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PAKISTAN PRESS STANCE ON GOVERNMENT-TTP TALKS: ANALYSIS OF THE EDITORIAL COVERAGE IN DAILIES; THE NATION AND THE NEWS

Introduction:

The study at hand is an effort to look on to the stances and opinions produced by some major dailies in their editorials on peace talks between Pakistani Government and Tehrek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

Peace talks in Pakistan have been the core issue in the country for the last few months and have been covered and framed by national and international media accordingly. Since the inception of new regime of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) in the country the Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has been stressing the need of peace in the country. For the purpose he has, many times, shown his concerns and efforts to cope with the issue. On January 29, 2014 Mr. Nawaz formed and announced a four-member committee to start peace talks with TTP¹. After few days, TTP also announced the names of their representatives.

Both the parties selected well known individuals in Pakistani politics, media and religious life as members of their negotiating committees. Government nominated RahimullahYusufzai, a known journalist from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Major Amir, an old Nawaz loyalist who was part of the Midnight Jackals plot to bring down the first Benazir Bhutto government, and other two members, former diplomat Rustam Shah who is now linked to the PTI and columnist IrfanSiddiqui are both known for being pro-talks².

On the other hand, Taliban nominated Maulana Sami ul-Haq, dubbed the "father of the Taliban" by the media, is an influential Pakistani cleric and politician whose teaching are thought to have influenced the Taliban movement, Maulana Abdul Aziz who is a staunch advocate of enforcing Sharia (Islamic law) in Pakistan. He was the prayer leader of the controversial Lal Masjid (Red Mosque) in Islamabad. Other member is Prof. Ibrahim Khan, a former senator from the

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tribal region of Bannu. He is the head of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provincial chapter of the Islamist political party Jamaat-i-Islami, which is a vocal supporter of the Taliban and al-Qaeda.

This study considers this entire situation in the country as a problem to be discussed in the context of role of media. The researcher would analyze and report on the stances used in the editorials of dailies; *The Nation* and *The News*, during January and February 2014. The core purpose of the research is to inform the reader about the stances and views of the editorial contents of the selected newspapers.

Pakistan press, with their varied opinions and stance, covered the issue with due urgency and priority. The press supported the government policy initially but condemned the TTP and criticized the government for not taking action due to the fact that TTP did not follow the ceasefire and carried on attacks in Pakistan. The researcher selected two major dailies from English national press in Pakistan i.e. *The Nation* and *The News* to develop a critique on their stance on Government-TTP Talks. Editorials in both the dailies published during January and February 2014 have been selected to compare the newspapers' policy and develop a critical write-up on it. The researcher would analyze the editorials to check how they supported and/or opposed the Talks process and what kind of arguments they presented to support their stance in the context.

Literature Review:

This review examines peace talks, dialogues or negotiations between Government of Pakistan and TTP highlighted through research studies and reports. But first of all it is pertinent to mention a brief introduction of TTP which is an umbrella organization for indigenous Pakistani Taliban commanders. It is terrorist organization formed in 2007 in opposition to Pakistani military efforts in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan is a network of at least a dozen groups that claimed responsibility for suicide bombings across Pakistan (Pike, 2015).

Today, the TTP poses a serious national security challenge to Pakistan, having strengthened its hold in various parts of the tribal belt, in particular, Waziristan, where it has supplanted the old administrative system with its skewed interpretation of Shariah. On account of its theological appeal TTP enjoys massive patronage in terms of man and material from: (a) groups and individuals subscribing to numerous smaller extremist outfits with big nuisance value; (b) a nod from the political Right, in addition to (c) grass-root Jihadists drawn in by the Global Jihadist Movement on account of Pakistan's proximity with Afghanistan (Criterion-quarterly.com).

Pertaining to the attempts for establishing peace, the government of Pakistan has been engaged in a series of peace talks with the TTP. In 2004, Pakistan government reached a deal with local Taliban led by Nek Mohammed in South Waziristan in 2004 whereby the militants agreed to live peacefully and not use Pakistani soil for militancy. The first of its kind peace deal since the emergence of the TTP became the keystone of future such agreements. The treaty was regarded as a failure by 2007. In August and September 2007, the government also signed peace treaties with different tribes in Mohmand agency. In March 2007, the government signed another deal with pro-Taliban militants and tribal leaders in the Bajaur agency. Miranshah Peace Accord (2006), Khyber Agency Pact (2008), Swat Agreements (2008) and several other peace treaties between Pakistani government and TTP and have met the same fate as the first one (Jamal & Ahsan, 2015).

