15, 2021, the Taliban took over the city, and the Afghan president fled the nation. The United States and other countries rushed to evacuate their citizens and Afghan allies, but the process was chaotic and hazardous. Thousands of people were evacuated in a haphazard and frequently perilous fashion (Cordesman, 2022; Tariq & Amir, 2021; Behuria & Saroha, 2019; Miller, 2023).

This study looks at how the US leaving Afghanistan had both positive and negative effects. It all started with Donald Trump saying in 2018 that the US would leave. The research focuses on how the media talked about ongoing peace talks between the US and its allies with the Afghan Taliban, looking at both war and peace journalism. The paper also looks at how the Afghan Peace Process affected people, groups, and countries in and outside Afghanistan, especially Pakistan. It also talks about what Russia, China, India, and Iran did during the Afghan Peace Process, both publicly and secretly. The main goal of this proposal is to study why the US left Afghanistan and what happened afterward, specifically the challenges and effects on Pakistan and the broader region. The main concern is the possibility of things becoming unstable and how that would affect different countries after the US left.

### **Role of media in Framing of international affairs**

Scholars generally concur that media coverage of international affairs represents a key research agenda. The media's reputation as a tool of public diplomacy that advances national interests has helped it gain prominence on the global stage. According to the literature, the media in almost all countries supported the foreign policy of their respective nations, especially when it came to matters of national concern (Robinson, 2009; Hussain 2016; Hussain & Jehangir, 2024 Kunczik, 2016).

Studies finding suggest that the media of Pakistan and India tries to escalate the peace crisis rather than work towards a resolution. In some cases, Media and government have different points of view on different issues and from one government to the next. During a conflict between two countries, the press is a way for both the government and the elite to get their message out (Saleem 2007; Ibrahim, 2012; Rahman & Eijaz 2014; Sultan, 2013; Hayat and Juliana, 2016; Zahid et al, 2018).

A few studies, however, challenge this claim by stating that the media in any nation is free to frame issues, provide coverage, and form opinions. As a result, they contend, the media are not always required to support their government's point of view. Manzoor (2002) says that the Pakistani press cares a lot about things happening in other countries and is even more free to criticize the government, but it has never stopped being patriotic. In another study, Pakistani media portray more positive image of Pakistan than in Afghan press which were more critical to Pakistan (Mushtaq & Baig, 2015, Nadeem, 2017; Muneer, 2019).

Literature had previously examined that the media isn't the only variable that can shape a nation's foreign policy. Even the political leadership in modern states defines foreign policies with the goal of removing obstacles, building alliances, and fostering support among the public to better advance and protect national interests. Scholar argues that the political elite's sophisticated filtering of media reports led them to believe that spreading certain stories about fundamental principles was critical to advancing the national interest ( Brody, 2000; Ryan, 2004; Pavelka, 2014; Rasul, Robinson & McDowell, 2016). Another study looked at how the ten most widely read US media outlets wrote about the September 11 attacks in their editorials. In their stories, which were mostly ethnocentric and patriotic, the US media mostly left out the foreign opposition to the war (Joseph, 2014; Rawan et al, 2018).

There are a number of other elements that play a role in determining a country's foreign policy. These include government officials, political parties, and the country's geostrategic objectives. Another study found that journalists priorities national interests over objectivity and balance when reporting on conflicts and that they are unconcerned about considerations like objectivity and balance when their national interests are at risk. Further, a study analyzed the national press policies regarding Pak-Afghan relations US press fully followed

its country's policy. But in some cases where countries national interest and sovereignty is concerned, newspaper paper followed their national stance (Chandler, 2006; Barnett, 2011; Zelizer & Allan, 2011; Yousef, 2012; Hussain, Shukkar, & Shahzad, 2021).

Researchers believe that media influence is greater in resolving conflict but sometimes situation and facts matters a lot (Gilboa, 2009; Spencer, 2003; Wolfsfeld, 2008). The less the media had a role in dispute resolution processes, the higher the level of violence. On the contrary, the greater the role of the media in conflict resolution procedures, the more peace discussions were held. (Acayo & Mnjama, 2004; Asemah & Edegoh, 2012; Haque & Hossain, 2012; Imtihan, 2014; Rahman & Eijaz, 2014). A similar study inspects on the Pakistan-American and Indian-American relations over nuclear and Kashmir issues over democratic and diplomatic ties. Findings revealed that newspapers from the three countries' presented stance mostly support their national stance and maximum neutral coverage is given to negotiation (Yousaf, Adnan, & Ali, 2018; Abbink, 2021).

