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Keywords: Neo-Taliban regime; international media; Media narratives; Pakistan; Afghanistan; Indo Afghanistan relations; regional politics; media framing; legitimacy; South Asia

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Framing the Neo-Taliban Regime: International Media's Role in Shaping Regional Perceptions and Politics



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Abstract

This paper examines international media coverage of the Neo-Taliban regime and its influence on regional political perceptions and discourse. Since the Taliban's resurgence in August 2021, global narratives have shaped debates on security, human rights, and stability in South Asia. Using qualitative content analysis, the study draws on framing literature and discourse analyses from outlets such as The Economist, the BBC, and regional media in Pakistan and India. Unlike earlier descriptive accounts, this research situates findings within political communication and international relations debates, employing framing theory, constructivism, and agenda-setting. Results reveal recurring frames, including security and terrorism, human rights and women's rights, governance and legitimacy, and humanitarian crisis, that construct specific images of the Taliban, influencing Indo-Afghan relations and Pakistan's strategic stance. By linking media discourses to broader geopolitical contexts, the study highlights the constitutive role of international media in shaping notions of legitimacy, threat, and engagement in South Asian politics.

Keywords: *Neo-Taliban regime; international media; Media narratives; Pakistan; Afghanistan; Indo Afghanistan relations; regional politics; media framing; legitimacy; South Asia*

Introduction

South Asian politics and global security issues saw a significant turning point in August 2021 when the Taliban reclaimed control. The time period known as the Neo-Taliban regime is very different from the previous one (1996–2001) politically and internationally. The speedy fall of the U.S. troops paved the way for the Taliban's fast takeover, while their subsequent course of action has been influenced, not just by the ground realities, but by the narratives created in the international media. The global media, including CNN and BBC, and the regional South Asian media have significantly influenced perceptions of the Taliban's ideology, legitimacy and political clout.

The Taliban regime is not only portrayed through news coverage, but also embedded in the broader political landscape, shaping international policy, geopolitical strategies, and security narratives. The literature on framing shows how narratives have the ability to shape actors as threats, allies, heroes or villains and consequently the state responses (Tanveer, Imtiaz, & Shahzad, 2023). These representations are very significant for Afghanistan, as the regime is not known to many in the international community. This has made soft power and perception management crucial to its political survival, making the media a key instrument in the quest to establish legitimacy and influence international relationships.

The media framing has had a tremendous impact on the regional politics, especially on Indo–Afghan and Pak–Afghan relations. In India, coverage tends to marginalize the Taliban as a disruptive presence, associating them with security issues in Kashmir and greater South Asian geopolitics (Khan, Yamin Khan, & Sadam, 2023).



In contrast, Pakistani media has been a bit wobbly in its tone on matters of strategic depth, and worried about the instability on the border. The different depiction affects diplomatic policy, aid negotiations, and counterterrorism policy; foreign media images have an impact on regional policy discourse (Rahimi & Lu, 2024).

The paper thus attempts to analyse the international media's construction of a Neo-Taliban regime and its impact on regional politics. The study, using dominant frame analysis, emphasizes the image building and construction of the Taliban by the global media and its impact on the relations between the Indo and Afghanistan and on the geopolitical positioning of Pakistan. The research is set against the backdrop of ongoing discourses in the field of political communication and international relations, which helps to go beyond the descriptive level and shows how media narratives are actual components of regional diplomacy and security discourse.

Problem Statement

The resurgence of Taliban in August, 2021, often called the rise of Neo-Taliban regime, has changed the political and security landscape in South Asia. The present regime unlike its former regime (1996-2001) exists in a world of high level of interaction and the international media plays a decisive role in creating the global and regional image. With the Taliban making an attempt to sell itself in a more moderate and pragmatic manner, the themes of terrorism, extremism, human rights abuses and insecurity in the region dominate the international media discourse.

