

War And Peace Journalism: Evaluating the Media Coverage of Afghan Conflicts

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Abstract

This research examines media contents in Afghanistan's conflict-ridden environment using the categories of war and peace journalism. The study offers a 100 days quantitative analysis of the coverage of IS-K, the US, and SRF conflicts in the two Afghan (Tolo News, Ariana News) and one US (Azadi Radio) leading media outlet, from 15 August to 21 November 2021. For examining the designed two hypotheses, 280 reports were collected from the three leading media. Consistent with the existing literature on Peace and war journalism studies, the study found that all the three media outlets predominantly reported the IS-K, US, and SRF conflicts in Afghanistan through war journalism. More focus of media in the coverage of IS-K conflict was on reporting the visible effect of war, and they followed the zero-sum orientation of war journalism. In the coverage of the US and SRF conflict, the selected media reported the elite's people as the main peacemakers in these conflicts and didn't pay much attention to the public. For better understanding, this research advocates on the peace journalism scholarship to identify that the media content can play an effective role in peace and conflict resolution.

Keywords; Afghan Conflicts, Elite, Media coverage, public people, War/Peace Journalism.

Introduction

Afghanistan has been the site of numerous violent conflicts since 2001. After 20-years of war, the Taliban captured Kable on 15 August 2021, and the US and NATO militaries left Kabul. On 6 September 2021, the claimed victory of the Taliban in Panjshir province completed their takeover of the country (Ibrahim & Siddiqui, 2021) and the structural conflict between the Taliban, the Afghan government, and the US ended with this victory. But, Afghanistan is still suffering three major conflicts with the new government of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA).

When the Taliban and US signed a peace agreement with the withdrawal of foreign military, Afghan peace negotiation shifted to a positive peace process (Galtung & Ruge, 1965, p. 2). Now, this conflict is in the process of reconciliation between the Taliban and the US, and they organized two round negotiations since mid-August 2020 (BBC, 2021).

In addition CRF is the second Afghan conflict. When the Taliban captured Kabul, many Afghan officials and militaries fled to Panjshir province. They regrouped war against the Taliban under the Second Resistance Front (CRF), a movement leading by Ahmad Massoud, son of Ahmad Shah Massoud, the legendary Afghan guerrilla commander, who led the Northern Alliance or the first Resistance against Taliban “1996-2001”(Coll, 2018, pp. 24-35; Rahshid, 2001, pp. 41-67). On 6 September 2021, the Taliban captured Panjshir and many leaders of CRF based in Tajikistan, America, and many other countries in the world.

The third conflict is Islamic State–Khorasan (IS-K). After the victory of the Taliban, it's the first direct and high-security threat in Afghanistan. Since IS-K announced its establishment in January 2015, they have organized many deadly suicide and guerilla attacks. It has also intensified the sectarian dimensions of war by escalating attacks on civilians, especially on Shia Muslims (Ibrahimi & Akbarzadeh, 2019, p. 1). Since 2015, the Taliban and SI-K have been belligerent parties in the country, with the engagement of fierce violent conflict (Gardner, 2021; Ibrahimi & Akbarzadeh, 2019).

While the Afghan conflict has been subjected to a large number of scholarly research in the world, the analysis of media's role in the Afghan conflict has not received significant attention. Moreover, the analysis of the role of media in these three conflicts didn't subject to academic debates. While this study is an attempt to fill this gap by looking at how media report these three conflicts, the indicators characterize the reporting of conflict in terms of war and peacemaking capability of media.