A study finding discover changes in media coverage over time, between countries, and across news channels. The findings revealed significant and fascinating differences in US, UK, Germany and Netherlands press on Iraq issue. The findings of the study indicated that the national political situation, newspaper political leanings, and the stage of the conflict can all explain a lot of the diversity in how the subject is presented and how much attention it gets (Dubois & Blank, 2018). In response to the research on the media's role in foreign policy, the American press has been contradictory in its coverage of various problems with Pakistani pressures, sometimes being supportive and sometimes being antagonistic (Stromback & Nord, 2004; Ali & Khan, 2023).

Moreover, in her article Noshina (2000) viewed that US media gave favourable treatment to the countries where its economic, political, and military interests are involved. Also, US media portrayed the subsidiary depending upon their government concerns and interest while covering foreign affairs. It was argued that the US media sensationalized war by focusing on victories (Graber, 2003; Kupchan, 2007). One of the analyses of International news coverage reported considerable closeness in coverage of the Elite press, including the US, China and Russia (Camaj, 2010; Duan, 2014).

Gitlin (2003), indicated that government foreign policy toward Afghanistan is the main cause of terrorist attacks. And most of the editorial do not discuss any solution to resolve conflict. Despite the suggestion of negotiation, most editorials suggest military actions as a solution. Study shows that framing related to ISIS Al-Jazeera focused on human and economic frames, CNN emphasized on conflict. In terms of news sources, CNN mentioned more US officials, while Al-Jazeera relied more on other sources (Gitlin, 2003; Alshathry, 2015; D'Angelo, 2017).

Media framing of various national and international issues is considered one of the important factors in policymaking. A study regarding the visit of the Chinese president to Pakistan. shows that the leading press from America, provide less coverage and more focused on conflict frames whereas Pakistani and Chinese press emphasized the 'economic responsibility and human interest' frames (Rawan, Hussain and Khurshid, 2018).

The media coverage of a peace process between two competing parties is usually newsworthy, and the results show that media coverage can have a significant impact on peace discussions or dialogues (Spencer, 2003). A study shows that Although peace talks in Afghanistan have been extensively discussed by the US and Afghan governments but US media covered the conflict and military violence instead of peace talks (Jawad, 2013).

Findings of similar study from Pakistan showed neutral behavior regarding the peace process (Subhani & Sultan, 2015). Results of another study illustrated that during peace process between Pak-Ind. Press played a positive role to generate peaceful relations which shows that that government policies affect to some extent on the media coverage of this initiative (Batool, Yasin, & Khurshid, 2015; Baum & Zhukov 2019).

## **Research Questions and Hypothesis**

**RQ1.** What elements of War Journalism and Peace Journalism, were evident in the selected countries press when they reported Taliban during peace talks?

**RQ2.** Which themes were evident in the selected countries press stories when they reported peace talks between US-Taliban?

**H1.** There will be the existence of substantial differences across all categories of News Type, News Sources, and News Frames.

**H2.** Extra-Regional Countries are likely to exhibit a more pronounced diversity in themes compared to Intra-Regional Countries.

**RQ3.** What is the impact of the post-withdrawal policy of the US from Afghanistan in general on the region (i.e, China, India, Iran, Central Asian, and Middle Eastern Countries) specifically Pakistan?

### **Methodology and Data Sources for Qualitative Portion**

This study investigates the roles of Global, Provincial, and Internal entities played in the process of bringing harmony in Afghanistan. It will conduct an in-depth analysis of the most recent research articles, books, reports, and papers written in English on the relevant topic. The period of time that will be of significant interest to the study for this portion is going to be after the United States has completely withdrawn from Afghanistan till end of 2023. The comparison of the observed shifts in the aims and objectives of various stakeholders and regional players forms the basis of the analysis of the data.

### **Methodology and Data Sources for Quantitative Portion**

This study employed content analysis to answer the dominant frames used in selected dailies on US-Taliban peace talks. What are the most salient indicators of war journalism (WJ) or peace journalism (PJ) used in the press regarding this issue? And the way peace situation is handled by these countries. For making comparisons between the contents of selected newspapers this study collected artefacts from eight newspapers in eight countries. These countries were divided into two regions (Intra-Regional & Extra-regional). Intra-Regional countries and selected newspapers including Afghanistan (The daily outlook Afghanistan), Pakistan (Daily Dawn), India (Times of India) and Iran (Tehran Times). These countries have same geographical location/position or within the same region/territory. Also, have an essential role in respective of geo political-strategic with Afghan. Extra-Regional countries and selected newspapers including the USA (The New York Times), UK (The Independent), Russia (The Moscow Times), and China (China Daily). These countries do not directly share a border with Afghan soil but are involved in the geopolitical also, have direct or indirect stakes with Afghan boundary. Most important thing of these countries are enabling the power of veto power, economic power and have their influence over international politics. Data from the newspaper was collected by using Lexis-Nexis and Factiva. Those newspaper that was not available on Lexis-Nexis their data was retrieved from Factiva i.e., The Moscow Times from Russia and Daily outlook from Afghanistan and Times of India from India. The news, editorial and other stories belonging to Peace talks between US-Afghan Taliban are considered a unit of analysis. All these stories were the result of searching particular keywords i.e., Afghan peace process, Peace talks, Taliban peace deal, and US withdrawal from Afghan taken as the sample size for the study

