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## **Balochistan: Reaping the benefits of peace journalism**

*Kurzfassung:* Wenn das Ziel des Friedensjournalismus darin besteht, zur Förderung des Friedens beizutragen, indem er die journalistische Qualität der Konfliktberichterstattung vorantreibt, dann zeigen die Ergebnisse dieser Studie, dass die Berichterstattung über den Balochistan-Konflikt den Lackmустest bestanden hat. Die Berichterstattung ist an den Bedürfnissen der Bevölkerung orientiert und die Berichtersteller sind sich ihrer Verantwortung gegenüber der Gesellschaft bewusst. Trotz akuter Sicherheitsprobleme ist es den Journalisten gelungen, den Konflikt auf die öffentliche Agenda zu setzen. Eine Mehrheit der Pakistaner teilt heute die Meinung, dass die Bevölkerung Balochistans von Politik und Armee misshandelt wurde und die Zeit dafür gekommen ist, ihr die Rechte zuzugestehen, für die sie jahrzehntelang gekämpft, tausende Menschenleben geopfert und großes Leid erduldet hat.

*Abstract:* If the focus of peace journalism is to press for quality journalism during conflict reporting which will ultimately contribute to peace, then the findings of this study show that the available reporting on the Balochistan conflict passes the litmus test. The coverage is pro-people, and the reporters are aware of their responsibility to society. Despite acute security problems, the journalists have been able to bring the conflict onto the public agenda. A majority of Pakistanis now agree that the people of Balochistan have been maltreated by both politicians and the army, and the time has come to grant them the rights for which they have been fighting for decades, sacrificed thousands of lives and endured great suffering.

### **1. Introduction**

Critical scholarship on conflict communication often accuses the mainstream media of producing propaganda and fanning the flames of nationalism in ways that mislead audiences about what is actually happening in war zones. Scholars like Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick have analyzed the media penchant for sensationalism and dramatization of actual events during conflicts. This is equally true for Pakistan's news media, which remained obsessed with escalatory and inflammatory content while reporting on the war against the Taliban in the tribal areas (bordering Afghanistan) (Siraj & Hussain, 2012; Hussain, 2014). Medialogic (the country's premier ratings recording firm for the TV industry) has revealed that news media in Pakistan have outdone the entertainment media in terms of viewership and financial benefits. One reason for the ascendancy of news media may be the prevalence of a plethora of security and political conflicts, which generates dependency on media for information. Media theorists (Altheid, in Baran & Davis, 2009) believe that during conflict periods, dependency on media increases, which may result in stronger effects of media reports, leading scholars like (Kempf, 2012; Ross, 2007; Tehranian, 2002; Lynch 2006) to stress the need for more constructive reporting to produce greater social benefits.

In this study, we analyze how Pakistani media report on the Balochistan conflict and how people react to this. The conflict has been going on since the founding of Pakistan, but now it has turned more violent. Thousands of people have been killed, many more gone missing, and despite peace overtures, there is no reduction in the tensions. A brief discussion of the nature of the conflict is presented to provide a better understanding.

### **2. Background of the conflict**

Balochistan is the largest Pakistani province in terms of territory, but the smallest in terms of population. According to the 1998 census, the ethnic makeup of the province includes 55 percent Baloch and 29 percent Pashtun tribes. Economically, despite rich mineral and gas deposits, it remains poverty stricken, underdeveloped and receives only a small share of the revenue it generates (Kundi, 2008).

The present insurgency in the province has its roots in history. Soon after the founding of Pakistan in 1947, the integration of Balochistan into it was resented by the ruling dynasty of the Khan of Qalat, who started agitation against it, which was soon suppressed. The unitary form of government (merging of all four provinces) was another bone of contention that ignited resentment (Ziring, 2004). When the One-Unit status was abolished in 1969, the situation in Balochistan took a turn toward normalcy. The next year, Balochistan was declared a separate province. However, after the dismissal of the elected provincial government of Balochistan in 1973 by the then Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, a wave of insurgency arose in the province, leading to a massive military operation that took a heavy toll on the two sides (Harrison, 1981). However, the aim of the insurgency was never secession from Pakistan, but rather to gain more influence on national affairs. General Zia ul Haq, who

staged a military coup in 1977, was quick to understand the threat and engaged with local leaders, which substantially improved the situation in the province.

This was a sound strategy, and different projects were initiated to further peace and development in the province. The so-called democratic era of the 1990s saw the political integration of the province, with the center and insurgent movements relegated to the back burner. However, the fourth military coup by General Musharraf in 1999 worked as a spoiler, as the Balochi people from the very outset disliked his policies. The development of army *cantonments* (permanent military stations), the construction of Gawadar Port and the killing of Balochi leader Nawab Akbar Bugti in 2005 all contributed to the present insurgency in the province.

The root cause of unrest among Balochistanis lies in the realization that their resources are being exploited without any benefit to them, states Mir Hasil Bezingo, a nationalist leader from the province (personal interview, May 2013). Reservoirs of Sui natural gas were discovered in 1952 and the facility was extended to the length and breadth of the country, but the only district in that province to receive a gas facility was Quetta, which got one in 1986, and that too was limited to the cantonment areas. Likewise, with other minerals that are being extracted, the center gets a major share of the profits, and the province languishes in poverty and economic deprivation. They fear that the developmental projects are designed by military and bureaucratic elites to colonize their province. Nonetheless, the political and economic grievances are eminently resolvable (greater devolution, permitting Balochistan to control its natural resources, including fixing the price at which these commodities sell, investing in Balochistani human resources development, expanding access to electricity and gas, and so forth).

