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MEDIA CONFORMITY TO FOREIGN POLICY: COVERAGE OF WAR ON TERROR BY THE BRITISH PRESS

This study analyzes to what extent British press followed its foreign policy guidelines in the coverage of War on Terror. For this purpose two British dailies, *The Guardian* and *The Independent* were selected. The editorials of these newspapers were analysed by employing the technique of thematic analysis. It was noted that British government supported the War on Terror, Afghanistan war 2001 and Iraq war 2003. Even British army participated in these wars. However, study found that the British press was not much supported to the War on terror. In the case of Afghanistan war 2001, at certain points the British press supported government policy and supported its army in the field but in the case of Iraq war 2003 both newspapers criticised British policy on war. It was stressed that the British government should withdraw its support from Iraq war 2003. Overall, British press did not strongly support British foreign policy guidelines in the coverage of the War on Terror.

After September 11 attacks in the US, the British government decided to support U.S actions against Al-Qaeda and Afghanistan. The British government provided logistic, military and political support to the US in War against Terrorism. For instance it provided Tom-a-hawk cruise missiles from its submarines, assisted refuelling of U.S. Navy jets and British special military forces participated in Afghanistan war. The British investigation plans also helped the US army in providing intelligence information. In addition to this, the

diplomatic role of British Prime Minister, Tony Blair was also crucial for the US, as he travelled the world to gain support for Bush's military actions (Golino, 2002).

Blair's response to U.S. military strategies indicated his serious concerns against Al-Qaeda and its supporters. Although he supported the 'war on terror', he was more concerned than US to include multilateral and UN approval for the action (Lunn *et al.*, 2008). Likewise, Britain served the ambitions of Bush administration whose policies were unilateralist and based upon the doctrine of pre-emptive actions. Almost immediately after 9/11 Britain became the major ally of United States. Kamfner (2003) criticizes Blair's decision, "when George W Bush and the neoconservatives around him saw in the new global dangers the need to assert a doctrine of pre-emption and US primacy" (p. 350), he denounced Blair's strategy to "go with the Americans". It was Blair's failure in the perspective of foreign policy because he overvalued the influence of U.S. pressures.

It was not only Afghanistan that was supported by the British Government but also in Iraq war 2003, Britain was a major ally of U.S government. Its support was very crucial for the US government to practice its military plans in Afghanistan and especially in Iraq. As Meyer (2005) mentions that American officials often discussed this issue with British's ambassador after 9/11 and desired to win UK's support. In response, Blair's government stood along side with American global policies of intervention. Blair criticized the division of world opinion over Iraq war 2003, he said in parliament debate over Iraq crisis:

"What we have witnessed is indeed the consequence of Europe and the United States dividing. ... The heart of it has been the concept of a world in which there are rival poles of power – the U.S. and its allies in one corner, France, Germany, and Russia and its allies in the other" (Blair, 2003).

British and US cooperation in Iraq was considerable. This strategic relationship was developed during the war in

Afghanistan 2001. As McCausland (2006) mentions that there is no other example except Britain that considerably supported and remained involved in Iraq war operations with the United States. By having a close relationship with the US, Britain had an opportunity to serve its national interests. Blair's foreign policy advisor David Manning argued, "At the best of times, Britain's influence on the U.S. is limited.... But the only way we exercise that influence is by attaching ourselves firmly to them and avoiding public criticism wherever possible" (Kampfner, 2003, p. 117). British policy makers considered this relationship good for Britain in terms of global aspects and in giving a way for Britain to impact US policies. Blair certainly wanted to have a strong involvement in war on terror and Iraq invasion. Blair argued that if a UN resolution did not support military actions in Iraq, it could loss its credibility (Dumbrell, 2006). Even before 9/11 Blair showed the same commitment towards a US and Britain relationship. He said in his Chicago speech 1999, "we have a government that is both pro-Europe and pro-American" (Blair, 2004, p. 115).

Media Conformity to Foreign Policy

The study aims to explore how far the British press followed the foreign policy guidelines of its country in the coverage of the war on terror. Previous researchers had explored media compliance with foreign policy or the government position (Bennett, 1990; Entman, 2004). In the United States the studies indicated the dominant presence of Presidential frame in the political discourse of mainstream media. Frenssley (2002) the investigated New York Times coverage of Bush's speeches after September 11 attacks; it was found that these speeches framed media coverage of the event. Likewise, cross-national studies suggested that sometimes the journalists consciously averted the principles of objectivity and fairness. Grundmann, Smith, and Wright (2000) conducted a comparative analysis of French, British, and German media reporting on Kosovo crisis. Thematic dissimilarities in their media coverage were discovered though these countries are allies and have parable designs. Similarly, Gurevitch, Levy, and Roeh (1991) found different media frames in the coverage of Mikhail Gorbachev's speech by

American and British media. It anticipates that foreign policy directives make their impact on media coverage.