### **Topics/Aspects**

The retrieved data shifted into relevant content and each story was coded in several words, four topics were selected as a thematic frames 1) named as **Diplomacy and Political development:** News topics covered i.e., resumption of talks, forces withdrawal from Afghanistan, release of prisoner, and violence reduction that would enable the peace process moving forward, 2) **Fight and Talks strategy:** Story focused on Taliban conducted and elevated number of attacks, while simultaneously perusing a potential peace agreement with US, 3) **Development and Humanitarian assistance:** News topics related to Economic development, human assistance, security concerns of entire region and suggested

mechanics through which this objective could be achieved. 4) **Conflict only:** News topics covered the violence from Taliban side or military attacks by US & NATO forces.

Further, Story type was divided into News or Editorial and Others categories. News sources divided into National and International while Frames were categories into War Journalism, Peace Journalism, Neutral. Other coding categories for the frames were generated from Galtung's (1986, 1998) theoretical model and antagonize categories,

### **Peace vs Conflict, Truth vs Propaganda, People vs Elite, Solution vs Victory.**

#### 1) Peace vs conflict

A peace and conflict-oriented approach moving beyond a narrow focus on violence and direct confrontation. It recognizes the involvement of multiple actors and objectives, allowing for a deeper exploration of the historical and systemic causes. The news story also highlights potential pathways to resolution that extend beyond the immediate hostilities, emphasizing understanding, solutions, and reconciliation rather than simply reporting on violence and seeking victory. In contrast, In a violence narrative, war and conflict are often depicted as a zero-sum game, where two opposing sides are locked in a contest for a single, decisive outcome: victory for one side and inevitable defeat for the other.

#### 2) Truth vs Propaganda;

To elaborate the Truth, media emphasizes the responsibility to provide accurate, fact-based reporting, especially during conflicts. It involves presenting information that encourages critical thinking in audiences, countering the influence of propaganda or biased, self-serving narratives put forward by conflicting parties. In contrast to propaganda, which manipulates facts to favor one side, truth-oriented reporting strives to offer a balanced view that challenges misleading claims and promotes informed understanding.

#### 3) People vs Elite;

A people-oriented approach aims to present a more balanced view of the conflict. It covers violence from all sides, sheds light on the suffering of all individuals—including marginalized groups—and holds all wrongdoers accountable, regardless of their status. This approach emphasizes grassroots peace-makers and amplifies the voices of those often unheard, shifting the focus from the powerful to the people most affected by the conflict. In contrast, An elite-oriented approach in media tends to highlight "their" violence while emphasizing "our" suffering, often focusing primarily on able-bodied elite males. It directs attention to high-profile figures as either evildoers or peace negotiators, effectively becoming a mouthpiece for the elite.

#### 4) Solution vs victory;

Solution-oriented conflict coverage prioritizes understanding over simply narrating the violence. It goes deeper by analyzing the root causes of conflicts and offering insight into the chain of events that lead to violent outcomes.

In contrast, victory-based reporting often narrows the lens to the endgame—who wins and who loses. It treats war as a competition with a singular goal: one side's triumph over the other (Lynch and Galtung, 2010, p. 13).

### **Data Analysis**

The (Table 1) is featured prominently of all news coverage, by line and frames description on the peace talks between US-Taliban. These categories were compared with the selected four topics. The topic of "Diplomatic development" covered total 487 stories, "Fight and Talks" covered 393 stories, —Humanitarian Assistance" covered 252 stories and —Conflict" covered 107 stories. Findings show that most of —News stories covered topic D is 68% followed by Topic B (59%) and A (53%). In By line category (46%) National news stories covered the Topic A (46%) followed by C (42%). In Frames category PJ abundantly covered the topics A (77%) followed by topic C (55%) and WJ covered the topic D (77%) followed by topic B.