Basit (2014) analyzed that the best outcome of this eight-month long peace process has been a 40-day ceasefire from 1st March to 10 April 2014. The TTP, however, did not extend the ceasefire further, stating that the government was insincere and not serious in their efforts to secure peace. The government in turn blamed the TTP for being inflexible and deceitful. Moreover, in his view Islamic Caliphate vs. the Nation-State, The 'Talk-and-Fight' Paradox, Disconnect between the Civilian and Military Leadership, Too many stakeholders in the peace initiatives have also become a great obstacle.

The nation is worried whether Pakistan talking or negotiating? Have the real talks even started or not? And if they do start, are the talks designed to fail – with the TTP sticking to their demand for imposition of “Sharia law” throughout Pakistan, while the government refused to budge from the position of having talks under the ambit of the Constitution (which, in spirit, does not allow for negotiations with terrorists, and has a clear punishment for those who commit treason as per Article of the Constitution). The TTP demands – their first 15 points, and the later insistences as their prerequisite for a ceasefire on their part – were inherently designed to turn Pakistan into an Islamic Emirate: like the one the Taliban created in Afghanistan between 1996 and 2001, but (when one looks closely at Fazlullah’s reign over Swat) much, much worse in terms of the fundamental human rights and modern freedoms that the citizens of Pakistan (and particularly the religious minorities) would enjoy under TTP rule. On February 23, Amir Mir clarified for all and sundry that the TTP, through their spokesman Shahidullah Shahid, “are trying to mislead the masses by raising the issue of Shariah at this stage despite the fact that they had abandoned it in the first week of the talks by leaving Maulana Abdul Aziz of the Lal Masjid in the lurch”. Mir called this “a belated move on the part of the Taliban to win back the sympathies of the people of Pakistan by shifting their focus from the real issue of unabated terrorism unleashed by the TTP” (Afzal, 2014).

Can the peace talks be restarted now – can the process itself, or a modification thereof, be revived? If so – and if the idea really is to revert to talks – when will they be restarted? And under what conditions: will the state of Pakistan finally realize that it must negotiate from a position of strength, or will it (yet again) negotiate with the TTP in a condition of stalemate or of perceived weakness? Will a bruised, battered, debilitated and cornered TTP agree to a ceasefire; or does the Pakistan military, law enforcement agencies, government, and most importantly the general public, have to push the TTP into a position where they have no choice but to surrender in addition to ceasing their terrorist activities (Afzal, 2014).

In short, the peace talk to Taliban has become a one of the major challenges to the government of Pakistan. The penetrated ideology of Taliban in the society is a fundamental obstacle for the peace talk. The widespread sympathizers of the Taliban will be the main supporters of Taliban ideology in case of any critical situation developed by the government. Hence, the desired outcomes are hard to even visualize in the presence of above mentioned hurdles, which could potentially impend the government's move for the settlement of Taliban issue. The appropriate understanding of aforesaid arguments has become the prerequisites for the peace talks with Taliban. Without addressing the prerequisite core issues, the chances of success of peace talk are impossible to imagine.

There are a number of ways this dialogue could unfold in Pakistan. It could be in the form of a government mandated by the people and opposition, such as the one reached at a conference early last October calling on the government to engage in dialogue. Another scenario could be that open Afghan dialogue with Washington prompts dialogue with the Pakistani Taliban as well, particularly given the importance of regional stability to the impending pull out of US forces from Afghanistan (Zaidan, 2015).

Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS) published a report entitled *Taliban Talks: Past, Present and Prospects for the US, Afghanistan and Pakistan* (2013:06) edited by Mona K. Sheikh and Maja. T. J. Greenwood. The authors discussed the issue in three parts in their report; Background and status, Challenges and the Recommendations to create communication environment for the peace process.

The report suggested that Pakistan, Afghanistan and the US have their own concerns regarding the peace talks with the Taliban. For Pakistan the main concern is the internal security and threat from TTP while for Afghan government avoiding a new civil war would be the major concern. The US, on the other hand, is concerned to get out of Afghanistan with a successful note. The report further

emphasized that the main task behind the talks for Pakistan is to secure stability and reduce threats stemming from TTP.

Mona and Maja quoted Rahimullah Yusufzai, Resident Editor, The News International (Peshawar) in their report who appreciated the initiative. He said that you have to talk to the enemy to know their enemy and he referred to the peace process in Qatar and said that talking to Taliban the US came to know their strength. So, on both sides, due to the talks, there seemed flexibility in the approaches where the US claimed that their earlier demands would now be achieved through talks and the Taliban who refused to talk to anybody earlier are now talking to the Americans.