Significance of the Study

The study is relevant to the academic and policy level. Academically, it adds to the escalating body of literature (media framing, conflict narrative and South Asian politics) by studying how the Neo-Taliban regime is framed in the international media. Although other studies have examined the political resurrection of the Taliban and its influence in the region, less focus has been on how the global media has helped to shape and develop the image of the Taliban and the perceptions of legitimacy. This study provides a multidisciplinary angle on the post-2021 Afghanistan by filling the gap between media studies and international relations.

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The study is especially applicable at the policy level in the case of Pakistan, India, and Afghanistan. In the case of Pakistan, the media discourses about the country shape the foreign policy, anti-terrorism policies, and relations with the West and other regional states. In the case of India, these stories collide with the issue of security in Kashmir and regional politics in general. In bringing forth the role of media frames in forming perceptions, this paper can provide useful information to policymakers, diplomats, and analysts of the region to appreciate the interplay between international opinion, regional politics, and the Taliban regime. Finally, the proposed research is justified by the fact that it helps fill one of the most urgent gaps, the role of the images of the Neo-Taliban regime created by international media in perceiving the role and approaches of modern South Asian politics.

Research Objectives

To analyze the role that the international media play in building the image of the Neo-Taliban regime through the same, repeated frames of security, human rights, governance and humanitarian crisis.

To understand the impact of these framing on Indo–Afghan relations and Pakistan's strategic positioning in South Asia.

To use a framing theory and constructivist approaches and agenda-setting theory to explain the influence of media narratives on perceptions of legitimacy, threat and engagement.

Research Questions

1. How is the Neo-Taliban regime portrayed in international media?
2. What main themes and issues are highlighted in these media narratives?
3. How do such portrayals affect regional politics, especially Indo–Afghan relations and Pakistan's role?

Limitations of the Study

This paper has some limitations that should be noted. To start with, it is primarily based on secondary sources, including media coverage, journal articles, and literature, which might have the bias of the sources. Second, the study is on the role of the foreign media and does not incorporate primary data like interviews or survey. Third, the study is limited to the period of the Neo-Taliban regime (2021 onward), which restricts long-term comparative analysis. Finally, due to time and resource constraints, the research is confined to selected cases and narratives, which may not represent the full diversity of global media perspectives.

Literature Review

Media framing theory and conflict reporting

Media framing theory explains how journalists and news organizations select, emphasize, and present aspects of reality to shape audience interpretation. In conflict contexts, frames (security, human rights, terrorism, governance) influence whether an actor is seen as a threat, partner, or subject of humanitarian concern (Zaklama, [2025](#)). Framing studies remain central to political communication, but the rise of social media has transformed the field, creating a hybrid environment that reshapes public debate and agenda-setting (Rabadán, [2021](#)). Some of the prominent researchers of the media framing are Entman and Gamson and Modigliani. Entman also points out that media helps to create political and social realities, when it highlights some issues, whereas Gamson and Modigliani take the role of writing about meanings and using frames to construct a narrative. Both focus on the role of media in shaping the opinion of people and social conventions (Samsudin, [2020](#)).

Comparative studies of Taliban framing (2023)

In a number of 2023 studies, frame-analysis was employed to the coverage of the Taliban by various national media following the Taliban's August 2021 comeback. Tanveer, Imtiaz, and Shahzad ([2023](#)) have found in their analysis that the Pakistani editorial content varies between frames of security and pragmatic statehood, and this variability is indicative of the complicated strategic relationship between the country and Afghanistan. In the past, the media has also focused on the issue of security in the sense that they have covered the threats of terrorism, geopolitics and the necessity of policy adaptation, as observed in the War on Terror and the coverage of CPEC. A pragmatic-statehood frame developed after the Taliban took control, which depicted Afghanistan in a more neutral way and stressed the strategic depth of Pakistan and stability in the region. Such a dual framing shows that the media plays a major role in influencing the perception of the population and the discourse of policy, where coverage changes according to new geopolitical dynamics and domestic concerns, which reduces to dynamic interaction between media, politics, and popular opinion in Pakistan (Tanveer, Imtiaz, and Shahzad, [2023](#)).