In the past two decades, the conflict has acquired the new dimension of the 'disappearance of Balochi youth', implemented by the security agencies. Hundreds of mutilated bodies have been recovered so far, while the number of those already in custody is still a secret, though it is feared that they are in the thousands. In a report, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (2011) cited 140 cases of killings and 143 cases of disappearances. Besides the security forces, the report also mentions how the separatist groups are involved in killing ordinary people of Punjabi descent, whom they accuse of colonizing their lands.

After remaining on the back burner for decades, there is a realization in Pakistan that the situation in the province needs to be addressed immediately. Several politicians and the Supreme Court of Pakistan have championed the cause of the Balochi people and produced the best scenario for resolving this conflict. Pakistani media are especially responsive to the issue and prominently report events occurring in the province. This study will explore how Pakistani media frame this conflict, what is the impact of this reportage on the public, and how media discourse complies with the principles of peace journalism scholarship.

### 3. Media, War and Peace

Many researchers (Knightly, 2002; Bratic, 2008; Hamelink, 2008; Nohrstedt & Ottosen, 2008; Cottle, 2006; Shinar 2004) have found a media penchant to report on violence, due to political, financial and professional interests. *Political* interests may be expressed in the guise of pressure from warring states to use media for winning more friends and deterring enemies (Severin and Tankard, 1992); *financial* interests may also be that people are interested in information about conflicts and hence the opportunity to attract larger audiences (Knightly, 2002), and *professional* interests may be that war stories are more newsworthy and exert a great influence (Howard, 2003; Wolfsfeld, 2004).

In studies of US media, researchers have found cases of media jingoism during the two World Wars, Vietnam war, Cold War, and conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan (Bratic, 2008; Spencer, 2005; Herman & Chomsky, 1989; Ross 2007). Similarly, Dorman and Farhang (1987) found that US media coverage of Iran from 1951 to 1978 took cues from foreign-policy-makers rather than being independent.

Ottosen (1995) found that from 1980 to 1990, Norwegian newspapers' usage of enemy images was consistent with Norwegian foreign policy, in that journalists predominantly expressed patriotism rather than acting as critical observers. Susan Ross (2007) has investigated media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and found that Western media compromised their professionalism and supported Western interests.

The apologies offered by The New York Times, BBC and many other media outlets for their blind support of the Iraq invasion (Lynch & McGoldrick; 2005), indictment of a German radio broadcaster for his involvement in crimes against peace during the Second World War (Hamelink, 2008) and life sentences for three Rwandan journalists for inciting communal discord (Thompson, 2007) point to the fact that journalists don't always remain neutral and can become parties to conflicts.

Interestingly, the realization that media can be used for peace purposes is as old as the fear of its potential for inflaming conflicts. In the first quarter of the twentieth century, the Radio Nations were set up by the League of Nations to promote peace and harmony in Europe. Its successor, the United Nations, also established crisis radios to promote peace in the troubled regions of Europe, Asia and Africa (Becker, 2004). Likewise, there is a growing list of peace media outlets established in modern times to help resolve conflicts. A number of media outlets are

working to promote peace among conflicting parties in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Southern Asia.

Norwegian peace scholar Johan Galtung was the first to systematically analyze how the media report conflicts. In a study done in 1965, he and a colleague studied Norwegian media coverage of international conflicts and found the coverage propagandistic and in line with national foreign policy interests. In further studies, Galtung (1998) found that traditional media thrive on (a) reporting killings, injuries and direct violence (b) highlighting differences between conflicting parties to prepare for tougher competition (c) presenting conflicts with scant regard for the contexts and outcomes, and last but not least (d) maintaining that victory can be achieved if the competitor is defeated or reduced to a subservient position.

Obviously offended by this type of reportage, he proposed media for peace, which he called peace journalism. Galtung believes that if media can intensify conflicts, they have an equal potential to promote peace if properly used. According to Galtung (1998), peace journalism centers on news stories that accentuate peace initiatives; reduce ethnic and religious differences; prevent more conflict; and support conflict resolution, reconstruction and reconciliation.

Jake Lynch (2007) believes that peace journalism should be based on an awareness of the consequences of reportage, even if only facts are reported. The advocates of peace journalism draw on the literature of peace and conflict studies for guidance. Lynch and McGoldrick hold that it 'creates opportunities' for the public to 'consider and value nonviolent responses to conflict' (2005: 5). It is a remedial approach, based on a critical awareness that widespread reporting conventions produce a dominant diet of war journalism, and it is intended to give peace a better chance in public deliberation and debate.

Harvard scholar Etyan Gilboa (2009) has documented how international professional journalists, including "Seale, Koppel, Friedman, Gonzalez, Cronkite, Politkovskaya, Tower, Laguerre, and Scali" have played mediating roles to de-escalate conflicts. Five of them were successful and positively influenced sensitive negotiations. Few of them were appreciated, while others were suspected of spoiling negotiations. According to Gilboa, criticism of media journalists is partly professional (journalistic norms) and partly political (opponents criticize the media because they are not in favor of peace). He believes journalists should not be opposed if they start peace initiatives when other parties are reluctant.