The emergence of the Taliban in Afghanistan

The movement of the Taliban was founded in the Kandahar province of Afghanistan in 1994. Initially, the Taliban aimed to end the civil war to restore peace. The first theory about the earlier emergence of the Taliban explains the movement's rapid success in capturing anarchic in the country by local people's need for security, given the immoral conduct of many commanders. But many argue that the Taliban was organized by Pakistan to promote their interests (Wani, 2021, p. 2). Also, Rashid writes the rapid success of the Taliban, “In the first three months after capturing Kandahar, the Taliban had broken the stalemate in the Afghan civil war by capturing 12 provinces and had arrived at the outskirts of Kabul to the north and Herat in the west” (Rahshid, 2001, p. 31). In this process, the movement aligned itself with the number of international Islamic Jihadist groups, including Al Qaeda and Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, to fight a coalition of former mujahidin movements or First Resistance Front of northern Afghanistan. In 1996, the Taliban took control of Kabul, and they ruled most of Afghanistan, but they couldn't capture Badakhshan and Parwan, the northern provinces of the country. After 11 September's incidents, the regime of the Taliban collapsed by the invasion of U.S.-led forces in 2001 with the prime suspect Osama Bin Laden and his Al-Qaeda (Ibrahimi & Akbarzadeh, 2019, p. 8; Hussain, 2016, p. 32). In 2001, NATO-led military and northern resistance forces killed and prisoned many members and officials of the Taliban, and many of them moved to Pakistan (Zaland, 2019, p. 14). Coll (2018) quotes the US government policy in 2002 that “the Taliban had been defeated, they remained illegitimate, and stragglers should be hunted down, imprisoned, and interrogated about Al-Qaeda” (Coll, 2018, p. 157). In 2003, the Taliban leaders who were based in Pakistan regrouped and started fighting against the Afghan Government, US, and NATO.

The Taliban movement was led by Mullah Omar, but in July 2015, the official spokesperson of the Taliban, Zabihullah Mujahed, accepted that Mullah Omar died in 2013, and they announced Akhter

Muhammad Mansour as the second leader of Taliban. In May 2016, Akhter Muhammad Mansour was killed by a US drone in Pakistan. The movement declared Mullah Hibatullah Akhunzada as Amir al-Mu'minin or commander of the faithful (Ibrahimi & Akbarzadeh, 2019, p. 7). In Principles, the movement of the Taliban was led by a group of their leaders from Pakistan, based in Quetta. The Shura was responsible for the overall leadership of the movement. In 2017 Taliban started a new Chapter of their Political life. In August 2017, President Trump declared a new strategy that "conditions on the ground - not arbitrary timetables - will guide our strategy from now on" (Sopko, 2021, p. 35).

Taliban and Peace Negotiation

Besides being the war in Afghanistan, the US announced a new strategy, and they tried to end the long war by the following negotiation. Since 2018, following tenthronds of negotiation, the US and Taliban representatives Zalmay Khalilzad and Mullah Abdul Gani signed a peace agreement on 29 February 2020 in Doha, and the Counterterrorism assurances, the withdrawal of all American and foreign forces from Afghanistan, the Intra-Afghan negotiation, temporary reduction in violence and a lasting cease-fire between US Taliban were the four issues of this agreement (Maizland, 2020). Regarding US and Taliban agreement in Doha, the Intra-Afghan Negotiation started on 12 September 2020. Besides three rounds of negotiation between the Afghan government and the Taliban in Doha, the Taliban has started surrounding many provinces. United States Institute of Peace (USIP) quote, "the Taliban, believing itself to be an ascendant power, is unwilling to make concessions, as is the Afghan government, which seeks to maintain its waning influence" (threlkeld, 2021, p. 16). Finally, on 15 August 2021, the Taliban captured Kabul, and US announced its full withdrawal of international troops from Afghanistan on 31 August 2021 (threlkeld, 2021, p. 3). To conclude the result of 20 years' war, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) declared the whole rate of the 20 years conflict in Afghanistan, they wrote that the US and The Department of Defense (DOD) spent \$982 billion on warfighting and trying to reconstruct Afghanistan. During the war, 2,443 American and 1,144 allied troops were killed and 20,666 US troops injured. However, the Afghans have suffered an even greater toll. At least 66,000 Afghan troops have been killed. More than 48,000 Afghan civilians have been killed, and at least 75,000 have been injured since 2001 (Sopko, 2021, p. 1).

Afghanistan and Media

The historical context shows that freedom of expression was already recognized in Afghanistan during the rule of King Amanullah. (Tanwir, 2001, pp. 93-97). King Zahir Shah legalized the freedom of expression for the second time in 1964 (Eide, Khalvatga, & Shirzad, 2019, p. 2). After the collapse of the Taliban, the new constitution in 2004 recognized freedom of expression (article 34) and Mass media law (2015) permitted the establishment of private media "article 10" (Bahar, 2020, p. 4). During the last 20 years democracy, Afghanistan adopted the liberal theory of the press (Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1996; Kobiruzzaman, n.d.). In the last two decades, media industries and freedom of expression have been improved.