In another report published by DIIS *Pakistan: Regional Rivalries, Local Impacts* (2012: 12) the authors; Mona Kanwal Sheikh, Farzana Shaikh and Gareth Price pointed out that the regional attempts on peace talks are muddled up in power games played out by the US, Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, Iran and Saudi Arabia. The regional powers interrupt to secure most influence over future Afghanistan and to ensure their own domestic stability.

There is another key issue related to the peace talks i.e. the division of opinion among Taliban on talks. The Daily Beast published a news story *How Afghan Peace Talks are Splintering the Taliban* (2012:02) pointing out that on one side the US is involved in peace talks and on the other hand the US drones are killing the Taliban leaders which increase the Taliban fragmentation and opposition towards talks.

In a research report entitled; “Afghanistan: Negotiations with the Taliban. Do the conditions for a negotiated settlement exist?” the researcher Arezzo Hamid and his colleagues tried to explore that what sort of conflicts existed among Afghans and Taliban and whether there was any possibility for purposeful settlement of confusions and conflicts. It was observed that over the period of time, perceptions for a negotiated settlement with the Taliban have changed. As the change occurred in US administration, need to find better possibilities for purposeful negotiations with Taliban were realized. Different segments of the society including public, politicians and academics were of deep concern for permanent solution of the Afghanistan without any sort of military actions. All possible initiatives were made to bring Taliban on table for the purposeful negotiations so that peace process may start, yet all in vain. Mat Waldman, a well-known academics said that negotiations are the only solution of the present crisis and anyone of the parties must come peaceable point so that proper solution of the conflict may be find out. There is no doubt that bilateral negotiations would help to find better solution of the existing conflict. On other hand, neighboring countries are also very much keep to keep Afghanistan as in peace. That is why

they all have kept in eye on Afghanistan because they have strong impacts due to instability in there (Hamid, 2014).

In another research report, entitled “Talking Peace in the Ogaden”, Tobias Hagmann reported that a peace agreement between the Ethiopian government and the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) is very important of its nature for peace in the Somalia Regional State (SRS) and the region. Kenya played significant role to start the peace talks process to resolve the insurgency which is existing since last about twenty years and people suffered badly. However, the limited approach adopted by the Kenyan team overseeing the talks may serve a purpose now but risks casting the process in the future. While having conflicts, both parties were willing to find avenues to start peace talks which is the only solution of the crisis. ONLF was willing to take all possible initiatives for betterment yet SRS stops military actions. The Ethiopian government is betting on a peace deal that involves minimal concessions in return for big dividends, such as regional stability with real economic, political and geopolitical gains. The Ogaden conflict is one of the world’s forgotten conflicts; outsiders have rarely acknowledged the suffering of Ethiopian Somalis (Hagmann, 2014).

In an editorial “Pakistan and the Taliban: Jawing with the enemy”, published in *The Economist*, dated 8 February 2014, it is stated that Pakistan has suffered a lot due to terrorist activities and paying high price for it. In such situation, every effort for peace process and stability seems vain. Last week the Prime Minister of Pakistan has nominated four members as representatives of government of Pakistan for peace talks. Yet, on other hand, Taliban suggested five names. Meeting in this regards was scheduled to be held on February 4, 2014. After first session of talks, it appeared that at one end, TTP were not ready to accept conditions of opponents and control of Pakistan over targeted areas yet, on other hand both parties were seems to un authoritative. Former ambassador to America Mr. Hussain Haqqani was of the view that these negotiations cannot be succeeded because TTP want to put our country in 8th century. They one demand of others, was to have control over swathes were strick impose of sharia law would done. For Pakistan, it was not possible to give such space that would resultantly increase the violence in the country. Moreover, even peace talks with Afghan Taliban are not so easy. According to *New York Times*, Afghan Taliban had held talks with Afghan President Hamid Karzai but no result could come out and mistrust created. Mr. Nawaz Sharif after taking charge of his position, was ready to launch military operation against TTP. He is having strong coordination with COAS, General Raheel Sharif. He took strong action in North Waziristan. At this stage, despite talks, action against TTP would continue.

M. A. Niazi, the Executive Editor of *The Nation*, in his column, *Talking the talk* (2014:02) published in *The Nation* discussed the international aspects of the Government-TTP talks. He said that the talks process directly affect

Afghanistan, Pakistan and the US. Government needs to talk to the Taliban because it needs peace in the country to bring economic growth in the country as they promised in their election campaign. The USA needs Taliban to stand down because they want to drawdown from Afghanistan effectively. In both cases, Mr. Niazi added, there is an acknowledgement of the TTP win by both the countries. M. A. Niazi pointed out that the peace talks would not accomplish their desired results until the USA become party in the talks. Unless the USA withdraw its army from Afghanistan, a demand by TTP, the talks are pointless.