The security frame focuses on the past tensions, including the conflict over the Durand Line and the involvement of Afghans in the separatists (Javaid and Fatima, 2013; Javaid, 2016) and threats related to Taliban restoration, which makes terrorism spread into Pakistan a matter of concern. Conversely, the pragmatic-statehood frame focuses on economic factors and regional integration since it reflects the changes into the trade and geo-economic involvement with Afghanistan, especially following the Taliban takeover (Rahman & Jan, 2023). In the same vein, comparative studies of U.S., Indian, and Pakistani newspaper editorials reveal dramatic disparities: Western papers were more concerned with terrorism and human-rights issues, Indian papers were more concerned with security and regional threat discourses, and Pakistani papers were more mixed, between fear and geopolitical expedience. These works point out that the media frames are mediated by national interests and domestic politics (Aksar & Imran, [2025](#)).

International media: dominant frames and narratives (2023–2024)

The analysis of significant foreign sources, including BBC, The New York Times, and The Economist, depicts the repetitive frames used in addressing the Neo-Taliban regime. These are a security/terrorism frame, which presents the Taliban as a regional menace; a human-rights frame, which has highlighted the reversal of women rights and civil liberties; a governance/legitimacy frame, which has questioned the effectiveness of the regime to govern and be recognized internationally; and a humanitarian/crisis frame, which has pointed out displacement and economic ruin.

These frames are not neutral because they influence the opinion of the people and are oriented to a certain priority of the policy actions, such as sanctions, humanitarian aid, and the isolation of diplomatic relations. Critical discourse analyses also reveal the extent to which the rhetorical devices, including metaphors and labeling, escalate the threat perceptions and shape the international discourses on Afghanistan.

Western media covered the war in Afghanistan, drawing on historical context, the Afghanistan Papers, and existing academic studies. It shows that Western outlets largely echoed official narratives by focusing on the liberation of Afghan women, portraying military forces positively, and employing orientalist frames that reinforced existing stereotypes. In line with Bennett's indexing theory, the state-driven narratives continue to shape Western foreign news coverage, even with the influence of the internet and social media (Bergman & Liu, [2022](#)).

Russia is the first nation to officially recognize the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, almost four years after they seized the control of Kabul. The ruling has attracted criticism because it legitimized a regime that denies women the right to education, work and civil liberties. Russia gives economic cooperation and anti-terrorism cooperation as some of the reasons and has a history of interacting with the Taliban including trade agreements and removing them off its terrorist list. The rest of the world still fails to acknowledge it because of the prevailing human rights issues (BBC, [2024](#)).

Afghan Media Landscape in 2024: Self-Censorship and Information Control

Newer generations of writing point to the increased constraints placed on independent journalism in Afghanistan by the Taliban rule. A 2024-research indicates the self-censorship strategies employed by journalists to overcome the threats, restrictive laws, and information ministry directives. This narrowing media coverage restricts foreign coverage, pushing media to use more Taliban propaganda or diaspora sources, compromising accuracy and subtlety. Finally, the limitations to access and self-censorship influence domestic reporting as well as how the media portrays the Taliban regime in the world (Duda, [2024](#)).

Media Political Economy in Transition: Propaganda, Digital Platforms, and State Responses (2024–2025)

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Recent research conceptualizes the media transformation in Afghanistan in terms of political-economy, with the view that Taliban domination of broadcasting licenses, outlet bans, and official messaging helps to encourage domestic propaganda and restricts the access of foreign reporting journalists. Meanwhile, the digital and social media have become the sphere of struggle, as the Taliban use it to build their image and external players to advance counter-narratives. The 2024-2025 research also sheds light on the role of international platforms and governments mediating the issue through the moderation policies, account suspension, and the diplomatic actions that affect the type of content that goes viral and becomes popular across the globe. The processes are central in the understanding of the manner in which media frames are generated and propagated (Ribeiro & Zelizer, [2025](#)).