When the Taliban took over Kabul on 15 August 2021, they promised that the freedom of speech and media would be free and independent in the first two days of their regime. But, on 19 September 2021, Qari Mohammad Yousuf Ahmadi, the interim director of the Government Media and

Information Centre (GMIC), announced 11 rules of Journalism at a meeting with the media (Noorzai, 2021).

The first three rules forbid journalists from broadcasting or publishing any issue against Islamic values, national figures, or violating privacy. The second three (4-6) instruct journalists to follow ethical principles. They must “not try to distort new content”, they must “respect Journalism principles”, and they must ensure the news reports”.

The rules 7-8 say that, “Matters that have not been confirmed by officials at the time of broadcasting or publication should be treated with care” and that “Matters that could have a negative impact on the public’s attitude or affect morale should be handled carefully when are being broadcasted or published”. The ninth rule requires media to be impartial and truthful in their coverage. The last two rules (10 and 11) reveal that the GMIC has “designed a specific form to make it easier for media outlets and journalists to prepare their reports following the regulations,” and that from now on, media outlets must “prepare detailed reports in coordination with the GMIC” (RSF, 2021; Noorzai, 2021).

However, since 2001 there are 96 TV stations, out of them 20 run by Afghan government; 190 radio stations are on the air and 231 print outlets (Eide, Khalvatga, & Shirzad, 2019, p. 3) and 14 news agencies. From 31.6 million total population, 3.8 million people use social media, and all social media are free accessible in Afghanistan (Bahar, 2020, p. 4).

Besides, this improvement of Afghan media, Afghanistan has become one of the most dangerous countries for media in the last two decades. In the Reporters Without Borders (RSF) Press Freedom Index for 2017, the country is ranked number 120 out of 180 (Eide, Khalvatga, & Shirzad, 2019, p. 1). In the last 20 years, journalists treated by officials and conflicting parties have faced a lack of access to information to assure reporting or investigating sensitive issues. UNESCO documented the death of 80 Journalists in its observation since 2000 (UNESCO, 2021). In 2017, RSF reported Afghanistan as the third deadliest country after Syria and Mexico (Eide, Khalvatga, & Shirzad, 2019, p. 3).

On 1 October 2021, Accordant International Federation of Journalist (IFJ), “At least 153 media outlets have been suspended their activities in Afghanistan, and over 7000 media workers have been affected by takeover, with many prevented from working, in hiding and fearful for their lives and those of their families” (FIJ, 2021; Rights, 2021).

Inside the security threats of journalists, the economic crisis is the second reason for this situation. Previously, Afghan media had been supported by many governmental projects, international organizations, and companies’ advertisements. Many media programs were funded by foreign suppliers. But now, many political and economic problems have affected these processes. International Press Institute (IPI) reports that 80% of media organizations have shut down their operations, or at least they do not operate regularly, and 20% are struggling to survive financially (IPI, 2021).

Debates on Media and Peace

Conflicts generate when parties find their targeted goals incompatible like two parties want the same land or two nations want the same state (Gatung & Mult, 2000, p. 2). Lynch and McGoldrick write (2005), conflict is a process through which two or more actors (parties) try to pursue incompatible aims or goals while trying to stop the other(s) from pursuing their goals (McGoldrick & Lynch, 2006, p. 6). On the other hand, Dominant states can’t win the war without securing the information

superhighways that have gotten the global goals(Hussain, 2016, p. 33). According to Galtung, it's important to know how conflicts should be resolved or how media can make sense for conflicts resolution(Galtung J. , 1998).Many researchers have documented the mass media role in the second war, cold war, and the invasions of many Asian, African, and South American countries in the latter half of the twentieth century, and the recent invasions of Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria(Knightely, 2004; Allan & Zelizer, 2004; Thussu & Freedman, 2003).In all these invasions, media has been controlled by warring states for their strategic interests(Hussain, 2016, p. 33).

To encourage the conflicting parties to peace process instead of fitting and violent, researchers believe that media can play an important role in reconciliation. In this process, Peace Journalism is a normative theory for this transformation. The theory claims that news media have the responsibility and capability of contributing to the peaceful transformation of conflict (Atey, 2017, p. 556). According to Roy Greenslade, "if media are the central locus of war-mongering then, logically, they can be the catalyst for peace-mongering"(Lynch & McGoldrick, 2007, p. 248).