Traditionally, it was believed that media mostly worked independently in democratic countries but, it had been found that during an international crisis, the media in US and UK usually worked in line with their foreign policy guidelines (Bennet, 1993; Carpenter, 1995;; Friel & Falk, 2004; Kumar, 2006; Reese & Lewis, 2009); and political leaders aligned public opinion with their foreign policy lines by using mass media (Hill, 1996; Morgenthau, 1978). From 9/11 to the Afghan invasion, US media incorporated militarist themes in their coverage which justified Bush's military policies. It included these frames: "America Strikes Back" and "America's New War" (Kellner, 2007). Kaufmann (2004) noted that after 9/11 attacks the popular media, newspapers and magazines provided an opportunity to Bush administration to propagate their claims that Saddam Hussain was a direct threat and could use Weapons of Mass Destruction on America.

However, Khan (2008) tested media conformity in three elite US newspapers regarding the portrayal of Pakistani image in pre and post 9/11 scenario. Findings reveal that US changed its foreign policy towards Pakistan and adopted a more positive gesture; US media did not show similar expression and continued criticism against the country.

British media coverage of the War on Terror

In the case of the British press, the previous studies argued that official sources not only provided primary information about the issue but also shaped news agendas (Schlesinger & Tumber, 1994). It was a practice in Britain that during war, the media most often evaded criticism in favour of the government. During the Iraq invasion 2003, this practice was observed firmly; the newspapers that adopted oppositional stances were toned down. Even the politicians were condemned (Murray, Parry, Robinson, & Goddard, 2008). Franks (2003) proclaimed that during the 'War on Terror' the British Army pressed the media to manoeuvre the facts in favour of war.

Generally, British media supported the coalition forces throughout the war on terror. Robinson, *et al.* (2009) noted that during the fight against terrorism, the principles of patriotism and official sources farmed the media performance in favour of the British government. The Glasgow University Media Group¹² (1985) said that the British media had been nationalistic, compliant and accommodating during the conflict of Falklands in 1982.

Lewis, Brookes, Mosdell and Threadgold (2006) identified considerable reliance of British media on official sources. They divided the coverage into three thematic categories connected with the governments' case of Iraq war: immorality of the Iraqi regime, the threat of Saddam's mass destruction weapons, and reception given by the Iraqi people to the coalition forces. The findings indicate that British media supported the official stand by highlighting the immorality of Saddam regime and welcoming gesture of the Iraqi public whereas it refrained from the critical questions regarding the claims of grave threats from WMD to the world. Similarly, Robinson, Goddard, Parry and Murray (2009) identified British media's conformity to the official viewpoint by relying on government sources and notion of patriotism. On the other hand, the researchers also found considerable data on causalities and humanitarian issues. Somehow it indicates towards the objective and balanced coverage trends of British media as well. There are certain elements in the British media that distinguish it from the US media regarding the coverage of terrorism. Papacharissi and Oliveria (2008) present a comparative analysis of US and UK newspapers about the reporting of terrorist attacks. They found that US newspapers gave more coverage to military aspects, political personalities and excluded the information associated with diplomatic perspective while UK papers were concerned about the all international players related to the issue of terrorism, more use of global resources and foreign experts, alternative policy options and diplomatic assessment of terrorist attacks. They argue that national government policies of US and UK generally influence the media strategies about the coverage of any issue.

Few studies observed that British press projects both military and diplomatic arguments but US media seems to be more focused on war strategies and pro war ideas. Although this may be true but Susan (2004) comes up with different findings. She analyzed ‘*The Independent*’, the British daily. It was observed that the newspaper presented both positive and negative images of America regarding the war on terror. During the initial days of September 11, attacks America was portrayed as a victim but later on it was presented as combatant or a “country out of revenge at every cost” (p. 18). *The Independent* chose this frame due its liberal ideology because the paper does not hesitate to express its opinion against the government. By the same token, Hammond (2003) proclaims that British main stream media, for instance, Channel Four and Daily Mirror had included many references of criticism on American imperialism and also presented reports related to anti-war protests and condemnation.

