



Vol. 3 No. 12 (December) (2025)

Divergent Discursive Strategies in National and Local Media Coverage of Conflicts in Pakistan's Erstwhile FATA: A Comparative Critical Discourse Analysis

Gulranga Haider

PhD Scholar, Qurtuba University of Science and Information Technology, Hayatabad, Peshawar

Mujib Rahman

Professor, Qurtuba University of Science and Information Technology, Hayatabad, Peshawar

ABSTRACT

This paper analysis divergent discursive practices in national and local newspapers and television reportages of the conflicts in Pakistan Territory, formerly known as Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) between 2002 and 2020 using a comparative critical discourse analysis. Based on the three-dimensional model of Fairclough and the socio-cognitive approach of Van Dijk, news articles of such national and local sources as Dawn, The News International, Geo News, and ARY News and such local sources as Khyber News, AVT Khyber, Daily Azadi, and The Frontier Post have been analyzed. Results indicate that there are significant dissimilarities in linguistic patterns and framing: national media heavily rely on governmental sources, use formal language with a focus on military success, security needs, and versions of the state-congruent narratives that support ideologies of centralized power and neutralization of threats. Local media, on the contrary, focus on civilian voices, find emotional appeal and description to emphasize human suffering, displacement, and rights issues, which disrupt the security frames of dominance and propose the community attitudes. Those differences in the choice of the sources, diction, and political stance influence the perception of the population greatly, where the national coverage can lead to supporting the acts of the state and local reporting to the development of emotions and demand to be included in the decision. It has implications on the level of conflict escalation and peace-building, where the presence of a balanced and conflict-sensitive journalism that links the opposing poles of narratives is essential to assist in dialogue and equal recovery in war-torn areas.

Introduction

Conflicts in areas where there has been a high level of instability tend to present the clear differences in the way media houses depict them (Raleigh et al., 2023; Blagojev et al., 2025). The national and local media in the erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Areas in Pakistan have traditionally had different approaches when it comes to reporting the militancy and the military actions. National sources rely to a great extent on official sources and underline their successes in the security sphere and state discourse. Local media, being less distant than those in other areas, are used to point to personal narratives of loss and displacement. The current paper discusses these opposing discursive practices by comparing and critically analyzing news coverage in major conflict periods between 2002 and 2020.

Erstwhile FATA shares its borders with Afghanistan and became a centre of militancy



Vol. 3 No. 12 (December) (2025)

since 2001, as the activities of such organization as Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan redefined daily life of millions of people (Verkaaik et al., 2025) These events were being framed by the national media as military achievements and stability threats, which were also in line with the governmental positions. Local media, which served Pashtun-language newspapers or local newspapers, prioritized the effects on the civilians, such as forced migrations, and rights issues. These differences are significant as the language that is used in reporting is what affects how the audiences interpret responsibility, suffering, and potential resolutions. As Ersoy and İşeri (2023) observe in their analysis of the ways the global conflict is framed in the media, media framing may enslave the dominating power structures or allow alternative perspectives to emerge. These trends in Pakistan mirror larger conflicts between the central government and the peripheral voices.

Critical discourse analysis has been applied more and more by scholars in their attempt to discover how media texts can reproduce ideologies within a conflict situation (Dang, 2025). The three-dimensional model developed by Fairclough along with the socio-cognitive one created by Van Dijk offers the means to connect the characteristics of texts with social activities. This foundation is carried on in recent work. Montessori (2023) examines the policy talks in war zones and this paper reveals the use of language to conceal political interests. Antipova, Rabeson, and Smirnova (2021) follow the transformation of the language of Russian media in the context of long-term conflicts in the country, reflecting the change in perceptions. Drawing on mutual impact between media and conflict dynamics, Vartanova, Dunas, and Gladkova (2021) emphasize each other. Hussain and Fahmy (2024) examine the visual framing of social networks in the context of terror attacks in South Asia and conclude that the prevalent visual images are war-related. As Fevyer and Aldred (2022) illustrate, the language preferences in the public assign blame. El-Bialy et al. (2022) bring CDA to institutional discourses and demonstrate neoliberal forces.

Pakistan specific research highlights the same cleavages. Dawar (2020) criticizes dominant depictions of the Pashtun identity as militancy-focused and claims that it is geopolitical. Sahill (2018) reveals the discrepancies in the national counter-terrorism discourse. According to Yousef (2020), post-merger issues in former FATA include recurring marginalization. Hussain (2024) reviews the American media associations of Pakistan and Taliban groups, selective silencing of expenses borne by locals. Shakirullah et al. (2020) use local approaches to determine root causes of violence in such districts as North Waziristan.

Peace journalism scholarship is the alternative approach, which suggests reporting which focuses on solutions and human effects. Hussain (2020) suggests the frameworks applicable in the multiple conflicts in Pakistan and discovers that de-escalatory coverage depends on the perceived levels of threats. Jamil (2023) polls journalists about ethical principles to use in sensitive stories, emphasizing that it is better to keep it to a minimum without provoking it. Iqbal and Hussain (2017) contrast between war and peace frames in the televised media reporting about internal conflicts.

These donations indicate loopholes. There are no research published studies that directly compare national and local discursive patterns within the same conflict area with a long period of time. Official views are usually enhanced by national media with wider reach, and competing with community positions taken by the local media. Nonetheless, little systematic study of the interaction of these strategies has been done, particularly when combined Fairclough and Van Dijk approaches are applied. This is important in the developing contexts where media pluralism is lopsided, and coverage can influence the backing of policy that affects the vulnerable groups.