From the perspective of peace Journalism, The framing of events is like health reporting because journalists inform about the causes, cures, and preventive measures of disease. But in war, journalist critics allege, like in sports reporting, because the journalist justfocuses on winners and losers or who scores more points(Galtung, 2003).Suppose we study the theoretical framework of war and peace Journalism. In that case, war journalism emphasizes violence, is sensational by nature, waits until physical actions occur, decontextualizes information, and neglects the creative of peace initiatives. Peace journalism is a positive attempt to identify the reason for violence and explores the cause and consequences or solution of the conflict (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2007; Cortés-Martínez & Thomas, 2020).

Sabir quote the argument of Peace researcherLynch and Galtung, "The mere absence of violence is negative peace. It is the availability of resources and opportunities for all members of society that results in positive peace(Hussain , Siraj, & Mahmood, 2019, p. 4).Galtung identified negative peace as the absence of direct violence and war, and positive peace as the integration of human society or prevalence of justice, harmony, and equality in society(Galtung & Ruge, 1965, p. 2).

To create such a situation in a conflicting environment, media can play a positive role by highlighting the structural and cultural events of violence, and they should produce a critical opinion that values peace, humanity, and equality(Lynch J. , 2008; Ottosen , 2008)Media apply two scholarly approaches of war and peace journalism in war-torn countries(Hussain , Siraj, & Mahmood, 2019, p. 4). The first approach is a collection of war journalism frames. According to this Approach, media reports through the perspective of (a) violence, (b) propaganda, (c) elite oriented, (d) difference oriented(Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005, p. 280). This approach was accepted by many US and UK media outlets for being unable to critically report on the Iraq invasion(Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005).Researchers found during a war that media leave the attention of professional objectivity, and they act as spokespersons of the war state and argue that media should be used to forge national unity during wars by ratcheting up a patriotic frenzy(Hussain , Siraj, & Mahmood, 2019, p. 4).

The second scholarly approach is the collection of peace journalism. In this approach, media follow (a) peace-oriented, (b) truth-oriented, (c) people-oriented and (d) solution-oriented (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005).The academic approach of peace journalism has been accepted as the most influential mode both as a theory and practice(Cortés-Martínez & Thomas, 2020; Knightely, 2004; Thussu & Freedman, 2003; Lynch & McGoldrick, 2007).According to scholars, the shift toward peace journalism is not a departure from traditional journalism, but it's a subtle shift to focus on

people and conflict solution(Hussain, 2016, p. 34).Regarding the previous arguments on peace journalism, a deliberate emphasis on peace journalism can significantly help in the creation of a conducive climate for dialogues between opposing parties in Afghanistan. The hostile and conducive atmosphere, in which the media also plays a significant role, has influenced the possibilities of deliberate discussion on the SRF and US disputes in Afghanistan. Based on this argument, it is important to study how the media portrays the Afghan conflict in terms of peace and war journalism theory.

Research Questions

To analyze the conflicts of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) with the Islamic State of Khorasan (IS-K), United States (US), and Second Resistance Front (SRF), this study addresses the following question and hypothesis:

RQ1. How do Tolo News, Ariana News, and Azadi Radio cover the selected conflict in terms of war and peace Journalism?

RH1. War Journalism is the dominant form of reporting on the coverage of selected conflicts in the selected media outlets, including Tolo News, Ariana News, and Azadi Radio.

RH2. Tolo News, Ariana News, and Azadi Radio carry more the concept of Elite-orientated than People-orientated.

Research Method

To analyze the coverage of the selected conflict in the mainstream of news media, we follow the Galtung War and Peace Journalism approach. According to the suitable terms of analysis, this approach is better suited for studying the targeted media contents. The study applied Galtung's quantitative contents analysis approach to analyze collected data. Many researchers previously conducted such as approach for media contents analysis(Riffe, Lacy, & Fico , 2014; Hussain , Siraj, & Mahmood, 2019, p. 7). Here is a brief description of the Galtung approach of war and peace journalism.

Contents analysis

The study applies the Johan Galtung war and peace journalism model to analyze news media reporting of selected conflicts. The model consists of two dualistic War and Peace categories(Lynch & McGoldrick, 2007, p. 280; Hussain, 2016, p. 35; Ottosen, 2010, p. 275).For the codification of the data, this study follows Galtung's classification of war and peace journalism(Galtung J. , 1986; Galtung J. , 1998).According to this classification, each report is the contextual unit, whereas each paragraph of the report is the coding unit. To begin, each story is categorized for war or peace journalism indicators. However, based on the dominating structure, the report would be classified as war or peace journalism.