In another column *Shariah is Not the Issue* (2014:02) Ayaz Mir condemned the government policy towards peace talks for their so much flexibility to wards Taliban. He said so far it is the government making the principle concession of recognizing the Taliban as an equal party and that the slope of concession is always slippery. The more the government will concede the more the TTP will expect. Ayaz Mir pointed out that the Shariah is not an issue rather the issue would be the TTP demand for prisoners' release including DrUsman who is the mastermind of GHQ attacks, withdrawal of the Army from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), and the compensation or the ransom money.

Owen Bennett-Jones, a British freelance journalist, wrote an article *How can the Talks End?* (2014:02) for daily The News. He pointed out that the talks have ended before they actually begun. There was no homework and no clarity of mind regarding the objectives. The state accepted that the militants blowing up policemen was not a red line. Owen said the government has a problem. On what grounds it would declare the talks a failure? In Swat case Sufi Muhammad over reacted by saying now Swat tomorrow the whole Pakistan which encouraged the military operation. But now the Taliban have learnt their lesson, they will not do anything silly like that. So what would government do to end these talks? First, the government could declare the process over by saying the Taliban were not reasonable. But this reason would sound incredible because it would be asked that why it was not called off when policemen were being blew up? Second option is the face saving formula for both the sides. Both the sides set up joint committees and rest will be the same; the violence and the statements. Third, the government could follow the Swat precedent which would mean the enforcement of Shariah throughout Pakistan or the government would have to wait for some Taliban outrage or movie showing stoning and then be able to achieve public opinion to launch a full fledge military action in North Waziristan.

Ashraf JehangirQazi, a former envoy to the US and India, in his article *TTP, Government and Khan* (2014:02) published in daily The News condemned the government for hiding the truth from the public regarding talks process and for the lies that they have any anti-terrorism policy. He called the talks process a ridiculous charade and claimed that the government has no will, courage and honesty to address such issues. The talks process is an excuse for co-existence

with the Taliban which is a victory for the TTP. Why would TTP, who are ready to kill or die, stand down when they are receiving sickening pleas to spare certain parts of the country on the expense of the others.

Saleem Safi, a veteran journalist, regular columnist for daily The News and host of program *Jirga* on Geo TV, wrote an article *Dialogue to Nowhere* (2014:02) and gave a clear picture of the peace talks between government and TTP. He pointed out that apparently there are two parties in the process i.e. the government and the TTP but actually not. The government is sub-divided into three very different groups: the governing regime, the Military and the national representative leadership. The last group is further divided into religious and political leaderships.

Studying the stance of Pakistan press on Government-TTP talks, the researcher reviewed the above mentioned studies and articles from different schools of thought. The review of this variety of opinions and studies provided an opportunity to have a clear and broad picture of the versatile aspects of the process and understanding of the different stance on the issue. This would help the researcher in further research endeavor on studying Pakistan Press stance on Government-TTP talks.

Research Methodology:

In this study the researcher has used content analysis; both the quantitative and qualitative, as methodology to analyze the editorial contents of the selected newspapers.

Research Questions:

For the study at hand, the researcher formulated following research questions and hypotheses;

- 1- Which newspaper gave more editorial coverage to Government-TTP Talks during selected period of time?
- 2- What kind of stances/frames were used by the selected newspapers to present the peace talks process?

Hypotheses:

Following are the hypotheses formally constructed by the researcher for the study;

- 1- Daily The Nation gave more editorial coverage to the Talks process as compared to The News during selected period of time.

- 2- Daily The Nation remained more critical towards the Talks process as compared to The News.

Universe of the Study:

This study at hand considers all editorials published in dailies; The Nation and The News, during January 01, 2014 to February 28, 2014 as the universe of the study.

Unit of analysis:

In this study the unit of analysis is the “Editorial” published in dailies; The Nation and The News, during January 01, 2014 to February 28, 2014 regarding the peace Talks process.

Direction of the contents:

To check and determine the nature of the editorial contents of the selected newspapers, the researcher ranked the data on three point scale i.e. Supportive (+), Opposite (-), and Neutral (O).

Any editorial with supportive and/or positive stance about the peace Talks process was coded as supportive. The editorials which contained unsupportive and/or critical frames regarding the Talks process were categorized as negative and the editorials with mixed and/or unclear position were ranked as neutral.