However, many media scholars and practitioners are suspicious of such a role for media. They fear that this approach could reduce professional journalism to public relations or advocacy journalism (Hanitzsch, 2007). Others like Loyn (2007) argue that peace journalism wrongly sees conflict resolution as 'everybody's job', while Wolfsfeld (2004) opines that media and peace are incompatible, and Fawcett (2002) rejects peace journalism as a professionally and financially 'impractical notion'. German researchers (Kempf, 2007; Bläsi, 2004) have documented challenges that block the application of peace journalism, including the treatment of violence as a marketable commodity and hence a media penchant for reporting on it (journalistic cliché: if it bleeds, it leads) overly strict guidelines for journalists, competition to break the story, journalists' obsession with objectivity and a host of other issues. Majid Tehranian (2002) argues that peace journalism can be more successful in transforming national conflicts, but peace researchers have mainly focused on international conflicts and hence literature on the subject is scant. This study is an attempt to examine the feasibility of peace journalism in a national context.

Despite criticism of the notion of peace journalism, the concept is gaining momentum. Ordinary people, government officials, peace workers, national and international agencies, and well-known conflict reporters have joined the chorus to criticize the role of traditional media in conflict reporting and exert pressure for more constructive coverage. Many scholars have developed the theory and practice of peace journalism as a viable model for conflict reporting. German socio-psychologist and pioneer of peace journalism Wilhelm Kempf (2012), after a comprehensive analysis of the leading scholars and critics of peace journalism, has successfully identified it as *quality journalism*, which he believes is responsible journalism that refrains from an oversimplification of conflicts and is about asking the 'right questions'.

Jake Lynch agrees with this proposition that peace journalism does not require a complete departure from traditional journalism, but rather a subtle shift is required to focus on people and peace and show responsibility. This entails that the role of media for promoting peace and harmony must be introduced from within media practice rather than as an external goal imposed on journalists which runs the risk of advocacy (Hanitzsch, 2007; Loyn, 2007; Kempf 2007). Such a proposition, I think, will expand the role of peace journalism and hence increase the chances for its success. In fact, it sounds naïve to expect conflict reporters to practice peace journalism at the front lines of wars when back home they practice conventional journalism. It is, therefore, argued that the ideals of peace journalism like 'the inclusion of the perspective of ordinary people, asking why certain issues are neglected, scope of alternative discourse, win-win orientation, avoidance of incendiary language, emphasis on structural and institutional imbalance' must be learned at home (Tehranian, 2002). Also, there are good chances that the practice of peace journalism during peacetime will significantly minimize the risk of wars and conflicts in democratic regimes.

Relying on the concept of peace journalism as good and professional journalism, this study is designed to investigate the role of media in the Balochistan conflict. The key research questions are:

#### 4. Research Questions

**R.Q.1:** How do Pakistani media report on the Balochistan conflict?

By applying the conflict escalation and de-escalation models, this question will address what specific themes and frames are highlighted by Pakistani media when reporting on the Balochistan conflict.

**R.Q.2:** What is the impact of Balochistan conflict reporting on audiences?

This question will address how people from different regions of the country react to media reporting, whether people want more peace-oriented media and whether they consider the present mode of reporting satisfactory.

**R.Q.3:** What are the key discursive features of Balochistan conflict reporting?

This question will address the important framing strategies adopted by media while reporting on this conflict. Media actors will be interviewed and the stakeholders asked about their take on media representation of this conflict.

**R.Q.4:** What are essential factors that determine media reporting on the Balochistan conflict?

This question will address the important professional, political and financial issues that impact reporting. Interviews with reporters, editors, analysts and stakeholders will be conducted for a fairer assessment.

**R.Q.5:** What are the prospects and limitations of constructive journalism in the reporting of the Balochistan conflict?

This final question will address the challenges for constructive journalism in the reportage of this conflict. Drawing on theoretical and methodological scholarship on peace journalism, this discussion will attempt to present this notion as a proper media practice that is advantageous for democracy and at the same time is professionally and financially workable.

#### 5. Research method

Peace journalism frames	War journalism frames
<p><b><i>I. Peace oriented</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore conflict formation, x parties, y goals, z issues, 'win-win' orientation</li> <li>• Open space, open time; causes and outcomes everywhere, also in history/culture</li> <li>• Making conflicts transparent</li> <li>• Giving a voice to all parties, empathy, understanding</li> <li>• See conflict/war as problem, focus on creative conflict resolution</li> </ul> <p><b><i>II. Truth-orientated</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expose untruth on all sides / uncover all cover-ups</li> </ul> <p><b><i>III. People-orientated</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on suffering everywhere, on women, the aged, children, giving a voice to the voiceless</li> <li>• Give names to all evil-doers</li> <li>• Focus on people as peace-makers</li> </ul> <p><b><i>IV. Solution-orientated</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peace = non-violence + creativity</li> <li>• Highlight peace initiatives, also to prevent more wars</li> <li>• Focus on structure, culture, the peaceful society</li> <li>• Aftermath: resolution, reconstruction, reconciliation</li> </ul>	<p><b><i>I. Violence oriented</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on conflict arena, 2 parties, 1 goal (win), war, zero-sum orientation</li> <li>• Closed space, limited time periods; causes and exits in arena, who threw the first stone</li> <li>• Making wars opaque/secret</li> <li>• 'us-them' journalism, propaganda, voice, for 'us'</li> <li>• See 'them' as the problem, focus on who prevails in war</li> </ul> <p><b><i>II. Propaganda-orientated</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expose 'their' untruths / help 'our' cover-ups/lies</li> </ul> <p><b><i>III. Elite-orientated</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on 'our' suffering; on able-bodied elite males, being their mouthpiece. Give names of their evil-doers</li> <li>• Focus on elite peace-makers</li> </ul> <p><b><i>IV. Victory-orientated</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peace = victory + ceasefire</li> <li>• Conceal peace initiatives, before victory is at hand</li> <li>• Focus on treaty, institution, the controlled society</li> <li>• Leaving for another war, return if the old flares up again</li> </ul>