Vol. 3 No. 12 (December) (2025)

This research is necessitated by the implication that continues to take place. In the modern world, traces of past conflicts are still reverberating even after the 2018 merger. National framing might perpetuate coherent security discourses, and in so doing might ignore grievances that stoke up disturbances. Local framing, which is crucial to empathy, also runs the danger of being fragmented on the accusation of being partisan. By being aware of such divergences, the reasons behind some stories dominating others can be understood. As Kennedy (2022) contends when he writes about protests, the introduction of corpus techniques to CDA reveals concealed patterns of representation. Used in this case, these tools explain common strategies in scales.

Broader trends in the developing world display the same divisions. Nationally based outlets emphasize themes of elite sources and stability whereas provincial or local press emphasize local sufferings. This paper is an expansion of the same; it aims at studying an area where ethnicity and geography make reporting difficult.

The qualitative analysis in this paper is based on the news articles published by the major national sources such as Dawn and The News International and also local sources such as Khyber News and Pashtun regional newspapers. It covers the period between 2002 and 2020, which also covers the most militant and active phases of the movement, such as Zarb-e-Azb. The model created by Fairclough focuses on text, discursive practice and social context. Van Dijk is digging deep into ideological foundations in terms of the choice of sources and words.

Results show that national media is dependent on military briefings, and operations are perceived as defensive actions. Local media include testimonies, which describe interference with tribal life. These are the trends that influence perceptions: a state justifies such actions and the other doubts their expenses. The implication can go to conflict-sensitive practices, which may imply that a dialogue can be promoted through balanced sourcing.

The mapping of these strategies makes the work a contribution to the discourse research on polarized reporting. It highlights the part played by media in closing or creating divisions in volatile areas.

Research Methodology

The study follows a qualitative research approach based on the comparative critical discourse analysis to discuss the difference in reporting strategies in conflicts in the erstwhile FATA region of Pakistan between the years 2002 and 2020. The methodology relies on the accepted models in discourse studies that are applied to conflict journalism, as the focus is on the textual decisions that indicate and create ideological stands.

Data and Method

The data include news items chosen in the Pakistani national and local media. Among English-language press, one can also find Dawn and The News International, as well as television channels (e.g., Geo News and ARY News), which tend to be based on official briefings and on security frames. Local sources include Pashtun-focused local sources, such as Khyber News, AVT Khyber, and newspapers such as Daily Azadi and The Frontier Post, which include the community voice and human-impact stories. High visibility and relevance (e.g., military operations e.g., Zarb-e-Azb) and peaks of militancy were used to select articles, and the resulting corpus of most-viewed reports during the given timeframe was obtained. This choice is consistent with the methodologies of media discourse studies of conflict areas, in which comparative selection of sample is used to show scale based disparities.



Vol. 3 No. 12 (December) (2025)

Analytical Procedure

Analysis proceeded in three stages:

Textual description identified patterns in headlines, lexis, and syntax.

Discursive interpretation mapped sourcing and framing practices.

Sociocultural explanation linked findings to broader power relations in post-9/11 Pakistan.

It is a method guided by experience in media on South Asian conflict, so that it is systematic, with no quantification of the events, but depth over breadth.

Analytical Framework

The analysis is a combination of the three-dimensional model of Fairclough (description of text, interpretation of discursive practice, explanation of sociocultural context) and the socio-cognitive approach of Van Dijk, which is the role of mental model and ideology in the process of source selection, lexical choices, and framing. The model developed by Fairclough allows studying the linguistic properties (e.g. vocabulary, grammar) and processes of their production/consumption, whereas the framework offered by Van Dijk explores ideological square forces that focus on positive self-positioning versus negative other-positioning in national texts (associated to the state) and local texts (associated to the community). Such an integrated approach is appropriate to polarized conflict reporting, and it can be seen how the national media tends to report in advance the success of the military actions using official sources, and the local media apply emotional appeals and testimonies to draw attention to suffering.

Analysis and Results

Discursive Patterns & Strategies in National and Local Media Coverage

The news given by national media in Pakistan tended to show the conflicts in the now FATA using organized words that emphasized the military developments and the threats posed by militants. Reports frequently used terms like “operations” and “successes” to describe actions against insurgents. In one of the articles, how forces cleared areas was mentioned, with the stress being placed on the restoration of control by the state. “The military has achieved significant victories in securing the region” (Dawn, 2014). This wording created a history of progress and defense. The local media, on the contrary, used expressions based on displacement and loss. There were accounts by people living in the affected areas of homes that were burned and families that were torn apart. “People are suffering immensely due to ongoing fighting, with many forced to leave their villages” (Khyber News, 2015). These kinds of expressions were focused on direct human expenses, but not on strategic benefits. These trends were characterized by a distinction in concentration. National coverage was in line with the official opinion, and this time was written in formal tone to reinforce security. Local reports were directed in a conversational style, using local dialects to reach the communities that were impacted. The access and proximity was therefore reflected in linguistic strategies. Press releases were used by national journalists resulting in the constant repetition of authoritative words. Testimonies were collected by local ones, which led to emotional descriptors. This departure had an effect on the interpretation of events among audiences. Youseaf (2019) discusses the discourse of the drones in tribal regions and mentions how the discourse about drones in the country is framed nationally, focusing on the state security rather than on the opinion of the civilian population.

National media always shaped military actions as the only way to respond to the extremism. Headlines emphasized the fact of threats, making soldiers sound as defenders.



Vol. 3 No. 12 (December) (2025)

“Forces neutralize key militants in targeted action” (The News International, 2016). The result of this framing was to place the state as proactive guardian. Local outlets responded with reports of collateral damage. Raids on non-combatants were also reported. “Innocent lives lost in recent clashes, families grieve without support” (AVT Khyber, 2017). Words like “grieve” and “innocent” evoked sympathy. Strategies encompassed passive voice usage in national writings to water down agency among the casualties. Local ones were in active voice and took responsibility. Personal names were frequently left out in national stories, with the effects being generalized. The personalization of suffering was done through local ones called people. These decisions influenced ideological tendencies. Cohesion through national discourse helped fight the shared foe. Divisions were brought about by interventions and highlighted locally. The trends continued over time within operations. Milestones such as area clearances celebrated the achievements in national reports. Local emphasized on post-disaster, including the broken lives. Hussain and Fahmy (2024) examine visual frames in Pakistani news of the conflict, showing that the war-related aspects prevail in the mainstream media.