Limitations of the Study:

Conducting an ideal study is almost impossible. Every researcher has to face some limitations in his/her endeavor because of certain reasons. The study at hand is based on content analysis which is time consuming. This is why the researcher confined the study to two months i.e. January 01, 2015 to February 28, 2015. Secondly, the study is limited to the research question, hypothesis and defined categories.

Theoretical Framework:

In this study the researcher used Agenda Setting theory deductively, collected data and reflected on whether the theory was confirmed or discontinued by the results.

Agenda setting theory has been considered as important component of theoretical frame work to the researcher. It describes that the media sets agenda on some issue in accordance with its wishes.

Findings and Analysis:

This chapter is divided into two parts; the quantitative and the qualitative findings. The quantitative part contains the frequency of the editorials published by the selected newspapers during the time period under study. The qualitative part contains the presentation of direction of the editorial contents studied by the researcher with help of trained coders. Both the quantitative and qualitative findings are placed in tables with summarized interpretations of the data.

Part#01- Quantitative Findings:

Comparison of the total editorial published with the editorial coverage of the Government-TTP Talks Process in dailies; The Nation and The News during January 01, 2014 to February 28, 2014

| Newspaper | Total No. of editorials | No. of editorials on the issue | Percentage |
|------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------|
| The Nation | N=59 | N1= 32 | 54.24 % |
| The News | N=59 | N2= 19 | 32.20 % |
| Total | 128 | 51 | 39.84% |

N1 is total number editorials published by The Nation during the two months

N2 is total number editorials published by The News during the two months

N is total number editorials published by both the dailies during the two months

Interpretations:

During January 01, 2014 to February 28, 2014 daily The Nation published 32 editorials (54.24%) out of total 59 publications on Government-TTP Talks. While, The News published 19 (32.20%) editorials on the issue under study. So, The Nation published editorials regarding Government-TTP Talks more frequently than The News during selected period of time.

Comparison of the editorial coverage of the Government-TTP Talks Process in dailies; The Nation and The News during January 01, 2014 to February 28, 2014

| Newspaper | No. of editorials | Percentage |
|------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| The Nation | N1= 32 | 62.75 % |

| | | |
|----------|--------|---------|
| The News | N2= 19 | 37.25 % |
| Total | N= 51 | |

N1 is total number editorials published by The Nation during the two months

N2 is total number editorials published by The News during the two months

N is total number editorials published by both the dailies during the two months

Interpretations:

Both the dailies published 51 editorials regarding Government-TTP Talks during selected period of time. Out of these 51 editorials, The Nation published 32 (62.75 %) while The News published 19 (37.25 %). So, The Nation gave more topical coverage to the issue as compared to The News during January 01, 2014 to February 28, 2014.

Comparison of the directions of the editorial coverage on the Government-TTP Talks Process in both the dailies; The Nation and The News during January 01, 2014 to February 28, 2014

| N.P | N | Govt.-TTP Talks | | | Total |
|------------|----|-----------------|--------------|--------------|---------|
| | | + | - | 0 | |
| The Nation | 32 | 04 12.50% | 27 84.38% | 01 3.13% | 54.24 % |
| The News | 19 | 00 0% | 18 94.74% | 01 05.26% | 32.20 % |
| Total | 51 | 04 07.84% | 45 88.24% | 02 03.92% | 39.84% |

Interpretations:

The quantitative findings of this study show that during January 01, 2014 to February 28, 2014 daily The Nation published 32 editorials (54.24%) out of total 59 publications on Government-TTP Talks. While, The News published 19 (32.20%) editorials on the issue under study. So, The Nation published editorials regarding Government-TTP Talks more frequently than The News during selected period of time.

As for as direction of the contents is concerned, daily The Nation published 04 (12.50%) editorials containing favorable stances for the peace talk process while 27 (84.38%) editorials contained negative and unfavorable frames for the process and only 01 (3.13%) found neutral regarding the issue during selected period of time. On the other hand, out of 19 (32.20 %) editorials published by daily The News during selected period of time, the researcher found not a single editorial containing favorable stances for the peace talk process while 18 (94.74%) editorials contained negative and unfavorable frames for the process and only 01 (05.26%) found neutral regarding the issue during selected period of time.

So, overall daily The Nation gave more editorial coverage to the issue during selected period of time as compared to The News. The Nation strongly opposed the dialogue with the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and

urged the government to initiate country-wide military operations to root out the terrorism, terrorists and their sympathizers from the country.