Table 1. Galtung’s Classification of War and

Peace Journalism Frames	War Journalism Frames
Peace oriented	Violence oriented
explore conflict formation, x parties, y goals, z issues, general ‘win, win’ orientation open space, open time; causes and outcomes anywhere giving voice to all parties; empathy and understanding humanization of all sides; more so, the worse the weapon focus on invisible effects of violence	focus on conflict arena, 2 parties, 1 goal (win), war general zero-sum orientation closed space, closed time, causes and exits in the arena, who threw the first stone making wars opaque/secret dehumanization of ‘them’, more so the worse the weapon focus only on visible effects of violence (killed, wounded and material damage)
Truth orientated	Propaganda orientated
expose untruths on all sides uncover all cover-ups	expose ‘their’ untruths help ‘our’ cover-ups/lies
People orientated	Elite orientated
focus on suffering all over; on women, the aged, children, giving voice to the voiceless give name to all evil-doers focus on people peacemakers	focus on our suffering; on able-bodied elite males, being their mouthpiece give name to their evil-doers focus on elite peacemakers
Solution orientated	Victory orientated
peace = non-violence + creativity highlight peace initiatives, also to prevent more war focus on structure, culture, the peaceful society aftermath: resolution, reconstruction, reconciliation	peace = victory + ceasefire conceal peace initiatives before victory is at hand focus on treaty, institution, the controlled society leaving for another war, return if the old war flares up again

Source: (Ottosen and Galtung, 2010)

Selection of time period and Sampling

Relevant reports for 100 days were collected chronologically; 15 August - 21 November 2021. This period is significant because in mid-August Taliban captured Kable and announced their government under the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA). On the other hand, many security incidents took place in this period: an attack on Sardar Mohammad Dawod Khan Hospital, which left 15 dead and 34 injured, suicide attacks on Shia Mosques in Kandahar and Mazar provinces left 96 dead and 233 injuries, and two attacks on Kabul Airport, which left more than 170 dead (including 13 US troops) and 150 injuries. IS-K claimed responsibility of these attacks.

The sample for the content analysis consisted of the Tolo News, 24 TV channel; (b) Ariana News, 24 TV channel, (c) Azadi, 12 hours the US led radio station for Afghanistan, from 07; 00 AM to 07; 00 PM. The samples in this model were operationalized by the researcher. For coding purposes, the first author of this study conducted the coding scheme, and the Second author recoded 10 percent of the

data. The agreement for all frames showed that the reliability score was high than 80 percent and they were clearly defined. Microsoft Excel was used in the coding scheme, and the primary data was analyzed by SPSS version 26.

Research Finding

The three media outlets reported 280 reports relating to the three selected conflicts in Afghanistan. Out of the total rate, Afghan media outlets Tolo News and Ariana News published 67 and 98 reports, and the US leading Azadi Radio published 115 reports. The research question and two embedded hypotheses are addressed in the following sequence.

RQ1. How do Tolo News, Ariana News, and Azadi Radio cover the selected conflict in the terms of war and peace Journalism?

Table 2. Distribution of War and Peace stories in Conflicts Reporting

RQ1 & RH1							N(%)=		
280 (100)									
War Journalism				Peace Journalism			Total	Chi-Square	P-Value
Media	U.S	SRF	IS-K	U.S	SRF	IS-K			
Tolo News	11	6	35	6	7	2	280 (100)	1.121^a	0.891
Ariana News	17	30	22	13	11	5			
Azadi Radio	37	9	32	28	4	5			
Total	65	45	89	47	22	12			
	199 (71.7)			81 (28.9)					

RH1. War Journalism is the dominant form of reporting on the coverage of selected conflicts in the selected media outlets, including Tolo News, Ariana News, and Azadi Radio.