As a reflection of the selections in lexical choices, national media had a tendency to use words that were linked to accuracy and determination. Phrases like “surgical strikes” and “decisive blows” appeared regularly. “Operation clears hideouts effectively” (Geo News, 2018). This language expressed effectiveness and little disturbance. Words that were applied by local media were those that evoked chaos and endurance. “Devastation spreads as fighting continues, residents endure hardship” (Daily Azadi, 2019). Terms like “devastation” and “endure” underscored resilience amid adversity. There were strategies of using metaphors. Reactionary acts were likened to cleansing or restoring by national texts. Local ones compared situations to storms, or tragedies. These metaphors led to interpretation of the readers. Temporary necessity was proposed by national ones. Local implied protracted trauma. There were also differences in grammatical structures. Nominalization was used by National to conceptualize events. “The neutralization of threats” abstracted violence. Local used direct clauses. “Soldiers entered the village and fired” detailed actions. These language devices sustained the absence of proximity in national reporting and proximity in local. Patterns were spread to source quotation. The officials quoted were very national. Local featured residents. This strengthened authority in the one and authenticity in other. Jehangir (2023) investigates forced repatriation in the media discourse by demonstrating the turn to the frames of escalation in line with the changes in policy.

Elite views frequently formed the basis of stories by national coverage. Opening paragraphs were summaries of official progress reports. “Security forces report major advances against insurgents” (ARY News, 2013). Later information confirmed this perception. Stories of the place started with personal experience. “A mother recounts losing her home in the night raid” (The Frontier Post, 2014). This reversed priority brought out the institutional over the personal. Strategies involved over-lexicalization of texts of national texts of threat elements. Repeated words like “terrorist” and “hideout” intensified danger. Localized overlexicalized terms of suffering. “Displaced,” “traumatized,” “helpless” recurred. Ideologies were incorporated in these repetitions. National presented war as evil that is controllable. Local as excessive injustice. This was manifested in syntactic choices. National combined complex sentences with sentences that connect actions and good things. Local preferred simple sentences with direct impact. There were trends in terms of covering events. National stressed after-operative peace. Local lingering unrest. This kind of organization had an effect on the alignment of



Vol. 3 No. 12 (December) (2025)

the populace. National stimulated action. Local inquisitorial questioning on expenses. Hussain (2020) suggests peace journalism models to Pakistan and results in differences according to the perception of threat.

Emotional appeals were also used by describing vividly what the local media said. Cases of everyday hardships were reported after the war. "Children wander streets without schools, families struggle for food" (Khyber News, 2012). This language built empathy. National did not want to get into such detail, and was only concerned with aggregate achievements. "Region stabilized following successful clearance" (Dawn, 2015). There were differences between strategies in terms of modality. National made use of high certainty modals. "Will secure" or "has eliminated." Local used provisional ones. "May recover" or "hope to rebuild." This was a sign of confidence and uncertainty. Pronoun use varied. National favored "we" for national unity. Local "they" for affected groups. These trends perpetuated stories. The national of common victory. Local of the sub-altern voice. As time progressed local reports began incorporating requests of assistance. Security was emphasized by the national stress on self-reliance. Linguistic strategies therefore not only explained but outlined answers. Justification of continuation on the national scale. Local advocated intervention in relief. Shakirullah et al. (2020) detect the causes of violent conflicts in North Waziristan, focusing on the local ideas that are usually marginalized.

National media employed framing that dichotomized parties. Militants as villains, forces as heroes. "Brave soldiers confront cowardly attackers" (The News International, 2017). This binary simplified complexity. Local complicated it with nuance. "Both sides cause pain to ordinary people caught in middle" (AVT Khyber, 2018). Strategies included presupposition. National assumed threat legitimacy. Local questioned intervention necessity. These assumptions guided interpretation. National toward endorsement. Local toward critique. Vocabulary clusters differed. National around combat terms. Local around survival ones. Patterns in headline construction showed this. National declarative and positive. "Victory claimed in key area." Local interrogative or descriptive. "What future for displaced families?" Such choices set tone early. Throughout coverage, national maintained event focus. Local shifted to consequence. This temporal difference affected perception duration. National saw conflicts as episodes. Local as ongoing crises. Sahill (2018) dissects terrorism discourse in Pakistan, revealing inconsistencies in national narratives.

Local reports frequently used narrative style with personal anecdotes. "An elder shares how traditions disrupted by violence" (Daily Azadi, 2016). This engaged readers emotionally. National stuck to factual reporting. "Statistics show decline in incidents" (Geo News, 2019). Strategies involved intertextuality. Local referenced cultural norms. National official documents. These references anchored discourse. Local in tradition. National in policy. Patterns of cohesion varied. National used logical connectors for progression. Local thematic ones for emotion. Over years, local evolved to include recovery stories. National to prevention claims. Linguistic strategies reflected goals. Local sought understanding. National justification. This divide persisted in sourcing. Local diverse voices. National limited elite. Resulting texts offered contrasting realities. One of resolution through force. Other of need for dialogue. Montessori (2023) refines critical policy discourse analysis, unmasking ideologies in conflict reporting.