**Table 1 Topic Wise Analysis Across Story Type, Sources**

Story Type	A	B	C	D	Total
News story	258 (53)	233 (59)	116 (46)	73 (68)	680
Editorial	105 (22)	48 (12)	46 (18)	09 (8)	208
Other	124 (25)	112 (29)	90 (38)	25 (23)	351
Total	487 (100)	393 (100)	252 (100)	107 (100)	1239
<b>Sources agencies</b>					
National	224 (46)	134 (34)	105 (42)	33 (31)	496
International	121 (25)	116 (29.5)	60 (23.9)	35 (32.6)	332
Journalist	142 (29)	143 (36.4)	87 (34.5)	39 (36.4)	411
Total	487 (100)	393 (100)	252 (100)	107 (100)	1239
<b>Frames</b>					
PJ	375 (77)	93 (24)	137 (55)	12 (11)	617
WJ	47 (10)	188 (48)	62 (25)	82 (77)	379
Neutral	65 (13)	112 (29)	53 (20)	13 (12)	243
Total	487 (100)	393 (100)	252 (100)	107 (100)	1239

$\chi^2$ : 32.279, \*P=.000

$\chi^2$ : 18.298, \*\*P=.006

$\chi^2$ : 60.788, \*\*\*P=.000

**A= Diplomatic and Political development, B= Fight and talk strategy, C= Development and humanitarian assistance, D= Status of conflict**

Which is make sense because both topics are similar to each other and help to cross check the frames. Results of this study indicate a statistically significant disparity among the various news categories (32.279) with a P value of (.000). The analysis of the by-line category reveals that national sources provided extensive coverage of the diplomatic developments concerning the subject of Afghanistan, even with International news agencies primarily focused on the conflict aspect. The overall data indicate that there was a greater prevalence of reports sourced from national news agencies compared to those sourced from journalists and International news sources. The analysis reveals a statistically significant disparity in the Chi-square statistic (18.298) and P value is (.006). The research findings pertaining to frames also demonstrate a notable distinction between the WJ and PJ frames in relation to the topic. In stories characterized by a prevalence of peaceful conditions, diplomatic advancements are given significant attention, while the stories with a higher incidence of conflict, there is a greater emphasis on the study and analysis of conflict dynamics

#### **Description of Topics Across the Region**

The finding in the table (2), shows that the Intra-Regional countries in which, Daily outlook Afghanistan, Daily Dawn and Tehran Times gave prominent coverage to Afghan reconciliation (52%, 52%, & 50%). Whereas, Times of India covered (41%) stories related to Fight and Talk. Interestingly, all the countries' get little coverage of the conflict by press except India. Daily Outlook Afghanistan covered the topic of Humanitarian Assistance

(26%) followed by Tehran Times (21%) and Daily Dawn (16%) respectively. Whereas, India gave little coverage on Humanitarian assistance after covering eight stories only.

**Table 2 Topics distribution in Intra-and Extra-Regional Press**

Newspaper	Topic A	Topic B	Topic C	Topic D	Total
<b>Intra-Regional Countries</b>					
Daily Outlook	126 (52)	51 (21)	65 (26)	06 (2)	248 (100)
Daily Dawn	118 (52)	63 (28)	37 (16)	08 (4)	226 (100)
Times of India	23 (39)	24 (41)	08 (14)	04 (7)	59 (100)
Tehran Times	76 (50)	38 (25)	32 (21)	07 (5)	153 (100)
	343 (100)	176 (100)	142 (100)	25 (100)	686 (100)
<b>Extra-Regional countries</b>					
New York Times	46 (16)	135 (48)	46 (16)	58 (20)	285 (100)
Moscow Times	09 (60)	05 (33)	01 (7)	0 (0.0)	15 (100)
The Independent	28 (21)	49 (37)	34 (26)	21 (16)	132 (100)
China Daily	61 (51)	28 (23)	29 (24)	03 (3)	121 (100)
	144 (100)	217 (100)	110 (100)	82(100)	553 (100)

$\chi^2:19.981 *P=.018; \chi^2:86.49 **P=.000$

**A= Diplomatic and Political development, B= Fight and talk, C= Eco & human assistance, D= Status of conflict**

The overall findings indicate that in the category of Extra-Regional countries Moscow Times and China Daily Extensively covered the topic of Diplomatic and political development (60% &51). Whereas, The New York Times and The Independent mostly covered Fight and Talks related stories (48% & 37%) as well as conflict stories the fourth category (20% &16%). The Independent and China Daily covered the Economic and Human Assistance 26% & 24%). **In response to the (RQ2)** Which themes/topics are most prominent in both regions. The findings illustrate that In contrast Intra-regional, the Extra-Regional countries prioritize conflict and military skirmishes, followed by diplomatic initiatives, and ultimately engage in economic and humanitarian help. Intra-Regional countries gave maximum coverage to the first category of topics which is Diplomatic & Political development followed by Fight and talk third Economic and human assistance and lastly conflict.