As Table 2 shows the total reports, the selected conflicts are predominantly reported in term of War Journalism. Out of the 280 (100%) stories, 199 (71.07%) are reported in War Journalism frames, and 81 (28.92%) stories are reported in Peace Journalism frames. Despite the numerical analysis, the statistical test reveals that Hypothesis 1 is significant (Chi-Square 1.121^a; P-Value 0.891), so the collected data supported hypothesis 1. If we compare the two Afghan media outlets with the U.S.-led Azadi radio, this study found that Azadi Radio carried out more war Journalism frames than Tolo News and Ariana News. Previous studies on the IEA-U.S and IEA-IS-K conflicts also found the dominance of war Journalism (Rahimi, 2018; Hussain & Siraj, 2018; Ibrahim & Akbarzadeh, 2019; Rahimi, 2019).

The conflict between the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) and the Islamic State of Khorasan (IS-K) is a high structural security conflict in Afghanistan. The important issue of the IEA-IS-K conflict is the similarity of the contents. During the 100 days of the coverage, Tolo News, Ariana News, and Azadi Radio framed the visible effects of war such as death and wounded, as many high casualties incidents happened in the selected period. Tolo News (23 November 2021) reported “in the first 100 days of the IEA role, in addition to minor incidents, seven big security incidents occurred in the country that have caused 360 cases of death and injury”. On the other hand, the

media reported IS-K as a high threatening and uncontrollable waring party in Afghanistan. After every attack of IS-K, the selected media outlets have framed the reaction of international states such as the US, Russia, and Afghan neighboring countries, such as Tajikistan and Iran. Azadi Radio (19 November 2021) reported the Russian president Putin declarations, ‘it is essential to place extra security forces in our southern borders, due to the worsening security situation in Afghanistan’. Also, the selected media outlets have repeatedly challenged the IEA’s peace claim. On October 2021, Azadi radio said, “The Taliban has played down the threat from the Islamic State's affiliate, but repeated attacks have tarnished the group's claim to have brought peace to Afghanistan after decades of war”. In the coverage of IEA-IS-K conflict, the selected media just focused on winners or losers, like sport journalism(Galtung, 2003).From the perspective of war propaganda, when war begging, propaganda has become an essential tool of engagement, and the development of media offered fertile ground for propaganda and war(Fox & Welch, 2012).

Table 2 shows, the conflicts between the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) and the US and Second Resistance Front (SRF) have been covered in terms of war journalism. In reporting these two conflicts, the selected media outlets focused more on difference-orientation, and they reported events in such a way that eliminates the possibility of a peaceful solution between conflicting parties. During the 100 days of reporting, (capturing Panjshir and direct violence in this province, violation of human rights, the opening of SRF offices in Tajikistan and the US and the restarting SRF political and military conflicts, recognition of Islamic Emirate, rebased of Al-Qaida in Afghanistan, the release of Afghan frozen assets) were the more sensitized issues in the mainstream of selected media outlets. To conclude, the most dominant frame of war Journalism was the visible effect of war for the IS-K conflict, and many discussible opposed values were framed during reporting US and SRF conflicts. The media didn’t report on the socio-cultural effects of conflict on people. Likewise, when the stories focus on peace talks, the media would be stressed on the public and commonality of interests.

RH2. Tolo News, Ariana News, and Azadi Radio carry more the concept of Elite-orientated than People-orientated.

Table 3. Discription of Elite and People stories in IS-K, U.S and SRF

RQ1 & RH2							N (%) =		
94 (100)									
Media	Elite Orientate			People Orientated			Total	Chi-Square	P-Value
	U.S	SRF	IS-K	U.S	SRF	IS-K			
Tolo News	7	1	6	0	4	0	94 (100)	6.647 ^a	0.156
Ariana News	5	16	9	3	0	4			
Azadi Radio	17	2	6	9	0	5			
Total	29	19	21	12	4	9			
	69 (73.40)			25 (26.59)					

The two frames Elite-orientated of War Journalism and People-orientated of Peace Journalism were more reported in the coverage of selected conflicts. As Table 3 shows, out of the 94 (100%) stories, 69 (73.40%) are reported in the term of Elite-orientated, and 25 (26.59%) are reported in the term of People-orientated. The statistical test reveals that Hypothesis 2 is supported and it's significant (Chi-Square 6.647a; P-Value 0.156). The comparison of Tolo News, Ariana News, and Azadi Radio shows that Ariana News is more focused on Elite-orientated than People-orientated and Azadi Radio comes second.