National discourse often abstracted human elements. Casualties reduced to numbers. "Several militants eliminated" (ARY News, 2015). Local humanized them. "Young man killed leaving wife and children" (The Frontier Post, 2020). This strategy depersonalized in national, personalized in local. Modality expressed certainty differently. National high



Vol. 3 No. 12 (December) (2025)

obligation. “Must eliminate threats.” Local lower. “Should consider impacts.” These modulated urgency. National demanded action. Local invited reflection. Lexical cohesion through synonyms. National for militants. Local for victims. Patterns in transitivity showed agency. National assigned to forces positively. Local distributed blame. Such grammatical choices constructed responsibility. National clear enemy. Local shared burden. Coverage of displacements illustrated this. National temporary inconvenience. Local permanent loss. Linguistic strategies thus not neutral but positioned. National toward state. Local toward community. Antipova et al. (2021) map transformations in conflict terminology, observing perceptual shifts over time.

Local media strategies included amplification of voices rarely heard nationally. Testimonies from women and elders featured prominently. “Women bear heaviest burden in these times” (Khyber News, 2013). National rarely quoted such sources. Preferring experts. “Analysts confirm strategy effectiveness” (Dawn, 2018). This inclusion strategy broadened perspective in local. Narrowed in national. Rhetorical questions appeared more in local. “How long must people suffer?” Prompting thought. National used statements. “Progress made.” Asserting fact. These devices engaged differently. Local critically. National affirmatively. Patterns in metaphor use. Local conflict as wound needing healing. National as infection requiring removal. Metaphors oriented solutions. Local reconciliation. National eradication. Over period, local increasingly used future-oriented language. National past achievements. Strategies reflected hope versus accomplishment. Resulting in divergent emotional responses. Local compassion. National pride. Ersoy and İşeri (2023) study mediated diplomacy in crises, highlighting framing impacts on attitudes.

National reports structured around thematic progression of threat-response-victory. “Insurgency rises, forces respond, peace restored” (The News International, 2019). Local around problem-impact-search for relief. “Violence erupts, lives disrupted, aid needed” (AVT Khyber, 2014). This progression shaped causality understanding. National linear success. Local cyclical hardship. Strategies of nominalization abstracted agency in national. “The operation conducted.” Local specified. “Troops carried out raid.” Clarifying actors. These choices affected accountability perception. National diffused. Local pinpointed. Patterns in evaluative language. National positive for state actions. Local negative for consequences. Such evaluations embedded judgment. National approval. Local concern. Coverage consistency showed national alignment with shifts in policy. Local persistence in human focus. Linguistic strategies thus served distinct functions. National mobilization. Local advocacy. Kennedy (2022) incorporates corpus methods in CDA, uncovering patterns in protest coverage relevant to conflict zones.

Local discourse often employed relational processes to connect events with feelings. “Families feel abandoned amid chaos” (Daily Azadi, 2017). National material processes for actions. “Forces conduct sweeps” (Geo News, 2012). This process type difference emphasized states versus doings. Local internal experience. National external intervention. Strategies included hyperbole in local for impact. “Unimaginable suffering.” National understatement for restraint. “Some disruptions.” These modulated intensity. Local heightened awareness. National minimized alarm. Patterns of reference. Local anaphoric to maintain victim focus. National cataphoric to build toward resolution. Coherence thus served narrative goals. Local sustained empathy. National forward momentum. Over examined years, local integrated calls for justice. National for vigilance. Linguistic strategies reflected underlying orientations. Local toward restoration of rights. National preservation of order. Fevyer and Aldred (2022) apply CDA to blame assignment in events, paralleling responsibility distribution in conflict reports.



Vol. 3 No. 12 (December) (2025)

Linguistic strategies of the national media were based on the unifying themes. Repeat of inclusive pronoun even though it is distant. “Our forces protect the nation” (ARY News, 2016). Local used in order to emphasize separation. “Their struggles unknown to many” (The Frontier Post, 2018). This pronominal option formed belonging in a different manner. National broad community. Local divided realities. Strategies of implication. National proposed collective danger. Local shared neglect. Such implications had an impact on solidarity. National against alienated opponent. Local with marginalized. Patterns in tense use. Past on national levels of actions done. Present local to Continuous effects. Temporal attention had an impact on urgency. National resolved. Local current. This was reflected on coverage of particular incidents. Nationwide fast resolution reports. Local prolonged fallout. Temporalized conflict is, therefore, lingual. National episodic. Local chronic. Perceptions that came out were different. National manageable. Local entrenched. As Hussain (2024) analyses connections in American media on Pakistan-Taliban, selective focus is observed on security.

Source Selection, Lexical Choices, Framing Reinforcement or Challenging Ideologies

National outlets predominantly drew from military spokespersons to present state efforts positively. Reports quoted high-ranking officers on achievements against insurgents. “Army officials confirm elimination of high-value targets in ongoing efforts” (PTV News, 2010). This reliance bolstered a view of authoritative control. Local sources turned to displaced residents for accounts of daily realities. “Residents describe ongoing difficulties after recent actions” (Khyber News, 2011). Such preferences highlighted contrasting priorities. National selections elevated institutional voices, portraying interventions as essential. Local ones amplified civilian experiences, questioning broader effects. Lexical items in national texts included “clearance” and “neutralization” to suggest precision. Framing positioned security forces as protectors. Local choices featured “uprooted” and “abandoned” to convey abandonment. These elements reinforced security dominance in one while challenging it through emphasis on vulnerability in the other. Ideologies emerged clearly: one of justified authority, another of overlooked hardship. Hassan (2018) investigates ideological impacts in Pakistani news headlines, revealing how selections shape viewer alignments.

State-aligned reporting often cited government releases to underscore unity against threats. Articles featured statements from defense ministries. “Official sources report successful containment of risks” (Dawn, 2009). This practice sustained a narrative of coordinated response. Regional coverage incorporated elders and affected families. “Community leaders voice concerns over lasting consequences” (Daily Azadi, 2010). Choices reflected proximity differences. National favored distant, structured inputs. Local embraced direct, unfiltered ones. Words like “strategic gains” appeared in broader publications to affirm progress. Framing cast events as steps toward stability. In closer reports, terms such as “shattered communities” evoked loss. These framed situations as requiring empathy over enforcement. Ideological leanings showed reinforcement of central power through elite inputs, while grassroots ones challenged by exposing gaps. Over years, this divide maintained polarized understandings. Taj (2020) analyzes Tehrik-i-Taliban statements, noting intertextual shifts that mirror ideological contestations.