Figure 1: Galtung's model of war and peace journalism

Conflict escalating reporting	Conflict de-escalating reporting
<p><b>1. Politicization</b></p> <p>Ethnic and sectarian affiliations are politicized, the victims belonging to political groups are considered worthy, and common people get scant coverage, political wranglings are highlighted. The aggressors and sufferers are identified through their presumed political affiliations; deaths, suffering, trauma in conflicts are neglected, and the emerging conflicting political scenario becomes the focus of media attention, where political statements, controversies appear to be the only news. Vested interests of political parties are ignored, and media are always ready to provide a conduit to blame others, thus creating turmoil.</p> <p><b>2. Securitization</b></p> <p>Conflicts are securitized; they are discussed in terms of threats, dangers, and occupations. Police force, army personnel and elites get the limelight. Conspiracies, issues of national sovereignty, security, territorial integrity, independence, and patriotism are related to the conflict. The system, culture and social values are securitized and feared to be lost if the enemy prevails.</p> <p><b>3. Otherization</b></p> <p>Media take sides in conflicts, one party is treated as 'other, alien to our culture, and not belonging to 'us' and hence dangerous if it prevails. Bias dominates media discourse, and the whole conflict story is told from just one perspective. Collective fears are aroused and the 'bad deeds' of aggressors highlighted to send a message 'that the whole nation is united against you'</p> <p><b>4. Incompatibility</b></p> <p>Conflict is presented as a tug of war in which interests are incompatible. Compromises are not possible. The parties involved cannot agree on a single agenda and hence are doomed to a worse scenario in the future. The conflicting parties represent antagonistic interests, each hell-bent to prevail over the other. The antagonistic parties stand for diametrically opposed values where a zero-sum orientation prevails.</p> <p><b>5. Sensationalism</b></p> <p>Conflict reporting is dramatized and sensationalized; every unfolding event is treated as mysterious, historic and unprecedented, drama and hostile outbursts are highlighted. Arguments and counter-arguments of antagonists are the major discourses where the opposing group is ridiculed and challenged. Future is predicted to be more violent and ominous, no chances are seen for peace overtures.</p>	<p><b>1. De-politicization</b></p> <p>Focus on the non-political aspects of conflicts; affiliations like politics, ethnicity, religiosity or other considerations are avoided. The social, cultural and economic costs of conflicts are highlighted. Political manipulations and conspiracies are exposed in non-political and less sensational tones; The artificial barriers among conflicting groups produced by politicians are scrutinized, threadbare arguments, agendas and interests of politicians are exposed, examples of different ethnic and sectarian groups having political affiliations that live together peacefully are highlighted.</p> <p><b>2. Humanization</b></p> <p>Conflicts are humanized, individual sufferings are highlighted, and trials and tribulations of ordinary people get maximum coverage. Plight of women and children and other vulnerable groups is discussed. Conflict is covered from the perspective of ordinary people. Loss to social institutions and local culture is counted and steps urged for their recovery.</p> <p><b>3. We'ness</b></p> <p>Conflicting parties are treated equally; 'us versus them' notions are avoided. Grievances of aggrieved parties are shared and calls for resolution highlighted. Responsibility for law and order situation is equally shared. Negative attributes are avoided. Conflict itself is treated as a problem and efforts urged for solution. The people are sympathized with, and the concerns of estranged elements are shared and violence is explained from a wider context.</p> <p><b>4. Compatibility</b></p> <p>The commonalities and sameness in the standpoints of conflicting parties are explored and urged for reconciliation. The conflicting parties are encouraged and extolled for overtures that promote dialogue and bring the antagonists closer. History, culture and other interests that forge unity are highlighted. Conflicts are contextualized and mistakes of both sides are exposed for rapprochement.</p> <p><b>5. Responsibility</b></p> <p>Reporters feel responsibility to society, outcomes of unfolding conflicts are given beforehand, damage to society is told and re-told, caution is advised, reporting is devoid of sensationalism, pros and cons of conflicts are presented, and opportunities for peace explored. Contexts and backgrounds and root causes of the conflict are presented with encouragement for peaceful resolution.</p>

Figure 2: Operational Model of conflict escalation and de-escalation

This research study uses both qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate how Pakistani media report on the Balochistan conflict, what are the issues that motivate journalists to report the way they do, how ordinary people perceive conflict reportage and how to develop a more constructive strategy.

For the quantitative part of the study, I did a content analysis of six media outlets, including the country's two leading English-language newspapers (Dawn and Nation), two Urdu newspapers (Jang and Express) and two TV channels (Geo TV and Dunya TV) using both the Galtung model (cf. figure 1) and a context-specific model (cf. figure 2) developed originally by this researcher and recorded the frequencies for both conflict escalation and de-escalation coverage. The Galtung model is based on the war and peace journalism typology (violence/peace, propaganda/truth, elite/people and differences/solution), and the context-specific model is based on the conflict escalating and de-escalating typology (sensationalism/responsible, securitization/humanization, otherness/we'ness).