By looking at the previous literature, it was observed that the British media mostly supported government policy guidelines in the coverage of international crisis. The present study analyses that to what extent the British press conformed British foreign policy guidelines in the coverage of War on Terror. What themes come out of the data which supported the British government policy on the war on terror or how the British press opposed the government.

RQ: To what extent the British press followed its foreign policy in the coverage of War on Terror?

Method

For this study qualitative research design had been employed because this design had holistic approach and descriptive in its nature. This provided an opportunity to the researcher to build a complex and holistic picture, analyzes words, reports, information and conducts research in a natural setting (Creswell, 1994). Similarly, Shank (2002) defined qualitative research as “a form of systematic empirical inquiry into meaning” (p. 5). In this research, the qualitative approach

analyzed the coverage of war on terror in British newspaper editorials. It examined the whole text and information in the editorials. For analysing the text of newspaper editorials, the study employed the technique of thematic analysis.

Thematic analysis was one of the qualitative techniques that were mostly employed by the researchers. It identified 'what' and 'how' themes take place into text (Popping, 2000) through "careful reading and re-reading of the data" (Rice & Ezzy, 1999, p.258). Thematic analysis was utilized to analyze classifications and patterns within data. It described data with rich detail and interpretation (Boyatzis, 1998). Braun and Clarke (2006) define thematic analysis as a qualitative systematic method for "identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organized and described your data set in (rich detail). However, frequently it went further than this, and interpreted various aspects of the research topic" (p. 79). Thematic analysis was further assisted by computer-assisted programs that facilitate the data analysis process such as Atlas-ti, Nudist or NVivo. For example, NVivo was a tool that supports the researchers to develop theoretical concepts as Gibbs (2002) explained it as a 'theory builder's software'. This software was designed to include nodes that helped the researcher to connect theoretical concepts from the text (Gibbs, 2002, p. 57).

Population for the study

For this study two British newspapers namely *The Guardian* and *The Independent* were selected. The particular study focused on quality newspapers because elite and quality newspapers often played decisive role in determining political agenda for other mass media. Chomsky (1997) wrote that the elite media laid down framework for other media outlets. Although elite newspapers were not representative of entire media, they had a major impact on society (Benson & Hallin, 2005). Newspapers were retrieved from the Lexis Nexuses database.

The population for this research study included all editorials using the words "war on terror" or "9/11", or "Al

Qaeda”, or “Afghanistan war 2001”, or “Osama bin Laden” or “Iraq”, or “Saddam Hussain”, or “WMD” in the headline or leading paragraph in the selected newspapers from 12 September 2001 to 11 September 2003. For this study, all editorials having the above mentioned words in their title or leading paragraph during two years were selected for analysis. There were total 444 editorial from the British newspapers were analyzed, 175 from *The Guardian* and 269 from *The independent*.

Unit of Analysis

The entire editorial including title, headline, body text and theme was taken as unit of analysis. The rest of the articles, photographs and editorial cartoon on editorial page were excluded from the study. The editorial was chosen for the study because editorial depicted the opinion of its newspaper and organization. Moreover, the editorial also gave impression regarding the political affiliation of the newspaper and depicted the newspaper policy. The editorial depicted the opinion of a newspaper on the particular issue rather than objective reporting. That’s why editorials for this study were chosen.

Analytical strategy

By applying thematic analysis the researcher investigated how British press supported or opposed their Government policies in the coverage of War on Terror. For analyzing the content from newspapers, the study employed Inductive and deductive thematic analysis. The editorials British newspapers were chosen as the unit of analysis. The researcher started to analyze data based on the prior categories derived from previous literature but during analysis new themes and categorizes emerged from data.

In this study three types of coding was utilized: open coding, axial coding and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Open coding involved labeling and classifying the phenomenon that was pointed by the data. Each analyzed line or paragraph was broken down into different codes. All codes were assigned particular incidents or issues. Axial coding: during this process the data was analyzed again by making associations

between categories and its subcategories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The analysis explained the phenomenon implanted in the data. Selective coding integrated the categories to a structure or theoretical framework. In this case, first step was to identify core category. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998) core category was a conceptual idea that covered all other categories. Based on the following method data from the British editorials was analyzed. For this purpose, the researcher used NVIVO 10.