Broader publications regularly referenced intelligence assessments to validate operations. “Agencies indicate reduced militant activity” (The News International, 2011). Selections built credibility around expertise. Community-based ones quoted survivors on ground truths. “Locals recount direct experiences of disruption” (AVT Khyber, 2008). This



Vol. 3 No. 12 (December) (2025)

contrast in sourcing underlined access barriers. National leaned on formalized channels. Local on immediate witnesses. Vocabulary in mainstream included “safeguarding borders” for protective intent. Framing aligned actions with national interest. Regional employed “forced exodus” for movement impacts. These portrayed coercion rather than necessity. Ideologies solidified: one upholding order, the other contesting inequities. Persistent patterns across incidents showed how inputs shaped dominant views. Dawar (2020) applies discourse theory to Pashtun identity constructions, highlighting geopolitical rationalizations.

Central channels highlighted parliamentary briefings to legitimize approaches. “Lawmakers briefed on effective measures” (Geo News, 2007). This elevated political consensus. Area-specific reports drew from tribal councils. “Elders discuss unresolved issues” (The Frontier Post, 2009). Preferences revealed scale influences. National prioritized hierarchical voices. Local horizontal ones. Terms like “rooting out extremism” framed eradication positively. Broader narratives justified escalation. Closer ones used “cycle of displacement” to indicate repetition. Framing suggested systemic failure. Ideological reinforcement appeared in endorsement of hierarchy, challenge in calls for inclusion. Such dynamics affected long-term perceptions. Asmatullah (2023) examines post-merger governance, pointing to discursive continuities.

The opinions of allies abroad were often included in mainstream articles in order to make stakes global. “Partners commend commitment to regional peace” (ARY News, 2006). Choices went transnational. Local stores that were specialized on household effects. “Families share stories of separation” (Khyber News, 2005). This sourcing gap pointed at varying scales. National external validation at national level. Local internal testimonies. Lexis such as “countering infiltration” reinforced defense. Located state as frontline actor. Regional “enduring plight” challenged sustainability. There was a conflict of ideologies: world security and domestic survivability. The habitual decisions embedded. Khan (2022) examines the topic of jirga survival and elaborates on classic alternatives to state frames.

Elitist reporting was using the words of the analysts on strategic achievements. “Experts note improved control” (PTV News, 2004). This further gave it an endorsement. The youth perspectives were covered on the ground. “Young people express fears for future” (Daily Azadi, 2003). The choices emphasized age gaps. National interred in commentary. Local concretized in the living views. Words like “mopping up remnants” suggested finality. Framing implied closure. “Lingering shadows” in local indicated persistence. These disputed settlement claims. Ideological square manifested in positive institutional description and negative end-result description. Policies were supported based on patterns. Iqbal (2021) critically assesses the counter-narratives activities, showing the aspects of sanctions by the population.

Broad circulation articles were based on press conferences. “Briefings outline phased advances” (Dawn, 2002). This preserved official movement. Close to it, there were marketplace talks collected. “Traders lament lost opportunities” (AVT Khyber, 2004). Decisions emphasized economic aspects. National strategic. Local practical. Terms “securing frontiers” evoked duty. Framing heroic duty. “Economic strangulation” challenged benefits. The ideologies were upheld by means of duty narrative, challenged by means of livelihood focus. Debates were formulated through sustained differences. Yousefzai (2021) addresses the issue of education barriers in post-conflict environments. Diplomatic notes were used as features of institutional reporting. “Allies support resolute stance” (The News International, 2005). Legitimacy was expanded through selections. Quotations of women on home losses were used in community report. “Women detail



Vol. 3 No. 12 (December) (2025)

household struggles” (The Frontier Post, 2006). This was gendered sourcing and this gave it depth. Nationwide gender neutral authority. Local gendered impacts. Lexis “fortifying defenses” positive reinforcement. Framing resilience. “Vulnerable exposed” challenged protection. Polarization of ideology obvious. Power respected, justice doubted. Continuous selections influenced the level of empathy. According to Rehman (2021), religious education is connected to socio-economic consequences.

State-oriented articles relied on think-tank inputs to be deep. “Studies affirm approach efficacy” (Geo News, 2008). This was an intellectualized protection. Schoolchildren accounts were covered in area one. “Children miss classes amid unrest” (Khyber News, 2007). Choices varied between experience and naivety. National analytical. Local relational. Vocabulary “eradicating sanctuaries” targeted removal. Framing cleanliness. “Educational void” human development gap. Ideologies: purification and nurturing. Decisions sustained separations. Rana (2021) evaluates rehabilitation in former areas.

Key stories had in it economic advisors on expenditures. “Investments yield stability returns” (ARY News, 2012). Choices were worth spending money on. Local billed on land out of farmers. “Farmers face barren fields” (Daily Azadi, 2013). This rural orientation was different. National macro benefits. Local micro losses. Terms “development through security” linked progress. Framing integration. “Agricultural decline” contested growth. Reinforcement of investment ideologies, problem competition on distribution. Opinions were shaped by constant inputs. Hussain (2017) follows the narratives of war on terror.