All the categories in these two models were operationalized, and six coders were trained for data collection. The coders were students of MS media studies and worked closely with the researcher. The inter-coder reliability tests were conducted on the initial two months of data, which yielded more than 80 percent agreement for all categories, which is generally acceptable in empirical studies.

The time period for the study was one year, from November 2012 till November 2013. The period was important because violent incidents increased, the Supreme Court of Pakistan was hearing a number of petitions against the killings, and elections were held in May 2013, with parties vowing to initiate a policy shift on the issue. Only the front and back pages and the 9 o'clock newscasts were selected for newspapers, and TV respectively from Monday to Thursday for the whole year. The idea was to get more representative data.

Similarly, I also conducted a nationwide study to analyze how people react to this type of reportage. As many as 500 questionnaires were distributed among people all across the country (four provinces and the capital city area), from which I was able to collect 453 filled out responses.

For the qualitative part of the study, I conducted a critical discourse analysis, which included textual analysis, discourse practice and socio-cultural practice. For the textual analysis I analyzed 30 news stories, for the discourse practice analysis I conducted detailed interviews of six conflict reporters, and lastly for the socio-cultural practices analysis I conducted detailed interviews of editors from the six media outlets, senior journalists, experts and stakeholders in this conflict. I also conducted a field observation by traveling in the major parts of the province to get personal experience of how the conflict is impacting the daily lives of ordinary people.

## 6. Research Findings

### 6.1 How do Pakistani media report on the Balochistan conflict?

All six media outlets were analyzed for the prevalence of war/escalatory and peace/de-escalatory content. Three important themes emerged from the data analysis, which are separately discussed as Peace-oriented, We'ness-oriented and similarity among media outlets.

*Peace Orientation:* As table 1 shows, both models yielded predominantly conflict de-escalatory journalism, as indicated by the low Pearson chi-square value (.000). These findings are consistent with those of an Indian researcher (Prakash, 2013), who found a predominance of peace journalism on the Balochistan conflict. The unanimous answer that the researcher got from reporters and editors was that the Center's policies have estranged the Balochi people and hence they report events from a Balochi perspective. 'We try to impress upon the policymakers to resolve this issue amicably', said Abdul Khaliq of Geo TV. Likewise, the army and nationalist leaders called for a 'just, amicable' solution for the greater benefits of the Balochistani people. So, it can be argued that a peace journalism approach is concomitant with the urge at the societal level to find a solution to this lingering issue, which has alienated the Balochi people, much to the detriment of national interests. The hierarchy of influences model supports such an approach, where personal, organizational and professional considerations align with the norms of peace journalism.

Models	Escalatory N (%)	De-escalatory N (%)	Total N (%)	Chi-square (df = 1)	p
Galtung	615 (31.70)	1325 (68.30)	1940 (100)	33.49	< 0.001
Operational	405 (24.05)	1279 (75.95)	1684 (100)	29.97	< 0.001

Table 1: Distribution of escalatory and de-escalatory coverage

*We'ness oriented:* Similarly, the Balochistan conflict is discussed predominantly from a We'ness perspective, where issues in Balochistan are discussed as 'ours', ordinary people are sympathized with, and violence is ascribed to 'our wrongful and jaundiced policies'. Statistically, a significant number of stories were found in the We'ness category (cf. table 2).

When reporters were asked about such a tendency, they defended it because 'injustices were done to the people of the province', and 'it was their responsibility to play a role by informing the people'. In the survey part of the study, ordinary people expressed concerns over the 'situation in the province' and demanded an immediate halt to 'excesses committed by the establishment'. Similarly, the nationalist leader Mir Hasil Bizenjo said the province was denied its due, and army actions had to be held in check if achieving peace were the priority. He praised the media for highlighting the conflict and helping shape public opinion in a way that is conducive to peace. An army official, when asked about the situation, although he appreciated the media role in the conflict, warned that the issue was much more complicated, as 'foreigners too' were involved, and any step towards peace must consider such an approach. He added that the army wanted peace, but miscreants had a different agenda, which needed

to be tackled. A TV anchor, Saleem Safi, who has studied the conflict for quite some time, expressed satisfaction with the role of the media and said 'he personally sided with the people' in the conflict and vowed to continue his endeavors for peace. Irfan Siddiqui, a renowned analyst, expressed similar views. This is an excellent example of peace journalism where media actors pursue a path of peace and advocate 'giving people their due' despite pressures from different quarters. Researchers (Galtung, 1998; Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005) have long asserted that if media prioritize people and discuss the real causes of conflicts, this will definitely lead to permanent solutions.

Escalation	N (%)	De-Escalation	N (%)
Sensationalism	134 (8)	Responsible	231 (14)
Securitization	274 (16)	Humanization	320 (19)
Otherness	119 (7)	We'ness*	609 (32)

Chi-square = 52.74; df = 5; p < 0.001.

Table 2: We'ness in the conflict coverage

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*Similarities among media outlets:* The six media outlets emphasized the same theme of 'We'ness' when reporting on this conflict (cf. table 3), despite the fact that Pakistani media follow different editorial policies on key national issues. This similarity was echoed in the viewpoints of reporters who called for reconciliation of the 'estranged Balochi brethren'. This is a good example of the principles of public sphere theory, which though critical of media economic interests, calls for more constructive and democratic media. Many events occur in the province that can be exaggerated and dramatized to attract audiences, but journalists show restraint due to fear of escalation.