After 15 August 2021 when the Taliban captured Kabul, IS-K accepted the responsibility for many big incidents in Kabul, Mazar, Kandahar, and Nangarhar with a high rate of casualties. In 100 days of reporting of the IS-K conflict, the selected media outlets just broadcasted the numbers of death and injuries, but in their subsequent coverage, they emphasized the reactions of officials, individuals, and foreign leaders. On 16 October 2021, IS-K claimed responsibility for the Suicide bombing attack among Shia worshippers in Kandahar province, with 41 dead and more than 70 injuries. Ariana News just reported the reactions of 12 Afghan and Foreign Leaders, but they didn't report the emotional trauma of the victim's people in this event.

Also, in the coverage of US and SRF conflicts with IEA, the selected outlets are more focused on elite people while the public has been affected by these conflicts. On 3 October 2021, Azadi Radio reported the European Union Foreign-Policy Chief speech in Doha "Afghanistan is experiencing a serious humanitarian crisis and a socioeconomic collapse is looming, which would be dangerous for Afghans, the region, and international security". In such crisis situations in Afghanistan, the findings of this study shows that the media more focuses on officials and spokespersons as peacemakers and sources of information, but they neglect the public as the primary victim of the conflict, despite the reality that the Afghan conflict predominantly impacts the general public.

However, the theory of peace Journalism focuses on ordinary people as a source of information, and the emotional trauma, damage to society and the public. In this way, the main sources for media are voiceless and victimized people or those suffering the devastating impact of conflict. From the perspective of peace Journalism, the focus of media should be on public-peacemakers, not elite-peacemaker (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005) because it is the availability of resources and opportunities for all members of society that results in positive peace.

Conclusion

This study analyzed how media cover the conflicts between IEA and US, IS-K, and SRF. Similar to the previous study, the selected media reported the three conflicts in terms of war journalism, and media significantly focus on elite rather than the public; thus, the two hypotheses were confirmed. From the perspective of peace journalism, such media coverage can never pave the way for a peaceful resolution of conflict, and this was the expected results base of peace journalism theory (Gatung & Mult, 2000). The Finding of this study shows that media reports the present conflicts in Afghanistan based on two different policies of war Journalism.

The issues related to IS-K are mostly covered based on the first policy. According to this policy, media focus on the visible effect of war and cover the conflict in terms of two parties-orientation with the zero-sum concept. For this purpose, the media securitized IS-K conflicts and discussed in terms of high-security threats, dangers and occupations. Media treated the IS-K conflict as posing high-security threats for national security and regional countries. The most concerning issue in the

coverage of IS-K is the portrayal of media that the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan may not be able to control the high-security threat of IS-K in the country.

However, media covers the conflicts with US and SRF based on the second policy. According to this policy, the selected media presented the two conflicts as structural and cultural violence with incompatible interests of conflicting parties. After capturing Panjshir Province, the media didn't report any direct violence between IEA and SRF, instead, they contextualized many sensitive events related to SRF conflict, such as the victim of human rights in the north part of the country, immigration of many families from Panjshir province and regrouped the ISF member in Panjshir. Regarding these sensitive issues, elite people were more focused on reporting these issues. The main question is, while the public is suffering the difficulties of these events, why does the media concentrate on the leaders of SRF and IEA or the elites who live in foreign countries?

According to the second policy, media posing the conflict between IEA and US as non-direct violence in the country. After the withdrawal of the US and NATO military from Afghanistan, the US has frozen 9.5 billion Afghan assets and imposed many economic and political sanctions against IEA. As a result, Afghanistan is faced with financial crisis, and people are suffering many economic difficulties and are suffering the worse situation of life. In such a situation, media is more focused on the incompatible interest of elite' peacemakers. Whereas the poor public are the real stakeholders of conflict, and the conflict needs to be narrated from their perspective. According to the last 20 years' war in Afghanistan, securitization is not the logical way of conflict resolution. In this way, media should properly contextualize the conflicts, basic human rights of people, and the interests of different stakeholders who are directly or indirectly involved in these conflicts.

In spite of the fact that effective findings drawn from the research, but the study still has some limitations. We have chosen only two Afghan media outlets and one US-led radio station. We simply examined the contents of the selected media channels using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Other authors can choose more media, including Afghan, US, and regional media for a more in-depth investigation of war and peace journalism. More investigators should conduct a survey of journalists and leaders of opposing parties to determine the effects of crucial aspects during the reporting process.

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