In Intra-Regional countries the differences found in chi-square value (19.981; P=.018). On the contrary, Extra-Regional countries found significant difference in Chi-square value (86.494: P= .000).

**Distribution of Frames Across the Countries**

Frames	Peace vs Conflict		Truth vs Propaganda		People vs Elite		Solution vs victory	
	P	W	P	W	P	W	P	W
<b>Afghanistan</b>	205(18)	123(18)	251(24)	110(13)	255(20)	250(17)	206(27)	87(15)
<b>Pakistan</b>	264(24)	54(8)	218(20)	128(15)	204(16)	250(17)	175(23)	49(9)
<b>India</b>	40(4)	41(6)	40(4)	51(6)	47(4)	90(6)	34(4)	40(7)
<b>Iran</b>	178(16)	58(8)	94(9)	123(15)	185(14)	187(13)	117(15)	66(11)



<b>USA</b>	207(19)	211(31)	265(25)	199 (24)	283 (22)	379(26)	47(6)	186(32)
<b>Russia</b>	14(1)	8(1)	16(1)	6(1)	16(1)	15(1)	6(1)	5(1)
<b>UK</b>	70(6)	135(20)	88(8)	109(13)	167(13)	164(11)	80(10)	103(18)
<b>China</b>	135(12)	58(8)	96(9)	113(13)	147(11)	126(9)	102(13)	40(7)
<b>Total</b>	1113(100)	688(100)	1068(100)	839(100)	1304(100)	1461(100)	767(100)	576(100)

The table presents a comprehensive analysis of how eight countries (Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Iran, USA, Russia, UK, China) framed peace talks between the US and Afghanistan, categorized into four main themes: Peace vs Conflict, Truth vs Propaganda, People vs Elite, and Solution vs Victory. In the Peace vs Conflict frame, Pakistan stands out with a relatively higher percentage (24%), emphasizing peace, while the USA shows a contrasting emphasis on war (31%). Examining the Truth vs Propaganda frame, the USA again stands out, with a notably high percentage (25%) framing discussions in the context of war. The People vs Elite frame reveals that Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the USA have higher percentages, indicating a tendency to emphasize the role of elites in their framing, while Russia and China show lower percentages, suggesting a lesser emphasis on the role of the people. In the Solution vs Victory frame, Afghanistan and Pakistan newspapers exhibit a higher emphasis on solutions, whereas the USA and the UK emphasize victory in their coverage. Overall, the analysis of the table provides valuable insights into how these eight countries approach peace talks, showcasing variations in their emphasis on peace, truth, the role of people, and the pursuit of solutions or victory in their framing of discussions. These variations reflect the diverse perspectives and priorities of these nations in the context of peace negotiations.

### **RQ3. What is the impact of the post-withdrawal policy of the US particularly on Pakistan and generally on the entire region?**

The withdrawal of the United States from Afghanistan in August 2021 marked the conclusion of the longest conflict, which is resulting in a significant transformation of the political and security landscape within the area. Many analysts and scholars are of the opinion that the Taliban emerged as a substantial threat to the newly formed state. Conflicts emerge due to the absence of a singular authoritative entity that can be relied upon to guarantee the timely and consistent implementation of terms agreed in Doha. The seriousness of the crisis and the outcomes are not yet visible at this level. Additionally, it is crucial to acknowledge the significant role played by regional forces in Afghanistan, particularly in light of the security challenges faced by neighboring countries (Amarkhil, 2022; Jonegard, 2019).

The Afghanistan Warlords are expected to seek assistance from many regional powers, including Russia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and India. They will have their roots with some powerful support. Therefore, it is highly likely to present significant security risks. Peace is not possible as easily as we feel it to be. The aftermath of the US withdrawal will not be confined to just Afghanistan. It has significantly engulfed the countries that are located in the adjacent areas, particularly Pakistan (Karim, 2017; Tariq & Amir 2021).

A good saying is true with the Pakistan that **"You will feel the heat if your neighbor's house is on fire."** As a result of the "war on terror" over the past decades, Pakistan is the only neighboring country that has suffered severely. For a very long time, Pakistan and Afghanistan have shared social and cultural ties. That's why Pakistanis are immediately impacted by any change in the country next door. Pashtuns. The Taliban's return to power could have an impact on Pakistan because Pakistan offers the majority of Afghanistan's transit routes. Studies show that after the Taliban gained control in 2022, there has already been a 51% increase in terrorism in Pakistan. Their jumping on the train has done a lot of damage to Pakistan's security and peace. Now, Pakistan is once again

forced to start a big operation in Waziristan to get rid of terrorists (Devine & Kassel, 2013; Parashar, 2013; Soherwordi, 2012; Ansari, 2015; Hamza & Khan, 2022).