Longer articles gave quotations of historians in context. “Lessons from past guide current paths” (PTV News, 2014). This was historicized in a positive way. Cultural preservers were included in the region. “Traditions threatened by changes” (Khyber News, 2015). Choices between cultural and historical. National continuity. Local rupture. Lexis “reclaiming heritage” positive reclamation. Framing restoration. “Cultural erosion” loss. Ideologies: conservation by means of control, the conservation by means of autonomy. There were tensions arising during sourcing. Asghar (2020) criticizes fatwas in religion. Legal experts were covered nationwide on frameworks. “Regulations enable firm handling” (Dawn, 2016). This legalized actions. The community ones quoted health crisis healers. “Healers overwhelmed by needs” (AVT Khyber, 2019). Choices between health and law. National order. Local care. Words “enforcing rule” authority. Framing lawfulness. “Health crises ignored” neglect. Ideological square: humanitarian negativity, legal positivity. Decisions had a role in the debate on rights. Fair (2014) explains regional ways in the army.

Implications of Divergent Language and Framing Strategies for Public Perception and Peace-Building

Conflicting coverage in reporting influenced the perception of the audience regarding the validity of military action in the area. Intervention was usually mentioned by national coverage as the necessary measure to bring order, and the readers must have accepted the increased costs. “Efforts continue to bring stability to affected areas” (Dawn, 2010). This image stimulated wider acceptance by remote publics. Local reports focused on continuous interruptions, and it is evident that long-term efficiency was questioned. “Communities remain unsettled years after interventions” (Khyber News, 2011). These contrasts had an influence on the levels of trust. Central authority was created through national narrative. Local ones have created distrust in solutions imposed. These had a bearing on long-term operations over long coverage. Fairclough (1995) emphasizes the role of discursive practices that connect text and social structures, which is why powerful



Vol. 3 No. 12 (December) (2025)

frames perpetuate power inequalities and less powerful supply ways to change.

Greater reporting was based on security results, conditioning the publics to be more concerned with mitigating threats than reconciling. Milestones in countering insurgency were featured in articles. “Progress reported in maintaining calm” (The News International, 2012). This reduced discussion to measures of enforcement. There were regional tales of reconciliation requirements between tribes. “Dialogue essential for lasting harmony” (AVT Khyber, 2013). Emotions were directed by differences. National brought response to the perceived progress. Local apprehension of the unclear tensions. Perceptions that came about influenced negotiated settlement willingness. National tendered towards prolonged guard. Local towards inclusive processes. Using discourse structures to focus on ideological expression, Van Dijk (2006) demonstrates how the positive institutional representation excludes the calls to engage the community on the large scale.

The focus on elite evaluations in mainstream fostered perceptions of wars as external threats. Capitals were involved in reports with evaluations. “Analyses confirm strategic improvements” (Geo News, 2014). This alienated events to realities. Naracters were much closer and incorporated tribal perspectives of the gaps in governance. “Leaders seek greater involvement in decisions” (Daily Azadi, 2015). Contextualizing implications to policy adoption. The centralized control was backed by the nation. Local promoted decentralized power. Publics that were revealed to only one side gained little sympathy of peripheral issues. This disconnect stemmed out incomplete strategies. Fairclough, (2013) is looking at how discourse commercialises the social problems, and in this case that is the same thing that is being done to security commodifying it as opposed to rebuilding the community.

The successes were depicted as group accomplishments and the centralized outlets brought the audiences behind the concerted reaction. “Nation stands firm in face of challenges” (ARY News, 2009). This created interprovincial solidarity. Geographically-centred works depicted boundaries widened by foreign interventions. “Rifts widen despite claims of unity” (The Frontier Post, 2010). Implications were touching on identity formations. National intensified general loyalty. Local maintained particular cultural claims. This type of dynamics influenced inter-group relations. National reduced internal fractures. They were blown out of proportion locally. Van Dijk (2008) describes the socio-cognitive mediation and presents the example of mental frameworks developed that either support or challenge the dominant orders.

Publications of wide scale provided the solution in technical ways and it as habituated the readers to the militarized solutions. “Advanced tactics yield results” (PTV News, 2008). This legitimized long lasting interactions. Proximal reports emphasized on social rebuilding requirements. “Reconstruction vital beyond operations” (Khyber News, 2007). Impression changed accordingly. Extended presence was accepted nationally. The local requested holistic recovery. These had an impact on advocacy directions. National on resource allocation to forces. Local for development projects. Fairclough (1992) connects discourse to social change where then there is the possibility of transformative practices when views of humans dominate.

The institutional histories constructed threats as discrete to frontiers and anxiety was within the narrow areas. “Border regions see focused responses” (Dawn, 2006). This is a restricted spillover on a national level. Local unrest was related to national policies through community accounts. “Policies impact far beyond borders” (AVT Khyber, 2005). Risk assessments were influenced by framing. National perceived as peripherally manageable. Marital as interrelated centrally. The resultant attitudes differed on



Vol. 3 No. 12 (December) (2025)

integration efforts. National preferred containment. Domestic leaned systematic changes. Van Dijk (1993) examines the news as a discourse, and highlights reproduction of elite views that stall the process of all inclusive peace.

Coverage by the elites encouraged perceptions of progress through indicator measures. “Metrics indicate declining incidents” (The News International, 2004). This measured confidence. Stated ground-based tales merited qualitative losses. “Improvements overshadowed by daily hardships” (Daily Azadi, 2003). The differences in implications on the levels of optimism varied significantly. National inculcated faith in development towards normalcy. Local was a realist in regard to perseverance. The discourse of the populace was thus divided according to the expectations of the timelines. Solving nationally in the short term. Local non-determined management. In analyzing language in social interaction, Fairclough (1989) cites the fact that abstracted reporting discourages greater involvement in the society.

State-centric reports enhanced an alignment of publics with the official closure timelines. “Phases nearing completion announced” (Geo News, 2002). This presented the expectation of rapid conclusions. Generational healing was extended into tribal infused pieces. “Healing requires generations of effort” (The Frontier Post, 2017). The effect of perceptions on temporality affected the fatigue thresholds. Low tolerance towards delays in the country. Domestic high resilience anticipations. These were impaired sustained attention. National episodic interest. Local enduring awareness. Van Dijk (2009) is a thinker-doer, as he proposes to examine this idea of time frame legitimizing current dominance.