Regional Implications: Media Narratives, India–Afghanistan Dynamics, and Pakistan

Researchers underline the idea that media framing has a great influence on regional diplomacy. The policy position of New Delhi is compatible with security-oriented discourses in India, as they propagate the distrust of people toward their involvement with the Taliban. In Pakistan, a combination of frames reflects internal political cleavages and the difficulty of Islamabad to strike a balance between border security issues and pursuing stability in Afghanistan. Global media also plays a role: framing the Taliban through terrorism heightens security-driven policies, while humanitarian narratives create room for dialogue and aid. Although not the sole factor in policymaking, media frames influence public opinion, elite discourse, and the diplomatic space available to governments (Urmila, [2023](#)).

Gaps in the Literature

Most existing research on Taliban representation centers on their 2021 takeover and immediate global reactions, focusing mainly on security, terrorism, and human rights. However, little scholarship examines how media narratives evolved between 2023–2025 as the regime consolidated power and regional politics shifted. Current studies are largely country-specific, seldom linking international framing to Indo–Afghan relations or Pakistan's

foreign policy. The gaps fill with this study in analyzing cross-national media framing of the Neo-Taliban and how it has influenced regional diplomacy and security discussions within South Asian context.

Main Argument

The international media portrayal of the Neo-Taliban regime is not merely descriptive but constitutive in terms of affecting the perception in the region and in terms of state responses. These narratives have a direct impact on Indo-Afghan relations through foregrounding of the problems of terrorism, human rights, and security that place Pakistan at the central stage of the changing political situation in South Asia.

Hypothesis

H1: International media mostly portray the Neo-Taliban regime as a threat to security, which further contributes to the negative perceptions of regional security.

H2: Western and Indian media reports of human rights does more harm to the Taliban regime than does the Pakistani media or Al Jazeera.

H3: While the isolationist narrative can be discerned in Western and Indian media, the humanitarian frames create discursive space for conditional engagement in Pakistani and Al Jazeera media.

Theoretical Framework

This paper relies on Media Framing Theory and Constructivist methods of International Relations with the complementation of the agenda-setting notions. Combined, these views tell the story of the international media discourse that not only informs audiences, but also helps to create meanings, shape the state perception, and build a reaction to policies in the region.

Media Framing Theory

Framing theory argues that the media highlight some facts of the reality in an attempt to advance certain interpretations, judgments, and prescriptions of policy (Entman, [1993](#)). Security, terrorism, human rights, and humanitarian crisis are frames used in post-conflict situations to provide audiences with specific ways to view actors and events. In this paper, the analyses of framing has been used to identify the prevailing discourses used to paint the Neo-Taliban regime and how these discourses affect legitimacy, threat, and engagement discourses (Gamson and Modigliani, [1989](#)). Current empirical evidence on Taliban coverage confirms the high level of variation among national outlets, which explains the usefulness of the framing analysis in getting insights into the divergent perceptions (Tanveer, Imtiaz, and Shahzad, [2023](#); Khan, Y. Khan, and Sadam, [2023](#)).

Constructivist Approaches in International Relations

Constructivism focuses on how ideas, norms and identities influence state behavior. It aids in the understanding of how the media-made accounts are absorbed into local politics through the formation of perspectives on legitimacy, security, and diplomacy. This research has associated international frames with policy discourse in South Asia as it demonstrates how discourse shapes the strategic decision making of India and Pakistan with respect to the Taliban government.

Agenda-setting Concepts

Agenda-setting theory is also a complementary theory to framing because it puts emphasis on the role of the media in determining what issues are given focus and priority in the discourse of the masses and of politics (McCombs and Shaw, [1972](#)). In the Afghan case, the agenda-setting plays a very important role in comprehending how the enduring coverage of security threats, human rights abuses, or humanitarian disasters affect not only the opinion of the people but also the diplomatic priorities of the region and assistance.

This study uses Media Framing Theory, Constructivism and Agenda-Setting as they offer a complementary set of lenses that can be used to understand how a media narrative and regional politics interact. Media Framing Theory states why international sources introduce the Neo-Taliban in a selective manner (e.g., the emphasis on

terrorism, human rights, humanitarian crisis) by which international outlets are guided in interpretation. Constructivist views of International Relations justify the significance of such portrayals, demonstrating that media-constructions of meaning define state identities, views of legitimacy, and diplomatic decisions of a region. Lastly, the concept of Agenda-Setting explains how issues are given priority in South Asia in the political agenda by analyzing how prolonged coverage by the media promotes agendas of security or humility in policy. Collectively, the theories form the basis of the study on a solid analytical foundation, which can relate media discourses to the changes in Indo-Afghan relations and strategic reckonings of Pakistan.