Findings

In discussing the results, it was observed that overall coverage of the War on Terror by the British press was not supportive to its Government stand but at certain points the press supported British policies on War on Terror. After 9/11 the British press supported the United States on the tragedy and also supported the British Government stand but it was argued that shoulder to shoulder support to the United States would not serve British national interests. Likewise, in the case of Afghanistan attack, the press criticized the war but at the same time it supported the action against Al-Qaida. The press expressed its concerns against terrorism, Al Qaeda, Osama Bin Laden and stressed on the Government to take serious steps to restrict terrorism. However, in the case of Iraq war 2003, it was observed that the British press completely opposed it.

The Guardian and *The Independent* framed 9/11 attacks as a disastrous and barbaric act that killed thousands of innocent people and caused sufferings for the survivals. Both newspapers advocated taking such action that could prevent such catastrophic incident in any part of the world. It also supported American vengeance in response to attacks. *The Independent* argued that no responsible nation could avert such act of terrorism on its soil. America identified Osama and al Qaeda responsible for these attacks but it humbly pursued its policy against them. The evidence that were presented if they could not be approved in the court, still they justified action against Osama and al Qaeda. It was quite essential to isolate Taliban and to cut support for their network.

“The coalition is right to try to bring Osama bin Laden and his al-Qa’ida organisation to justice. Whether or not Mr bin Laden was directly responsible for the atrocity of 11 September, he gloried in it and is trying to foment similar acts of terror. And if effective action against al-Qa’ida requires a new government in Kabul, then the US-led coalition is justified in trying to help the Afghans to set up a new government that will respect international law” (*The Independent*, October 26, 2001, p. 3).

The Guardian stressed that armed retaliation should be effective and wipe out those factors that produced terror. It was also emphasized that military as well as political measures should be adopted to confront the threats of terrorism. Initially, *the guardian* was supportive to Blair’s policies to “war against terrorism” and framed them as a balanced and measured response. The Prime Minister stressed to adopt serious measures relating to 9/11 attacks but he did not indicated that Britain was bound to support everything devised by the US. *The guardian* commented that the Prime Minister must stick to this policy. As the guardian stated on September 15, 2001;

“Blair’s benchmark statement: Unconditional solidarity, but not unthinking support” (*The Guardian*, September 15, 2001, p. 21).

The Independent proposed that for restricting terrorism, it was important that the United States and the British should focus on intelligence and police work. Those organizations should be identified that were involved in terrorism and should neutralize them. The United States and the Britain should redouble its security of Government buildings, Air ports and other important places. In this way, the act of terrorism could be avoided.

After the fall of Afghanistan, *The Guardian* and *the Independent* hailed the victory of allied forces in its certain editorials. The early victory of the allied forces was appreciated. It was written that coherent American action brought worthwhile venture for the United States and the Afghans. That was a small war; even it was not expected in the start. With the fall of

Mazaz-i-Sharif, Herat and Kurduz, Taliban fell like ‘dominoes’. The press appreciated the performance of allied force that less than a month, they were able to defeat Taliban and dismantled Al Qaeda regime. Afghanistan was agreed to install a neutral government under UN backing. *The Independent* stated that America fought a restrained war in Afghanistan and avoided massive casualties that could enhance Muslim grievances or inspire al Qaeda.

However, in the case of Iraq war 2003, the coverage was not supportive to British policy. The British government was supporting the war at every level but the British press criticized every aspect of war. There were only two editorials noted from *The Independent* and *The Guardian* which supported the victory in Baghdad with this perspective that Iraqi people got released after despotic rule of Saddam. It was stated that British and the US armies wiped out 35 years of rule of Saddam. His statues were thrown down and Iraqis celebrated his defeat. *The Independent* stated that it was a quick victory with less allied forces casualties. It indicated the professional approach of allied forces that they successfully defeated Saddam forces and avoided massive collateral damages.

The discussion above included those references from *The Independent* and *The Guardian* that approved the British foreign policy in the context of War on Terror. Now the discussion below indicated that how British press gave critical argument against the War on Terror. The British press was not in supportive to give shoulder to shoulder support to the US. *The Guardian* argued that Britain could not give military blank cheque to the US. British support to the US should not contradict its national interest.

Later on, *the Guardian* criticized the British government insistence to support US the war on terror. It was commented that British supportive policies towards the US had put the country into troublesome situation. The newspaper deplored on the fact that Britain had supported US in this war but it did not have any authority to take any decision. All controls and

authorities were in the hand of Mr. Bush. *The guardian* deplored that Mr. Blair exceptionally supported Mr. Bush in this war as it wrote;

“The same principle binds the Bush administration, for whom in this crisis Mr Blair is acting as chief aide-de-camp. Unfortunately, this necessary clarity is so far lacking” (*The Guardian*, September 28, 2001, p. 23).