Part#02- Qualitative Findings:

Analysis and Discussion:

This part of the findings contains results of the study and answers of the research questions. The findings and results; both the quantitative and qualitative, showed if the hypotheses were confirmed or rejected, which were carefully formulated by the researcher at the outset of the study.

Following are the research questions and their answers:

Q#01- Which newspaper gave more editorial coverage to Government-TTP Talks during selected period of time?

The quantitative findings of this study show that during January 01, 2014 to February 28, 2014 daily The Nation published 32 editorials (54.24%) out of total 59 publications on Government-TTP Talks. While, The News published 19 (32.20%) editorials on the issue under study. So, The Nation published editorials regarding Government-TTP Talks more frequently than The News during selected period of time. So, overall daily The Nation gave more editorial coverage to the issue during selected period of time as compared to The News.

Q#02- What kinds of stances/frames were used by the selected newspapers to present the peace talks process?

The qualitative findings of the study and careful coding of the contents suggested that both the newspapers opposed dialogue with TTP and proposed military action against the terrorists. Daily The Nation, in particular, criticized the government for its 'Peace Talks' policy and suggested that the terrorists are playing games with government and people of Pakistan and that they (terrorists) are initiating talks at one hand and killing innocent citizens on the other hand.

The researcher, with the help of coders, extracted some explicit excerpts from the editorial contents of the selected dailies; The Nation and The News, which showed their stances towards Peace Talks Process between government and TTP in Pakistan;

The title of the editorial "New year, old problems", gives clear message that even New Year has been started but still the issues, problems and challenges are the same as previous year. Hope for good change does not seem to be in New Year.

In the editorial "New year, old problems" daily The Nation used opposing and critical frames for the Talks process. It is highlighted that in the year 2013, very prominent changes occurred. Mr. Nawaz Sharif again took the charge as PM,

New Chief of Army Staff General Raheel Sharif controlled the command of Pak. Army, and New Chief Justice Mr. Justice Tassaduq Hussain Jilani became Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Pakistan. Moreover, in result of drone attacks, the chief of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan Hakimullah Mehsud was killed and Mullah Fazlullah took over as head of TTP and so on. Despite such changes, problems are as the same and progressive change does not seem in the country. This country has professionally sound experts however, perhaps they do not have power or capability to utilize their resources to not only meet the challenges but develop a comprehensive and applicable framework through which hope of betterment may alive. Terrorism and sectarianism are the major threat for our country since long time. In year 2013, we faced great lost by such sort of hazardous activities. Although new year has come yet, social, economic, political challenges are as the same which are badly affecting the peace process in the country. It is hoped that our government will play its responsible role to keep the country on the path of peace, progress and prosperity.

In another editorial “A self-destructive agenda” The Nation pointed out that our politicians, technocrats and other stakeholders, are showing their incapability in various national policies and strategies through which our national interests are badly suffering and we our own-self are becoming source of devastation.

This editorial contains frames against the government functionaries and their policies. It is said in the editorial that as new year started, rather showing expression of not repeating mistakes of the future, our government has adopted the same route which goes towards more complications. Reference of a meeting between Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Chief JUI-S Maulana Sami-ul-Haq was given in which PM expressed desire for Maulana to cooperate for peace talks with Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) because Maulana has good relations with TTP leaders specially its deputy, Khalid Haqqani who was also the student of Maulana in Dar-ul-Uloom Haqqania. He was of the view that student-teacher relationship with militants would held to resolve the issues. On the other hand TTP has strong stand not to accept present system of the country. PM, while knowing the terrorism and extremism situation in the country, he is trying to use those resources who are directly or indirectly involved in such activities means we our-self are creating problems rather than finding proper solutions.

The Nation in an editorial “No more talks” depicts that Pakistani authorities always adopted options for encouraging peace talks while militants (TTP) did not care and kept on terrorist activities. So, now the time has come where option of talks has finished and aggressive attitude should be adopted against those militants.

This editorial opposes the policies of governing political parties. In this editorial it is mentioned that Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan is actively using its sources to destroy peace in the country through target killings, bomb blasts and other attacks. They are at the same time offering talks with authorities. TTP is basically playing games while actively working for its vested interests. Reference is given about attack on security check post and Mir Ali and Miran Shah. All parties' conference was organized to review the present situation and expressed support for operation in North Waziristan and other conflict hit areas. It is also mentioned that Interior Minister Nisar Ali Khan and even Prime Minister of Pakistan Mian Nawaz Sharif, should leave the offices if they are not capable to take active decisions on the present situation. In peace talks from TTP aggressive minded people are there while from government side, mullahs are not appropriate people for peace talks. TTP has adopted dual policy with Pakistan so there should not be any talk with TTP and strong action should be taken against them.