Research Methodology

The study has conducted using qualitative content analysis method with analytical lens of framing theory. This design is particularly relevant to the identification of themes, patterns and meanings in chosen texts, considering international media representations of the Neo-Taliban regime and its effects on regional perceptions.

The study utilizes secondary data sourced from the top media outlets, policy reports and academic literature from around the world. Articles, editorials and opinion pieces written in English language from news sites between 2021-2025 have been analyzed, with a focus on English language newspapers such as The New York Times (USA), The Guardian (UK), Al Jazeera English (Qatar), BBC News (UK), The Hindu (India) and regional newspapers like Dawn and Express Tribune (Pakistan). The outlets were selected based on their credibility, international audience and impact on the international and local story.

To ensure coding consistency, a pilot round of coding was conducted on a subset of articles, followed by discussion to refine category definitions. A second coder independently reviewed 15% of the sample, and inter coder agreement exceeded 85%, which is considered acceptable for qualitative content analysis. These steps reinforce the reliability and transparency of the coding process.

Sampling Strategy

A Purposive sampling method has been used to select the sample size of approximately 100-120 articles/editorials published from August 2021 to December 2025. The following were used as selection criteria:

- Direct references to the Taliban/Neo-Taliban regime in articles.
- Focus on security, human rights, governance, terrorism or regional stability etc.
- Discussions related to Indo-Afghan relations and the role of Pakistan in South Asia.

Articles were gathered from online archives and databases (LexisNexis, ProQuest and official media websites). The texts were coded by the frames prevalent in each of the texts: security/terrorism, human rights/women's rights, governance/legitimacy, humanitarian crisis, and regional diplomacy. Examples of coding and definitions for frames were created to be consistent.

Analytical Process Thematic and framing analysis was applied to determine the dominant frames and categorize them into different frames like terrorism/security, humanitarian, and governance. Coverage was then compared between outlets to identify commonalities and differences in framing. These frames were also analyzed to elucidate their underlying meaning in larger narratives on Taliban and their impact on the Indo-Afghan relations and political landscape of Pakistan. NVivo-14 software was used to manage, code and interpret qualitative data so as to facilitate systematic analysis. To improve transparency and reproducibility, reliability and validation measures were added.

Data Analysis and Results

One hundred and ten articles/editorials (2021-2025) of international media (The New York Times, The Guardian, BBC, Al Jazeera, The Hindu, Dawn) were coded and analyzed in NVivo-14. The analysis found four prevailing frames namely: (1) Security and Terrorism, (2) Human Rights and Women Rights, (3) Governance and Legitimacy and (4) Humanitarian and Regional Stability. All the frames were different in intensity through various outlets based on political and geographical contexts.

Security and Terrorism Frame

Security and terrorism frame was the most prevalent one as it was found in 65% of the articles that were analyzed. Other themes to note were the links between the Taliban and the extremist groups, the risk of cross-

border terrorism, the lack of stability in the region and American counterterrorism issues. The growing concern that Afghanistan would emerge as a terrorist haven secure haven was reported by the Western media, including The New York Times, BBC and The Guardian, although Indian media, including The Hindu, covered Taliban-Pakistan ties and the threat to Kashmir. Conversely, Pakistani media like Dawn were more careful and accepted that there is a danger of the instability spilling over without explicitly demonizing the Taliban. In general, this frame framed the Taliban mainly as a threat to the security and contributed to the reinforcement of negative images on the global and regional levels.

Human Rights and Women's Rights Frame

The human rights frame was present in 48 percent of the articles, urging the oppression of women education, suppression of freedoms and a multinational critique of the abuses. Western and international media like The Guardian, BBC and Al Jazeera were consistent in presenting the Taliban as a group that challenged fundamental rights and the Indian media was part of this reporting as they directly related human rights abuses with the illegitimacy of the regime. Although the Pakistani media highlighted these problems, it stressed the role of the international community in pressurizing the Taliban instead of a stern domestic outburst. Taken together, this frame contributed to the considerable influencing of the Taliban in the opinion of the world.