Emphasis in conflict reporting	Geo N (%)	Dunya N (%)	Dawn N (%)	Nation N (%)	Express N (%)	Jang N (%)	Chi-square (df = 5)	p
We'ness	72 (32)	59(25)	74(34)	101(33)	160(41)	143(48)	3.30	> 0.05

Table 3: Similarities among media outlets

## 6.2 What is the impact of media reporting of the Balochistan conflict?

This question is addressed in terms of the impact of the prominence of the conflict, popular (non-)support for the media and the appeal of peace journalism.

*Impact of the conflict's prominence:* The hypothesis embedded in the question suggests that public opinion in Quetta (Balochistan's provincial capital) will be different when compared to the views of respondents in four other cities who usually turn to media for information on the conflict. As table 4 shows, a significant majority of people in Quetta (mean rank 352.24) considers the army responsible for the conflict, more people in Quetta (mean rank 364.08) believe that ordinary people were the real victims, and finally more people in Quetta (mean rank 288.45) believe that general dissatisfaction with Islamabad's policies is a major cause of concern when compared to the mean ranks in other cities. These observations support the key arguments of the media dependency model that

media effects vary with dependence on media. Different from the people from other provinces the people of that province see the conflict mainly as a humanitarian problem that started with the national government's high-handedness.

Themes	ISD	LAH	QUE	KAR	PESH	Significance	
	Mean rank	Chi-square (df = 4)	p				
Is the army responsible?	219.28	305.89	352.24	247.68	212.07	69.967	< 0.001
Is it a security conflict?	228.67	219.16	215.35	251.26	218.64	4.964	> 0.05
People as sufferers	238.62	220.09	364.08	273.62	233.67	47.305	< 0.001
Is deprivation a real cause?	215.40	212.26	288.45	215.48	205.46	26.090	< 0.001

Note: Higher mean scores indicate greater influence. The scale ranges from 5 = 'strongly disagree' to 1 = 'Strongly agree'.

Table 4: Public perception of the Balochistan conflict

*Media for Peace:* Regarding the Balochistan conflict, greater cumulative agreement was achieved for demanding that media should focus on improving the situation and actively help to resolve this conflict, as shown in table 5. In a very systematic analysis, both Stephanie Thiel and Wilhelm Kempf (2014) analyzed experimental studies by various scholars, including (Bläsi et al. 2005, Schaefer 2006, Stuntebeck 2009, Kempf & Thiel 2012), and found greater audience support for de-escalation oriented texts in media reporting. This must be an eye-opener for journalists who sensationalize events to attract larger audiences. This challenges major criticism of the practicality of peace journalism that for financial reasons (people take an interest in dramatizing conflicts) the concept is a failure (Fawcett, 2002).

Themes	Cumulative agreement	Cumulative disagreement	Chi square (df = 1)	p
Improvement	264 (58.278)	189 (41.721)	128.097	< 0.001
Solution	256 (56.512)	197 (43.487)	102.067	< 0.001

Table 5: Public liking for peace media

*Views on conflict reporting:* As table 6 indicates, more and more people agree that reporting on the ethnic conflict is irresponsible, less objective, gives less current and timely information and tends to incite violence. The low Pearson values show that the difference is significance. However, the differences are not very strong when evaluated for bias and sensationalism. The hypothesis is partially supported. It can be argued that though media are doing some professional work, people expect more, which can be achieved not through advocacy journalism, but rather through good professional journalism.

Views	Responsibility N (%)	Objectivity N (%)	Timely N (%)	Biased N (%)	Sensationalism N (%)	Instigating N (%)
Agreement	119 (26.26)	119 (31.9)	117 (25.82)	254 (56.07)	246 (54.30)	328 (72.40)
Disagreement	334 (73.73)	254 (68.09)	336 (74.17)	199 (43.92)	207 (45.69)	125 (27.59)
p	< 0.001	0.01	< 0.001	0.067	0.678	< 0.001

Table 6: Public perception of the Balochistan conflict reporting

### 6.3 What are the key discursive features of Balochistan conflict reporting?

Pakistani media covered the Balochistan conflict mainly from two standpoints; violent incidents and the calls for peace by different stakeholders.

Regarding the first strategy, in this conflict, where security forces and different militias of Balochi nationalists are at loggerheads, the media usually refrain from siding with either group, consider the conflict as 'ours' and sympathize with the people of the province. For example, The daily Jang published a front-page story on April 4, 2012 headlined "4 killed in Sui remote control attack" in which 3 Frontier Constabulary personnel were killed,

including one unidentified man. The story does not refer to the assailants and also avoids labeling them as 'terrorists or miscreants'. Similarly, in other stories the reports do not elaborate on the assailants, usually call them 'unidentified men' and claim that 'the motive was unknown'. An excellent example of how Pakistan media avoid 'otherization' can be found in an example where the Jang reported on a deadly exchange between security forces and 'armed men'. A total of 13 people were killed and a few injured. The story does not tell how many security forces and 'armed men' were killed. This shows that the paper is sympathetic toward both parties; one entrusted to maintain law and order, and the second an aggrieved party that resorted to violence after being denied political rights for decades. The reporters and editors explained to this researcher that they were concerned about the problems of the people in the province, and the 'separatists' only resorted to violence when other options were exhausted. The Balochi leader Mir Hasil Bazenjo told this researcher that 'fair play' and justice toward the province can stem violence, while the army official said 'the new political arrangement is determined for peace' and that they supported political dialogue.