The Independent suggested to the Prime Minister Blair that he should express his reservations against War on Terror and should tell President Bush that the war would be counterproductive. War on Terror would have grave implications. It could excite Muslim anger and from economic perspective, it would be an expensive venture that could badly affect British and American economies. *The Independent* also stated that the Britain should not give unconditional support to the United States as it wrote in its editorial on March 01, 2002;

“There must be a limit to our support for America” (*The Independent*, March 01, 2002, p. 3).

Later on, *The Independent* found faults to the British policy relating to Afghanistan war. During the coverage of Afghanistan war 2001, *the Independent* and *The Guardian* highlighted certain aspects of war that were contradictory to the British policy. Such as the issue of heavy bombardment, collateral damages and sufferings of Afghan people were revealed. *The Guardian* stated that there was indiscriminate bombing in Afghanistan which killed many innocents. *The guardian* suggested that America should reconsider its policies and focused on peaceful diplomatic options rather than killing people.

With the start of ‘War on Terror’, President Bush expressed his concerns against Iraq’s WMD’s and included Iraq as its next target of “war on terror”. The British press was highly against to the US policies on Iraq. *The Guardian* argued that the US had cynically exaggerated the issue of Iraq’s WMD’s and 9/11 links. *The guardian* was not willing to give unconditional

support to the US in Iraq attack. It was stressed that the US should discuss this issue with the UK after that the government would decide either it would support the US or not. The British support on Afghanistan should not be taken for granted in this case.

Later on, the British policy over Iraq crisis was not approved by *the Guardian* and *the Independent*. The newspapers frequently mentioned its concerns on pro-war policy of the British government. *The Independent* remarked in its editorial on March 01, 2003 that the second phase of War on Terror was an unwise war and 'short-sighted negative policy of US might'. It criticized the idea of axis of evil and attack on Iraq. It was argued that international terrorism should be tackled through diplomacy, global coalition and world treaties. The policy of war would enhance more terrorism. The newspaper asked Mr. Blair that he should convince Mr. Bush to restrain from the idea of war.

“Mr. Bush's 'first friend' should warn him against going to war with IraQ” (*the Independent*, March 04, 2002, p. 3).

The Independent was in favour of peaceful solution of Iraq crisis and did not support war. In response to British decision to participate in Iraq war, the British nation protested against it and majority of people take part in anti war rallies. There were many protests in Muslim, Arab, and European countries and even in the United States. The public opinion in Arab countries was much hostile against American attack. There were many editorial from *The Independent* that criticized Blair's policies regarding Iraq attack. He was portrayed as loyal ally and assistant to Mr. Bush who complied faithfully to all his policies after 9/11.

“Mr. Blair has proved his loyalty to president bush - but not the case for war” (*The Independent*, September 04, 2002, p. 14)

The Independent argued that Blair was more inclined towards America after 9/11. He did not waste any opportunity to give shoulder to shoulder support to the United States. He

pressed that America would not tackle the issue of Iraq alone. *The Independent* commented that Blair's closeness to the United States isolating him in the Europe. Blair did not make sound case against Saddam. He repeated the charges of weapons of mass destruction but did not present strong evidences. *The Independent* wrote that Blair had risked his credibility by supporting the United States and he was perceived as junior partner of President Bush in Arab region. He had to face the consequences of war.

“Mr. Blair still needs to justify the considerable risks he has taken by launching this war” (*The Independent*, March 26, 2003, p. 18).

The British press stressed that Iraq war should be endorsed by United Nations, otherwise, the British Government should not support it. *The guardian* commented that the war without UN backing was not acceptable. If the British government support unauthorized war, it would be an unwelcomed breakthrough. *The guardian* argued that how the Prime Minister could take decision on Iraq without consulting parliament, UNO and putting in danger British and European interest. He could not take one-sided decision just following Mr. Bush's policies. The newspaper emphasized that British policy on Iraq was influenced by the policies of Bush administration.

“Ideology over Iraq: Tory policy made in Washington” (*The Guardian*, September 02, 2002, p. 17)

During Iraq attack, the British press highlighted civilian casualties, looting, human sufferings, killings and collapse of civil order. It was argued that the United States and British troops were unable to stabilize the situation. The sever implications of war put Mr. Blair in difficult situation. He could not convince the world on this war with rising human sufferings. The increasing anti Americanism in the region had made the post war situation more troublesome. In post war scenario, *the Independent* stressed that the UNO should play vital role in Iraq. The extended US presence in Iraq was opposed by the

newspaper. By analyzing the above discussion, it could be stated that on Iraq issue, British press did not support government policy. The newspapers criticized British government supportive policies to the United States and stressed on the role of UNO in Iraq crisis.