Governance and Legitimacy Frame

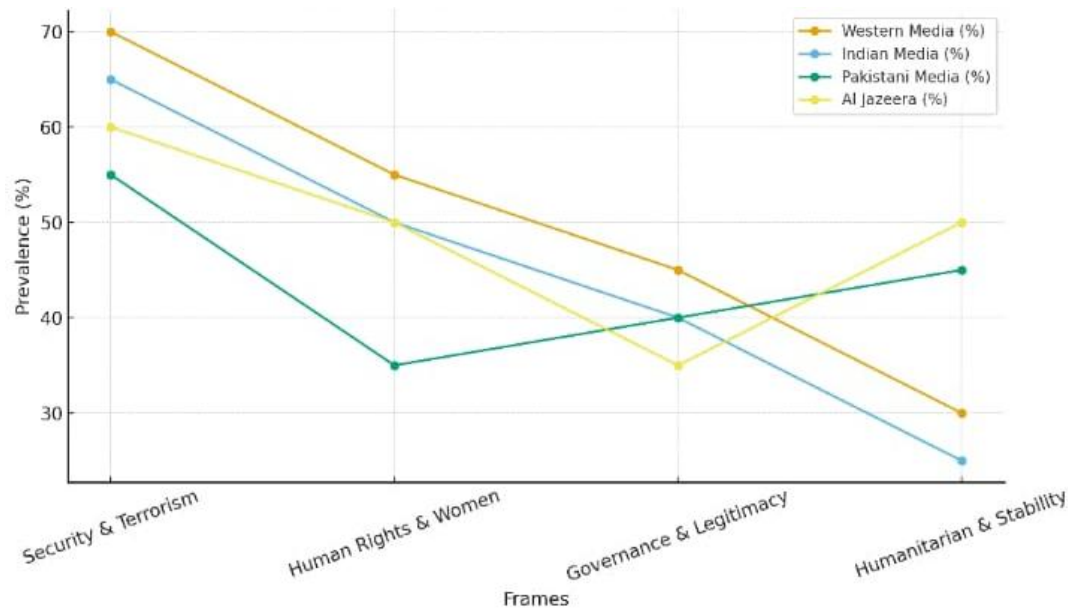
In 41 percent of the articles, the governance and legitimacy frame were visible featuring the power struggles among the Taliban members, low rule-making capabilities, and the ongoing absence of recognition internationally. Western media mostly emphasized on how the regime was not able to build an inclusive government whereas regional media questioned its capability of properly running the state. On the whole, such accounts helped strengthen the belief of the Taliban as an unlawful and weak government.

Humanitarian and Regional Stability Frame

The humanitarian frame was present in 36 percent of the articles and was based on food scarcity, economic breakdown, refugee migrations and aid. The presence of such outlets as Al Jazeera and BBC raised awareness of mass suffering and called on the international community to provide help, whereas the Pakistani media tended to justify the participation in the Taliban war through the humanitarian crisis. Indian coverage did not ignore such issues but linked them to the failure of governance and the insecurity of the whole region. Despite the prevalence of negative depictions in general, humanitarian discourses left some room occasionally to conditional interaction with the Taliban.

Comparative Patterns and Results

The image of the Taliban in international media shows a very distinct region-based difference. The western media focus on terrorism and human rights issues, while the Indian media fan the negativity by associating ties with Taliban and Pakistan to regional issues. Pakistan coverage is more balanced as it recognizes the risks of instability while highlighting the importance of engagement and stability in the region. The general impression of global discourses is to see the Taliban as a security threat and a human rights abuser, and regard the crisis of governance and human rights as a secondary but important component. These frames validate India's hardline stance and make Pakistan's role as a possible mediator in Indo-Afghan relations more complicated.