While daily The News took the same kind of stances regarding the Peace Talks but with little frequency as compared to daily The Nation;

In an editorial "Stepping forward" daily The News suggested that government is taking viable steps to encourage negotiations with Taliban so that bloodshed of common people may stop. Government always tried to develop healthy environment to encourage the peace talks with Taliban so that sufferings of common people due to bombs and bloodshed may be stopped and people may live peaceful lives. On other hand, economic development related activities may revive for development.

An editorial entitled "TTP's murder spree" tells that how TTP is continuously doing murder of the people. The TTP is actively engaged in targeted assassinations throughout the country. They killed Chaudhry Aslam at Karachi and several political figures from ANP and even PML-N including common people as well. So it can be easily understandable that how cruel they are. Despite all these facts government always tried to start peace talks with TTPs for which All Parties Conference also have given approval. Ch. Nisar, the interior minister, was of the view that there are two major reasons for deadlock in peace talks. First drone attack and second is that TTP consists of various groups in which certain are in favor of talks and others are not. So, such situation is also creating problems. Any how government should adopt comprehensive strategy to stabilize the issue.

In another editorial "Standing Still" daily The News claimed that the government is stuck on issue of militants while knowing that they are damaging our socio-economic areas and country is badly suffering from such dangerous situation. This editorial strongly criticized the government of PML-N. In this editorial the newspaper portrayed that the government always remained confused in issue of Taliban. In last two weeks, they did suicide attack at school of Hangu,

two attacks in Peshawar and Shangla, Ch. Aslam was assassinated. Attacks on security forces in Bannu and attack on RA Bazaar Rawalpindi and a huge no of people lost their lives. Our PM did not take practical action but starting talking to each other on this issue. So that people may understand that yes, government is quite serious towards such incidents. Reality is that situation is very clear. Taliban are not trustworthy at all. Time has come that Government must take affective steps against militant groups because our country and its people have already suffered a lot.

In an editorial entitled, "A frail craft", daily The News claimed that holding peace talks is a sensitive issue and the editorial presented some neutral and mixed stance on the issue. Here it is said that Imran Khan who always remained in favour of negotiations with Taliban, did not accept for being part of that peace talk process. Imran also denied for becoming part of team that representing TTP. His decision was wise because KPK remained the most targeted area of TTPs. MaulanaFazalurRehman also said that his party would not be the direct part of talk process. He also blamed on the government that Nawaz Sharif did not take him in confidence about the issue. It depicts that Maulana always keeps his status as prime aspect rather than national interest. Both sides are going to start negotiations. Government did not set any condition as yet and don't know TTP delegation got instructions or not. It seems to early but hope committees may able to go for progress.

Daily The News raised few critical questions regarding peace talks and its consequences in an editorial entitled; "We need answer" that as the peace talks between TTP and government are being carried out, then why suicide attacks are happenings. Why innocent people are being targeted. When there would be peace....people needs answer from authorities. According to this editorial, people of Peshawar know that negotiations are being carried out but attacks on civilians are being done. In recent attacks about 13 common people and in another attack, security personals are killed. In this situation, confidence level of the people will shatter. Government says that there is some source who wants to create hurdles in peace talks. It is said that India is involved in Baluchistan. Here TTP is also involved but government does not want to suffer peace talks process. As Maulana Sami said that all militant groups want to talk for peace yet our government should have strong base. Our law enforcement agencies should further improve their all sort of operational strategies so that people of KPK may get peace rather than losing confidence on government.

Following are the data and results to test the hypotheses;

1- Daily The Nation gave more editorial coverage to the Talks process as compared to The News during selected period of time.

During January 01, 2014 to February 28, 2014 daily The Nation published 32 editorials (54.24%) out of total 59 publications on Government-TTP Talks. While, The News published 19 (32.20%) editorials on the issue understudy. So, The Nation published editorials regarding Government-TTP Talks more frequently than The News during selected period of time. Both the dailies published 51 editorials regarding Government-TTP Talks during selected period if time. Out of these 51 editorials, The Nation published 32 (62.75 %) while The News published 19 (37.25 %). So, The Nation gave more topical coverage to the issue as compared to The News during January 01, 2014 to February 28, 2014.

The results of the study confirm the hypothesis.

2- Daily The Nation remained more critical towards the Talks process as compared to The News.

The qualitative findings of the study and careful coding of the contents suggested that both the newspapers opposed dialogue with TTP and proposed military action against the terrorists. Daily The Nation, in particular, criticized the government for its 'Peace Talks' policy and suggested that the terrorists are playing games with government and people of Pakistan and that they (terrorists) are initiating talks at one hand and killing innocent citizens on the other hand.