Overall, by analyzing the data, it was observed that the British press partially approved British government policy on War on Terror. During Afghanistan attack, at certain points the press supported Government stance but mostly it suggested avoiding military means and employing diplomatic measures to counter terrorism. Moreover, it pressed to strengthen intelligence and security measure to avoid terrorist attacks. It argued that war would enhance more terrorism particularly the extension of War on Terror in Iraq and other countries would enhance Muslims' grievances that could inspire al Qaeda for more attacks. In the case of Iraq war, the British press adopted oppositional stance against Government policies. The coverage of Iraq attack was dominated by critical and oppositional arguments by *The Guardian* and *the Independent*.

Conclusion & Discussion

It was discussed above that Britain supported the US government on the War on Terror. In Afghanistan attack 2001 British forces participated on ground. Prime Minister Tony Blair expressed his support to the War on Terror in front of media and public. Likewise in the case of the Iraqi attack of 2003, in spite of public pressure British Government supported the war and even its army participate in the attack. British Government pursued its pro-war policy against Iraq irrespective of the fact it faced immense criticism from various sections of the British society.

In line with the media conformity to the foreign policy, it was observed that mostly British press did not follow the government policy but at certain times it was noted that British papers supported government policies on the War on Terror and Afghanistan attack. However on Iraq crisis, it gave coverage to the issue contrary to the policies of their government. In the

coverage of the War on Terror, mostly the British press did not endorse government policy. It discussed bad consequences of war, oppositional arguments, criticism on British policies related to War on Terror, British anti terrorist laws and criticism on American policies. Similarly, during Afghanistan war, the press stressed on casualties in Afghanistan, sever bombing, less concentration by the United States and Britain on humanitarian issues and oppositional arguments on Afghanistan war. However, there were certain editorials noted which supported Government policies on Afghanistan crisis. These editorials hailed early victory in Afghanistan, condemned Al Qaeda and Osama for their aggressive actions and discussed European support on Afghanistan attack. It was also noted that the British press supported British troops that were participating in Afghanistan war. They were appreciated for their professional capabilities. These findings are consistent with the previous studies conducted on the coverage of the war on terror by the British press (Papacharissi & Oliveria, 2008; Susan, 2004; Hammond, 2003)

Conversely, on Iraq crisis, British press was completely against British Government policy. *The Guardian* and *The Independent* clearly wrote in their editorials that they did not support the war. The press criticized their Government for supporting such war that was not approved by the United Nations. British press discussed anti war protests, negative public opinion, oppositional statements against war, criticism on US for its dealing United Nations on Iraq issue and missing weapons of mass destruction after war. British press condemned its government for providing fake information on Iraq weapons of mass destruction and stressed on to US and British Governments to find weapons of mass destruction from Iraq after war. The coverage of Iraq war was completely against the Government policy of Britain. The press was aggressive and oppositional against Iraq war and British support for the war. These findings were consistent with the study of Pickerill and Webster (2006). They found in their research that during and after Iraq war 2003, the British newspapers, *The Independent*

and *Daily Mirror* opposed British support to the war and gave more space to dissent.

Overall, the research indicated that British coverage of War on Terror, Afghanistan war 2001 and Iraq war 2003 was dominated by oppositional themes but during initial days of 9/11 attacks and Afghanistan war at certain points, it supported government policy line. It could be stated that on Afghanistan war 2001 the British press partially conformed the British government policy but on Iraq war 2003 it was completely against. These findings are consistent with another study conducted by Robinson, Goddard, Parry and Murray (2009). They found in their study that British media gave balanced and objective coverage to War on Terror. At certain levels it conformed to Government policies but on the other hand, there was huge discussion on casualties and humanitarian issues.

However, previous studies suggested that during international crisis media supported government policies in its coverage (Bennett, 1990; Entman, 2004; Smith, & Wright, 2000; Bennet, 1993; Carpenter, 1995; Largio *et. al.*, 2004; Friel & Falk, 2004; Kumar, 2006; Reese & Lewis, 2009; Zheng, 2006), but the present study found limited support to media conformity to the foreign policy in the coverage of war on terror by the British press.

Key words: Media Conformity; British Press; War on Terror; Media coverage

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