Regarding the second strategy of highlighting calls for peace, the media accord maximum attention to steps for the normalization of the situation in Balochistan, when reporting on the province. Media strongly highlighted the statement of then opposition party Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) chief Nawaz Sharif, saying, "If Balochi people get rights, no one will be a rebel." Mr. Sharif demanded an end to 'abductions of innocent people and mutilated bodies of Balochis'. The Balochistan issue got the most attention when it was debated in the Supreme Court. The judges were quoted as referring to Balochistan as a 'spirit of the country' and expressed concern over lawlessness in the province. Other efforts like the Human Rights Commission report on Balochistan, stating, "Our security lies in focusing on human development, not on making atom bombs" and criticism of media in Pakistan for ignoring the Balochistan issue, where 'innocent people were being killed', also received a prominent position in the media. Similarly, the high-level meeting on Balochistan in which the prime minister, army chief and other senior officials of the government discussed ways and means to improve the situation in the province remained in the major headlines. The army chief was reported as saying, "the problem should be solved politically and there are no military solutions'.

Media framing of this conflict is predominantly constructive. The main features of framing are: "low-level-insurgency, military operation, separatist movement, kidnapping of Balochi youth, mutilated bodies, exploitation of resources, deprivations, Balochistan as the spirit of Pakistan, Pakistan grieves if Balochistan is in turmoil, Balochi as patriotic."

#### **6.4 What are the essential factors that determine media reporting of the Balochistan conflict?**

During long interview sessions with reporters, editors, stakeholders in the conflict and media and political analysts, a number of key factors were identified that impact the reporting of this conflict. These range from the personal beliefs of journalists to the security issues, sense of responsibility, salience of popular perspectives and the dominant security aspects of the state apparatuses.

Though usually journalists seldom confess that their personal views influence their professional actions, in the case of this conflict they confessed that their reporting was influenced to a greater extent. A reporter (who requested anonymity) said, "our resources have been exploited, our land is occupied and we are foreigners in our own land." "This is a battle for ownership of the province," another reporter said. The people of the province have been denied their due in national affairs and feel alienated and treated as pariahs, and they (the reporters) considered it their duty to highlight their issues. Explaining such a slant in the Balochistan conflict, an executive editor of Geo TV, Nusrat Ameen, said 'it is a story of neglect, depression and injustices', and we report it in such a way as to press the policymakers to take remedial steps. But, this support is always a tacit one, and in the past many reporters have been killed. All the reporters covering this conflict agreed that security was the major problem, and they feared for their lives and families. According to Abdul Khaliq of the daily Jang, "If we report the views of agencies, the militants say we are state agents, and when we report the views of separatists, the agencies say we work for these groups.". A reporter from the daily Nation said they couldn't verify information about the insurgency, as police are almost non-existent. Security forces and militants fabricate information to tell their side of the story. We often change the non-journalistic expressions to avoid reactions from opponents, even if they force us to report it in their words. He said that in the past year, 26 reporters had been killed. In the past month, one of our colleagues in Huzdar district went underground to save his life, but his two sons were killed.

Despite great odds, a display of responsibility is the hallmark of reporting on this conflict, which, in fact, is the cornerstone of peace journalism (Lynch, 2007; Peleg, 2007). The reporters covering the Balochistan conflict said quite often that they get information that is true and valid, but they don't report it due to fear of the harm it could cause to society. Interestingly, journalists in Balochistan, unlike reporters in other regions, are ready to play the role of conflict-resolver. A reporter from Dunya TV said, "We are also part of that society, so naturally we want peace."

Reporters of the Balochistan conflict agreed that most of the stories were written from the perspective of the Balochi people, because they were the major victims and sufferers. Shah Hussain of the daily Express said, "The

Balochi people have been subjected to discrimination and injustices'. As reporters, they said they considered the problems of the people as theirs and hence were sympathetic towards them. Peace journalism scholars stress that they favor the inclusion of people's voices in reporting but unfortunately, this is not the norm, where elites dominate the media agenda (Herman & Chomsky, 1989; Galtung, 2002). Last but not least, though the Balochistan conflict is framed from a humanitarian perspective, but journalists can't express open support for them due to pressure from the army when it comes to extra-judicial killings, kidnappings and the establishment of military cantonments in vast areas. "We are allowed to speak half the-truth, but not the whole truth," said one editor. Others said there are genuine issues but the media can't discuss them due to fear. The journalists interviewed said that though they don't agree with the modus operandi of separatists, they don't consider them militants or terrorists because, 'if their concerns are addressed they then can be pacified'. A reporter from Dawn said, "...they are Pakistanis and their demands are genuine except for separation."

### **6.5 What are the prospects and limitations of good journalism in the reporting of the Balochistan conflict?**

Though Pakistani journalists are unaware of the theory and practice of peace journalism, the quantitative content analysis, the qualitative discourse analysis and the nationwide survey showed that peace journalism emerged as a dominant theme in the reportage of the Balochistan conflict.