Hence, the results and careful findings proved the hypothesis correct.

Summary and Conclusion:

Daily The Nation, a part of the Nawa-i-Waqt group of newspapers and mainstream press in Pakistan, is considered as the mouthpiece of the media group claiming the *Two Nation Theory* as their ideology. The group is pioneered by a well-known journalist and figure in Pakistan movement Mr. MajeedNizami and is now led by Mr. HameedNizami and the family. The media group has a reputation of having political affiliation with Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). On the other hand, The News, equally reputed and respected English newspaper in the country, is the part of Jang Group which is the biggest media conglomerate in the country. The Jang, an Urdu daily newspaper, and the Geo, pioneer private TV News channel in Pakistan, are considered to have vibrant policy towards national and international affairs. It has been quoted many times that the media group owner, Mr. Mir Khalil Ur Rehman, claimed that they have a policy to not to have a

policy. Both the dailies, The Nation and The News, covered the issue frequently and presented their stance and suggestions on this core issue with every development.

The Nation published editorials on the issue with critical stance regarding government policy towards the TTP and the peace Talks. For instance, in an editorial *No More Talks* published on January 20, 2014 the newspaper presented TTP showing impudent hypocrisy and the government with no decision power. Government TTP talks, as claimed by the editorial, were façade and the peace offer by the TTP was a mirage. How could the attacks killing innocent people and the Talks go alongside? The editorial suggested that government should follow the Mirali and Miranshah precedent and launch a military operation against the Taliban after they have attacked security check post killing 25 personnel. The government should launch the operation even if the opposition does not like it. The only way to tackle the TTP is a full fledged military operation and the total surrender should be the demand of government not the TTP. The Interior Minister Nisar Ali Khan should resign if he cannot offer sane counsel to the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister must cease his impression of a man with no mind and take the immediate decision on the issue if they intend to secure the state. Say no to talks. And pick up arms, instead. It would be a decision still ten years too late, but do it now, and perhaps we can redeem our future. Do nothing, and effectively hand over control to the TTP³.

The Nation, in its editorials, continued its critical position against the government, during the time period under study, for not taking immediate decision and launching military operation against the TTP. In another editorial *Running out of time* the government is criticized and the editorial asked few questions and mentioned the consequences. What happens when a series of violent activities carried out by a terrorist organization fail to prompt any serious action? The answer is the stories that make headline every day⁴. The editorial presented a hope that the government see through the façade and identify the real enemy. The government is running out of time as the rest of the country. Government has to do something now and that is launching the military operation.

Daily The News, on the other hand, also took the same kind of stance as appeared in The Nation on the issue. The News also remained critical towards government policy against the Taliban and emphasized the military operation as the only way to tackle down the Taliban challenge. In an editorial, *Standing still*, the newspaper criticized the government for being stasis and commented that the government was not clear on what to do in this regard and that they did not have decision power. The editorial pointed out that the TTP was carrying on the attacks killing security personnel and civilians including women and children by attacking public places and even the schools but the government

was just talking and hoping against the hope. The editorial suggested that the government must take decision and do something now.

In another editorial, *Action or what?*, The News commented on the mixed and indecisive stance of the government on the situation which is getting worse and out of control with the passage of time. Commenting on the air strikes conducted by the army in areas of North Waziristan the editorial pointed out that government took a confused stance which would further sabotage the peace process if there was any. The government statement showed that there are differences lying between the army and the government on the options against the TTP. The army bombarded the areas claiming the killing of some 50 terrorists including 36 foreigners while the government seemed to be unaware of the strikes. In both cases, whether the strikes were only the retaliation by the army- without the government consent- against the TTP for their recent attacks on security check posts or the limited action led by the government-as being claimed, the chances of talks to proceed are vanished.

Overall, daily The News also condemned and criticized the government for the stasis option it chose, for being indecisive and confused, and for not taking necessary action against the Taliban challenge.

Both the newspapers in their editorials shared the same kind of stance on the issue. They commented on the government giving the critical stance for being like a headless chicken that has no idea where to go, for being indecisive, for not taking necessary action and for being played in the hands of the TTP. The editorials portrayed the gravity of the situation and the bitter consequences looming on the heads of the government. The mentioned the increasing anxiety among the army ranks and among the public due to the visionless government. The newspapers through their editorials demanded a full fledged military operation against the TTP as the only reasonable option available to the government if they want to secure the state and intend to redeem the future of the country.

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