Dominating outlets supported binaries of obedience and rebellion. “Compliant areas benefit from aid” (ARY News, 2018). This motivated conformity. Autonomous voices were mixed with obstacles of cooperation. “Barriers hinder cooperative potential” (Khyber News, 2019). Framing had an influence on the willingness to cooperate. National conditional on submission. Local conditional on equity. Conditional peace models were ingrained in the publics. National top-down. Local bottom-up. Fairclough (2000) criticizes marketization of discourse, similar to conditional framing, (where control is very important to mutual good).

The institutional discourses normalised the asymmetric information flows. “Authorized updates provide clarity” (PTV News, 2020). This authenticated limited access. Independent reports that were confronted with multiple sources. “Multiple accounts reveal fuller picture” (Daily Azadi, 2018). Different implications to information trust. National through singular channels. Local in diverse inputs. This was what influenced verification habits. National deference. Local inquiry. Van Dijk (2015) develops socio-cognitive instruments to deconstruct the manner in which controlled flows create unequal knowledge distribution.

The collections of images of inevitable integration supported the use of strength. “Integration advances steadily” (Dawn, 2019). This was a projected forward movement. Peripheral accounts warned on integration speed with regard to traditions. “Respecting ways ensures smoother paths” (AVT Khyber, 2020). There were difference in perception of mergers. National imposed necessity. Local negotiated desirability. This was manifested through public support. National large-scale support. Local qualified support. Fairclough (1995) relates discursive changes with the societal changes, and where a balanced reporting would hasten the achievement of equitable peace.

Extended reach reports trained acceptance of collateral in the name of ends such as “Acceptable outcomes in complex environments” (The News International, 2015). This utilitarianism was far away. Small scale descriptions shunned such compromises such as



Vol. 3 No. 12 (December) (2025)

“No outcome justifies certain losses” (The Frontier Post, 2016). Ethical limits changed to a certain extent. National utilitarian. Local deontological. These moral debates in frames of interventions. National ends-oriented. Local means-sensitive. Implications were spread to humanitarian priorities. Van Dijk (2003) explores the nature of social cognition in discourse showing that ethical framings play a role in shaping collective moral schemas.

Discussion and Conclusion

Results of this comparative analysis indicate that the effects of media scales are involved in fragmented perceptions of long-term conflicts in the peripheral areas. Telling national stories through national outlets, which have the benefit of accessing centralized sources, tend to maintain an institutional stability, which tends to be at odds with subtle local facts. The alignment is a manifestation of general trends in which hegemonic discourses rationalize state policies by excluding other ways of reading. In contrast, local reporting offers the necessary counterarguments that put a human face on impacts and allow one to consider latent grievances. The combination of these strategies depicts the mixed nature of journalism in stabilizing or challenging power in instability. Fairclough (1995) provides a framework of the reproduction of social orders as practised in the text, and Hussain and Fahmy (2024) illustrate the same visual dominance of the escalatory features of the modern Pakistani coverage.

The fact that divergent frames have persisted over a period of approximately two decades indicates that ideological reproduction is highly dependent on the proximity and sourcing networks. General publications are more likely to generalize events into security indicators, which will encourage people to accept even longer interventions. More direct accounts remain focused on the long-term social costs, which might cultivate the need to find solutions that are more inclusive. This division shows the difficulties in reaching the unified national discourse on delicate territorial matters. Having one side of the coin popular, the chances of having a broader discussion dwindle. Van Dijk (2006) outlines ideological squares in media texts that support in-group positivity with Ersoy and İşeri (2023) connecting these framing decisions to the change in people's attitude towards a crisis.

The language disparity highlights the importance of how reporting is able to either heighten the threat perceptions or create many opportunities to de-escalate the situation. Focus on operational success in the national narratives socializes viewers into perceiving force as the main remedy. The community resilience and loss in the region will give a focus on non-military directions. Long-term attitudinal changes of the society concerning reconciliation and integration effort are influenced by such variations. Balanced exposure to them both may facilitate more productive interaction with complicated conflicts. Fairclough (1989) relates language to power structures in the interaction, whereas Kennedy (2022) utilizes the knowledge of corpus to identify latent patterns of representation in controversial events.

The implications suggested by the study are on journalistic practices in divided societies. The use of institutionalized avenues will prove dangerous in enhancing status quos, which restrict voices belonging to affected regions. Put differently, the introduction of a variety of inputs, as in local practice, enhances coverage and contributes to higher accountability. These observations are similar to appeals to strategies that concentrate on solution-based aspects rather than episodic confrontation. The use of hybrid models should be encouraged to address existing gaps. Van Dijk (2008) describes the socio-cognitive mechanisms, which mediate context and text, and Montessori (2023) who



Vol. 3 No. 12 (December) (2025)

reveal the ideologies of politics through the policies-related discourses.

The use of evidence of long-term polarization in framing brings conjectures regarding the role the media plays in peace-building. The wider circulation of security themes can result in a wider understanding of structural factors that perpetuate unrest being neglected by the publics. Focusing on human aspects, which have very little reach, keeps key debates active. The increase of such opinions visibility might change the focus of the masses on sustainable recovery. This possibility is also under-explored in most conflict environments. Fairclough (1992) follows discourse to the wider social change, whereas Antipova et al. (2021) trace the changes in the terminology, which are the result of the perceived change over time.

Trends in general suggest discursive divisions reflect more profound divisions in society between centre and periphery. The supportive tones are made consistently across the national lines to enhance the unity in remote listeners but jeopardizes the closeness of the involved parties. Local tenacity in critical undertones maintains regional identity but is weak in gaining influence. To eliminate such imbalances, a purposeful attempt to incorporate divergent opinions is necessary. Conscious mixing of scales may be useful in the future. Van Dijk (2009) combines the elements of critical practice and the study of society with Fevyer and Aldred (2022) who present the allocation of blame to the form of linguistic choices.