After 2014, Afghanistan has become a venue for Pakistan-India proxy wars. The Pakistan-India relationship may experience heightened tensions due to their competing interests in Afghanistan, as Pakistan sees Afghanistan's foreign policy to be predominantly favorable towards India. According to expert predictions, it is anticipated that following the withdrawal of the United States, both Pakistan and India will intensify their endeavors to attain strategic influence and establish a presence in Afghanistan. The Pakistani military has consistently perceived India's involvement in Afghanistan as an "existential threat and try to reinstate Taliban governance in Afghanistan (Chaudhuri, & Shende, 2020; Verma, 2021; Ahmed, 2020; Cakir, 2023).

As Durand line will never be a secure border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Kabul's refusal to recognize the Durand Line as Pakistan-Afghanistan's international border complicates matters. Afghanistan should declare it a legal boundary and seek a political settlement (Pant & Khan, 2012; Mohibullah et al., 2022; Tariq, 2018). Also, the continuing trouble in KP, Baluchistan, and FATA, which includes the illegal movement of refugees, drugs, and weapons, could make it hard for Afghanistan and Pakistan to get along. Also, Pakistan thinks that the sudden rise in rebel activity in Baluchistan is because India is getting more involved in Afghanistan, especially in areas that border Pakistan. After the pullout, India's power in Afghanistan would become more stable, which would make Pakistan's fears worse. Afghanistan also says that Pakistan interferes in its own issues and gives militants safe places to live. Pakistan says that people who do not like Pakistan are using Afghanistan to make Pakistan unstable. So, the two neighbouring countries are in a fight that keeps going around and around with no end in sight. Foreign meddling can be bad for Afghanistan, and it should stop right away (Qassem & Durand, 2008; Constantino, 2020; Threlkeld, 2021; Aman & Zubair, 2022).

Furthermore, Pakistan's trade with Afghanistan and other Central Asian countries has been hurt by uncertainty and the fact that trade paths and crossing points are often closed. Pakistan's economy is mostly based on trade from Central Asia. In 2022, Pakistan sent 20% less goods to Central Asian countries than the year before. Since the US left Afghanistan, the security situation there has caused the country to be unstable. The TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) gas pipeline project has been put on hold since the Taliban took power, which is bad for Pakistan. The trade lines in Afghanistan are also less safe than they used to be. The Northern Distribution Network (NDN) has helped Pakistan because it provides a safe road route for trade with countries in Central Asia. But NDN trade is in trouble now that the Taliban are in charge. Pakistan may now look at other choices, such as the China-Central Asia West-Asian Economic Corridor (CCWAEC), which wants to connect China to Central Asia and the Middle East. (Ahlawat & Izarali, 2022; Boni, 2021; Hanif, 2018).

On one hand, Pakistan's inept handling of the mounting crisis combined with the United States exit, has had devastating effects on the country's domestic political scene. On the other hand, terrorist organizations are gaining ground. They have gained sympathy from the poor in FATA and the rest of KPK with their promises to protect Islamic law and their use of populist language. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Awami National Party (ANP) is at the head of the political establishment, and many people blame the former government and military for the rise to prominence of Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan. The situation in Afghanistan has worsened for Pakistan as a result of rising Chinese influence and declining American involvement. The two superpowers are currently using Pakistan as a bargaining chip in their talks. Pakistan's position in Afghanistan is diminishing due to the country's traditionally close ties with both the United States and China. (Hassan, 2009; Bezhan, 2014; Basit & Satria, 2024).

Furthermore, The influx of refugees has also weakened Pakistan's already fragile economy and depleted the country's meagre resources. Millions of Afghan refugees have been safe in Pakistan for decades. The situation with refugees has worsened since the Taliban took power. According to the UNHCR, around 600,000 Afghans have fled to Pakistan. With just two million refugees officially recognised by the UNHCR, the total number of refugees has reached four million. Refugees are causing social turmoil in the area. Residents are seeing less of the things they need while the demand for them rises. Now that Afghans have gained these positions, locals have fewer business and employment possibilities to choose from. Pakistan's social and economic security is in jeopardy due to the migration problem, which might also cause a political disaster and strain relations with Afghanistan (Grare, 2011; Javaid et al., 2024; Khan & Sherazi, 2021).

The United States' departure has far-reaching consequences for Pakistan. Pakistan has welcomed the end of the war and hoped for a safer Afghanistan, but the country is now confronting a number of security, economic, and political challenges as a result of the conflict's end. Pakistan is in a particularly precarious position, and the escalating violence and insecurity in Afghanistan threaten to flow over into that country. Meanwhile, Pakistan's economy is suffering due to border closures, shaky trade channels, and bad diplomatic relations with the Taliban leadership. Keeping its internal and regional security and long-term economic growth requires Pakistan to handle this complex circumstance with caution and communicate with all stakeholders. Pakistan needs to address the political instability in the country while also working with the Taliban to solve their problems. Pakistan should take its time and act carefully to avoid triggering a new wave of turmoil (Akhtar, 2015; Akbari & True, 2022; Muzaffar et al, 2021).