The discourse analysis of Balochistan conflict provides more detailed answers to the question. The media usually refrain from adjectives and name-calling to address the actors in this conflict. By avoiding negative labeling, the media dispels notions of binaries (we versus them) and hence are better placed to intervene for peace. In one of many reports, the daily Jang reported an attack on security forces in which 14 personnel were killed and 15 were injured. The report says 'attackers' fired rockets at security forces in the Turbat area of Balochistan. The story avoids speculation; a common practice that media usually follow, although decried by peace journalists for inflaming conflicts. The report does not elaborate on the 'assailants', and no detailed description of the conflict is reported. By avoiding words like 'insurgency, terrorism', the report downplays the incident, which according to peace journalism is a good way to avoid or at least reduce conflict escalation.

The media does not side with either party; one entrusted to maintain law and order, and the second an aggrieved party that resorted to armed violence after being denied political rights for decades. These notions of peace journalism can be explained, as the reporters covering this conflict had a thorough understanding of the conflict. They know the root causes of the unrest and told this researcher that they often included background information in their reporting to help people to understand the issue in greater detail.

Another aspect of peace journalism exhibited in media discourse on the Balochistan conflict is the prominent coverage of efforts for the resolution of this conflict. Regarding the visit of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, then the opposition leader, the Jang reported him on its front page saying, "If the Balochi people get rights, no one will be a rebel." Obviously the politician is touching the main cause of conflict and the media accorded him due appreciation for that. The underlying message of 'solution' and 'Balochi people are ours' thoroughly resonates in the report. The media gave suitable attention to the outpourings of politicians who were saying, 'The Balochi people are not rebels, they are patriotic Pakistanis'. A reporter from the daily Dawn said, "I don't think we can directly play a role in this conflict to bring peace, but certainly we can facilitate it. By avoiding statements that can endanger peace, the sides can be brought closer." Abdul Khaliq of the daily Jang agreed that journalists should be ready to play a part in achieving peace.

Another aspect of peace journalism that is duly highlighted in the Balochistan conflict by the media are the problems faced by the people and their solution. The daily Jang carried a report entitled "SC rejects government report on peace in Balochistan'. The judges referred to Balochistan as being a 'spirit of the country' and expressed concern over lawlessness in the province. The Express reported 'judges' displeasure over Intelligence Bureau's report on the law and order situation'. The court observed that the situation in Balochistan was grim, people were being killed, abductions were routine events, and the security agencies were barely concerned or even unaware. The daily Dawn reported the Supreme Court of Pakistan reprimanding the government for its apathy towards 'senseless and indiscriminate killings' in Balochistan. By focusing on such stories, the paper asks for the resolution of conflicts and pressured the government to take the necessary steps.

However, specific to this conflict, there are certain issues that circumvent the prospects of peace journalism. First comes the security issue. All the journalists and editors interviewed said that security was a major problem, and hence many issues like the interests of the Pakistani army and separatists, foreign influences, sectarian and militant groups and their activities cannot be properly reported. Two of the journalists recalled how the separatists and military threatened them for writing against their interests. Peace journalism requires that background information about the conflict and the perspectives of the conflicting parties should be reported in a balanced way, which is usually not done, due to pressure from the army. Thirdly, Balochistan is placed in the limelight when something important happens, like the visits of prominent politicians, cases before the Supreme Court or the formation of a new government. It is necessary for the practice of peace journalism that issues like

day-to-day business, security problems, non-availability of civic amenities and the problems of ordinary people are reported. Fourthly, reporters of the Balochistan conflict, though enthused by peace journalism considerations, have to face the adversarial 'editors' sitting at media headquarters in Karachi. These and other factors delimit the scope of peace journalism reporting on the Balochistan conflict.

## 7. Conclusions

During the field observations by this researcher, we found people narrating their ordeals of deprivations and a 'stepmother attitude' taken by the center as the main cause of tension. The same concerns echoed in the views of reporters and editors who called for addressing the real causes of the conflict. They sympathized with ordinary people and narrated the events from popular perspectives. The standpoints of separatist leaders and the Pakistani army were encouraging, and they called for peace and harmony. The agency of journalists emerges as a key factor in these findings, which according to researchers like Jake Lynch (2006) and Robert Hackett (2006) is crucial for peace journalism. Jürgen Habermas' public sphere theory offers an explanation for this perspective, where the media play a constructive role by barely discussing the issues with due consideration for the needs of the people. Media take cognizance of the gravity of the situation by sidelining its political and economic interests and focus on the public interests that are supreme and involve larger numbers of people. In the reportage of this conflict, Pakistani media do not capitalize on the violence and tension rather than cautioning and suggesting innovative peace strategies. A number of studies (Lynch & Galtung 2010; Lynch and McGoldrick 2005; Lynch 2006) have shown that when peoples' perspectives are included in media discourse, the chances for peace and harmony increase.

During interviews with journalists and experts, I found them ready to 'work for peace'. Senior journalists like Ihtasham ul Haq, Irfan Siddiqui and Saleem Safi emphasized their determination to highlight the need for resolving this conflict. The nationwide survey showed that people had a thorough understanding of the causes of the conflict and were demanding a solution to this conflict that would encourage politicians to take remedial steps. Media can make a contribution in this positive change and should be duly highlighted. The Balochistan conflict, which was ignored by Pakistanis, is at the top of the list. People are sympathetic to the ordeal of ordinary Balochi people; they are asking politicians about the strategies of resolving it. During recent elections in the country, it was on the electioneering agenda, and voters were asked about this. The Supreme Court of Pakistan has pressed politicians and security agencies to stop the persecution and disappearances of ordinary people. Nationalists run the new provincial government, and one hopes the situation will soon normalize in this insurgency-infested province. The media in this case must be given credit for practicing peace journalism.

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