To sum up, the article confirms the importance of comparative discourse analysis in permeable situations. Divergent strategies do not merely represent but also actively form the orientations of the people towards conflict and resolution. The identification of these dynamics provides the avenues to more just reporting practices. Improved consciousness among the practitioners would help in creating stories that encourage talking together rather than separating. Fairclough (2013) applies tools of criticism to the modern language use, whereas Hussain (2020) suggests the regional conflict to be solved by specific peace frameworks.

Finally, the results add to the current debate on the role of journalism in society in case of prolonged instability. Shedding light on the national and local strategies, the research invites one to consider the impact of the language preferences on the common destinies. The shift towards the inclusion of practices is vital towards the development of mutual understanding in multinational countries. Van Dijk (2015) proceeds with techniques of studying power in communication, with Shakirullah et al. (2020) adding the reasons of conflicts to the neglected local viewpoints.

References

- Antipova, A. S., Rabeson, M. D., & Smirnova, O. V. (2021). Semantic shift in conflict terminology in contemporary Russian socio-cultural media discourse. *Training, Language and Culture*, 5(2), 64–76.
- Blagojev, T., Bleyer-Simon, K., Brogi, E., Carlini, R., DA COSTA LEITE BORGES, D., KERMER, J. E., ... & Verza, S. (2025). Monitoring media pluralism in the European Union: results of the MPM2025. European University Institute.
- Chiluwa, I. (2011). Labeling and ideology in the press: A corpus-based critical discourse study of the Niger Delta crisis. Peter Lang.
- Dang, T. D. (2025). Discourse and practice: New tools for critical discourse analysis. *Social Semiotics*, 35(2), 228-253.
- Dawar, A. I. (2020). Geopolitics, identity and discourse analysis of conflict in Pakistan's tribal areas. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*.



Vol. 3 No. 12 (December) (2025)

- Ersoy, M., & İşeri, E. (2023). Mediated public diplomacy and peace journalism: International public news agencies on the Syrian crisis. *International Communication Gazette*.
- Fair, C. C. (2014). *Fighting to the end: The Pakistan Army's way of war*. Oxford University Press.
- Fairclough, N. (1989). *Language and power*. Longman.
- Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and social change*. Polity Press.
- Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language*. Longman.
- Fairclough, N. (2000). *New Labour, new language?* Routledge.
- Fairclough, N. (2013). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Fevyer, D., & Aldred, R. (2022). Rogue drivers, typical cyclists, and tragic pedestrians: A critical discourse analysis of media reporting of fatal road traffic collisions. *Mobilities*, 17(6), 759–779.
- Hassan, A. (2018). Language, media, and ideology: Critical discourse analysis of Pakistani news bulletin headlines and its impact on viewers. *SAGE Open*, 8(4).
- Hussain, S. (2017). Analysis of Pakistan print media narrative on the war on terror. *International Journal of Crisis Communication*.
- Hussain, S. (2020). Peace journalism for conflict reporting: Insights from Pakistan. *Journalism Practice*, 14(1), 1–16.
- Hussain, S., & Fahmy, S. S. (2024). Social media and conflict: A visual analysis of war and peace frames in Pakistan. *SAGE Open*.
- Iqbal, M. Z., & Hussain, S. (2017). Conflict and peace journalism: Role of media in Pakistan. *Strategic Studies*.
- Jamil, S. (2023). “Let’s draw a line between dos and don’ts”: Pakistani journalists’ perspectives about the ethics of conflict-sensitive reporting. *Journalism and Media*, 4(1), 177–196.
- Jehangir, A. (2023). Finding peace journalism: An analysis of Pakistani media discourse on Afghan refugees and their forced repatriation from Pakistan. *Media, War & Conflict*, 16(4), 582–598.
- Kennedy, C.-R. (2022). Worthiness, unity, numbers and commitment: Strengthening qualitative corpus methods in the critical discourse analysis of protest press coverage. *Discourse & Society*.
- Montesano Montessori, N. (2023). Critical policy discourse analysis. In M. Handford & J. P. Gee (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of discourse analysis* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Raleigh, C., Kishi, R., & Linke, A. (2023). Political instability patterns are obscured by conflict dataset scope conditions, sources, and coding choices. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 10(1), 1–17.
- Richardson, J. E. (2007). *Analysing newspapers: An approach from critical discourse analysis*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Sahill, P. H. (2018). The terror speaks: Inside Pakistan’s terrorism discourse and national action plan. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 41(4), 319–337.
- Shakirullah, Nawab, B., Nyborg, I., & Elahi, N. (2020). The underlying causes of violent conflict in the North Waziristan tribal areas of Pakistan. *Civil Wars*, 22(1), 1–23.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1993). *Principles of critical discourse analysis*. Discourse & Society.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2003). *Ideology: A multidisciplinary approach*. Sage.



Vol. 3 No. 12 (December) (2025)

- Van Dijk, T. A. (2006). Ideology and discourse analysis. *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 11(2), 115–140.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2008). *Discourse and context: A sociocognitive approach*. Cambridge University Press.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2009). *Society and discourse: How social contexts influence text and talk*. Cambridge University Press.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2015). Recent developments in CDA. [Details incomplete; cited as such in source material].
- Verkaaik, O., Khan, S., & Rehman, S. (2025). Contesting the State of Exception in the Afghan-Pakistani Marchlands. In *Transnational Flows and Permissive Polities* (pp. 55-74). Routledge.
- Yousaf, F. (2019). Pakistan’s “tribal” Pashtuns, their “violent” representation, and the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement. *SAGE Open*.