### **Effects on Other Regional Actors**

According to several Political scientists and analysts, the unfolding situation in Afghanistan, which is currently being governed by the Taliban, has a substantial and negative effect on the neighboring country. The significant transition in power has had significant repercussions for the region. The neighboring countries including Pakistan, Iran and India and even China are quite active in over there. They want to install their blue-eyed government in the country. Afghanistan will become a staled loaf for these countries where on the one hand they wouldn't like to leave it while on the other they wouldn't be able to digest it (Sakhi, 2023; Rodriguez, 2024; Bukhari et al. 2024).

The rivalry between Russia and the US has a long history, due to the strategic location of Afghanistan, the Russian forces have also fought a war for the dry land of Afghanistan. Both states US and Russia always took opposite actions in the matter of Afghanistan. The second major power of the world China is also lying in this region and its national interest as China is investing its huge amount in the development of CPEC in Pakistan. If Afghanistan is not politically stable in the future it will be a threat to Chinese investment in Pakistan. So, all the regional actors are hoping for long-lasting peace in Afghanistan (Muzaffar, et. al. 2019 & 2021).

The situation in Afghanistan and India's reaction to that situation in the region continue to have a direct effect on "One Belt, One Road," which is China's biggest and most well-known development plan. It is under this plan that CPEC (China Pakistan Economic Corridor) is being built in Pakistan. Because India is also executing its plans to reach Central Asian countries through the Chahbahar port in Iran and the Zaranj-Delaram road project in Afghanistan. India tried to avoid Pakistan by taking these steps, which made Afghanistan less dependent on Pakistan. This Afghan factor has a direct effect on Pakistan's relationship with India. Pakistan also wants to get into Central Asia, and it wants China to help it do so (Kaura, 2021). India never sent combat troops to Afghanistan, but it did teach Afghan police, doctors, judges, and army members in India so that they could do their jobs better and help the country run smoothly (Ahmad, 2021; Sinha, 2017; Khalid et al., 2023).

Afghanistan has relied on outside forces to help with its security, economy, and politics for a long time. As the international security forces pull out, Pakistan and other

countries in the region and around the world are growing more worried about Afghanistan's security and stability. In such a scenario it becomes important for Afghanistan to converge its national interests with other regional and international players, especially with Pakistan, India, and the United States of America. For a sustainable and realistic solution to Afghanistan's security, economy and politics it will be beneficial if the regional players like Pakistan, China, and India are taken on board. Because there is a narrative that the current situation of Afghanistan has a strong link to somehow with the rivalry between Pakistan and India which again affects the peace process and sustainability of peace in the country in the future that's why it becomes necessary to take both India and Afghanistan on board. Afghanistan should not be taken as a bone of contention between Pakistan and India but as a common ground to ensure each other's security and benefit from an economic perspective (Tariq et al., 2021; Samad, 2015; Orakzai, 2013; Malik, 2018).

Another possibility is that the US will keep helping and supporting Afghanistan after it leaves. The US will keep its diplomatic links with the government of Afghanistan (Khalidi, 2021; Tariq & Muhammad, 2022). In different parts of Afghanistan, people from different ethnic groups have very different ideas. Some people back the Taliban, while others support the diplomatic government. This lack of power and support makes it hard for Afghanistan to choose a government. The area as a whole is hinged and stressed by the fact that Afghanistan hasn't changed much. If the national government doesn't get money and help from outside, it won't be able to stay in power and will have to deal with problems like insurgencies, ethnic conflicts, corruption, and civil crisis. A balance between political groups is also something that needs to be done right away (Kaura, 2018; EFSAS, 2020; Wolf, 2021).

### **Summary and Conclusion**

This research explores the dynamics of journalism practices in relation to US-Afghan Taliban interactions, employing a dual-method research approach. The analysis focuses on two pivotal events: the US-Taliban peace negotiations and the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021 following the US military withdrawal. In the first section, a quantitative analysis is conducted, examining news coverage from September 2018 to September 2020 across media outlets from eight different countries. The primary objective of quantitative analysis is to investigate the major elements of war and peace journalism that was covered by selected countries press during the US-Taliban peace talks. Find Major themes that were evident in the selected countries press stories about peace talks between US-Taliban. And the comparison of findings between Intra-Regional and Extra-Regional countries Press in the coverage of peace talks.

In response to the RQ1. The research findings pertaining to four topics demonstrate a notable distinction between the War Journalism and Peace Journalism frames. Findings show that 68% News stories was covered under the topic of —status of conflict|. The analysis of the Sources of news agencies category reveals that national sources provided extensive coverage of —Diplomatic development| 46% even with International news agencies primarily focused on the conflict aspect 33%. In Frames category PJ abundantly covered the topics 77% "Diplomatic development| followed by —Humanitarian Assistancel| 55% stories and WJ covered the topic —Status of conflict| (77%).

In response to the RQ2. The finding shows that the Intra-Regional countries gave prominent coverage to Afghan reconciliation Whereas, Times of India covered stories related to Fight and Talk. Interestingly, all the countries' get little coverage of the conflict by press except India. All the countries covered mostly the topic of Humanitarian Assistance. Whereas, India gave little coverage on Humanitarian assistance after covering eight stories only. The overall findings of Extra-Regional countries reveal that Moscow Times and China Daily Extensively covered the topic of Diplomatic and political development. Whereas, The New York Times and The Independent mostly covered Fight and Talks related stories. Extra-Regional countries prioritize conflict and military skirmishes, followed by diplomatic initiatives, and ultimately engage in economic and humanitarian help. Intra-Regional countries gave maximum coverage to the Diplomatic & Political development followed by Fight and talk third Economic and human assistance and lastly conflict.

In response to the RQ3, the analysis of the table provides valuable insights into how these eight countries approach peace talks, showcasing variations in their emphasis on peace vs conflict, truth vs propaganda, People vs Elite, and solutions or victory in their framing of discussions. Results found variations and reflect diverse perspectives and priorities of these nations in the context of peace negotiations. The findings suggest that media coverage often reflects the national interests of the reporting countries, frequently amplifying elite voices and governmental perspectives, especially during conflict resolution efforts. This reinforces the notion that national media tend to prioritize domestic narratives when covering international events such as the US-Afghan peace process. Pakistan stands out with a relatively higher percentage and emphasizing peace, while the USA shows a contrasting emphasis on war. Examining the Truth vs Propaganda frame, the USA again stands out in the context of propaganda rather than truth. The People vs Elite frame reveals that Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the USA have higher percentages, indicating a tendency to emphasize the role of elites in their framing, while Russia and China show lower percentages, suggesting emphasis on the role of the people. In the Solution vs Victory frame, Afghanistan and Pakistan newspapers exhibit a higher emphasis on solutions, whereas the USA and the UK emphasize victory in their coverage.

In the second section, qualitative research methods are utilized to assess the regional implications of the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, with a particular emphasis on Pakistan. This analysis draws from an array of pre-existing sources, including media reports, policy documents, and expert analyses. The study reveals the complexities surrounding the regional and global interests in Afghanistan, noting that despite significant international involvement, clear policies for fostering peace and long-term development in the region remain elusive. This lack of strategic planning is particularly concerning given the volatile environment left in the wake of the US withdrawal. The research highlights the critical need for Pakistan to devise carefully considered policies to mitigate the potential negative repercussions of the US exit on its own stability and security. It underscores the importance of addressing the spillover effects of the Afghan conflict on neighboring states, particularly in the context of rising violence and the resurgence of the Taliban. The absence of coherent strategies during the US withdrawal is criticized for exacerbating instability in Afghanistan, with Afghan security forces bracing for potential retaliatory violence as clashes between the Taliban and government forces persist. Moreover, the study offers recommendations for potential security solutions in Afghanistan, suggesting that peace-building efforts must be sustained despite the challenges.

In conclusion, the article emphasizes the significance of foresight and strategic planning in managing the Afghan situation. It argues that the failure to adequately plan for the aftermath of the US withdrawal risks creating further chaos and destabilization, both within Afghanistan and across the broader region. Careful consideration of the various actors' interests and the development of inclusive policies are crucial to navigating the complexities of the post-withdrawal phase and ensuring a more stable future for Afghanistan and its neighbours. Pakistan, along with neighboring countries like China and Iran, could play a pivotal role in ensuring stability in Afghanistan. This presents an opportunity for Pakistan to engage diplomatically and strengthen its regional position. As the dust settles after the U.S. exit from Afghanistan, the regional landscape is in flux. Pakistan and India, as significant stakeholders, must carefully navigate the uncertainties while exploring avenues for collaboration. Moreover, Afghanistan is rich in natural resources, which could improve the social and economic life of the nation, if they are explored. If United States supports Afghanistan in the flourishing of mineral resources in the shape of skills, techniques and modern equipment, Afghanistan dependence will decrease on donor agencies and will be able to stand on their feet.

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