Figure 01*Dominant Media Frames of the Taliban Regime (2021–2025)***Table 2***Dominant Media Frames of the Taliban Regime (2021–2025)*

Media Outlet	Security & Terrorism	Human Rights & Women	Governance & Legitimacy	Humanitarian & Stability
Western Media	70%	55%	45%	30%
Indian Media	65%	50%	40%	25%
Pakistani Media	55%	35%	40%	45%
Al Jazeera	60%	50%	40%	50%

Discussion

Conducted in the time period 2021–2025, the review of media narratives indicates that the Neo-Taliban regime has been represented through different yet intersecting conceptual frames through various international and regional media. Security and terrorism emerged as the most prevalent frame, with Western (70) and Indian (65) outlets overwhelmingly focusing on the Taliban and links to militancy, extremism and cross-border threats, with Pakistani (55%) and Al Jazeera (60%) outlets also engaging this frame, though to a less dominant degree. Another important theme was human rights and the concerns of women, where Western (55%) and Al Jazeera (50%) outlets emphasized restrictions on women's education, media freedoms, and civil liberties more broadly, whereas Pakistani (35%) and Indian (50%) media expressed relatively few concerns regarding these issues.

The question of governance and legitimacy also made their way with Pakistani (40%), Indian (40%), and Western (45%)-based outlets in which there was criticism of a lack of international recognition of the Taliban and shaky governing institutions, and criticism of governance through the lens of authoritarianism, respectively. In contrast, humanitarian and stability issues were more prominent in Pakistani (45%) and Al Jazeera (50%) coverage, which emphasized food crises, mass movements of refugees, and political instability in the region, whereas Western (30) and Indian (25) outlets gave such concerns relatively limited coverage. These patterns are combined to bring out how media in different regions not only constructed the Taliban differently, but also carried the echo of broader geopolitical interests whereby the coverage of the Western and Indian outlets amplified the narratives of danger and oppression, whereas the coverage of the Pakistani and Al Jazeera outlets prefigured humanitarian demands and the necessity of regional stability.

Generally, the comparative analysis reveals that isolation and hard-liner discourses are legitimate in the West and India, while conditional recognition and regional stability-building discourses are legitimate in Pakistan and Al Jazeera. These polar visions have a direct impact on international perceptions and regional politics, especially Pakistan's emerging role as a mediator in Indo–Afghan relations. The study goes beyond reporting on patterns and instead explores with criticality how these frames come to be, in order to show how the nature of media narratives can shape South Asian diplomacy and security debates.

Conclusion

According to the study findings, the international media coverage of the Neo-Taliban regime of 2021-2025 is not objective and unbiased, and it is also a reflection of the geopolitical interests and priorities of different actors. The western and Indian media mostly emphasize on the terrorism, extremism, and the violation of human rights, which reinforce the perception of the Taliban as a global issue of security and weaken their right to govern. Contrarily, the Pakistani media and the Al Jazeera refer to the Taliban as more of humanitarian and stability, in which conditional interaction is needed to contain crises, such as food crises, refugee cases, and regional instabilities. Human rights in particular and women rights are a consistent but irregularly emphasized frame on all the outlets that attribute the significance of this being one of the key dimensions of world discourse on the Taliban legitimacy.

These polarizing frames constitute polarising international discourse having far reaching policy implications. The media in the west and India is solidifying the stands of extreme policies that advocate towards isolation, sanctions and counterterrorism campaigns by emphasizing terrorism and repression. On the other hand, the humanitarian versions of the Pakistani and Al Jazeera reporting allow room of dialogue, facilitation and maneuverability of diplomacy. This explains how media framing works as a construction rather than a reporting mechanism but as a process of soft power that constrains and also permits states to have their green light in the foreign policy formulations. In Pakistan, especially, the implications of such discourses are too tangible, as the manner in which it is mirrored in the local and global media has a direct impact on its abilities to establish itself as a mediator, despite having problems in managing its domestic security issues.

Lastly, the paper confirms the fact that the legitimacy dilemma in Afghanistan is not narrowed only to the issues of governance and war on the ground, it is also fought in the area of international media discourses. Media framing is not an act of imitation of events, but instead, it forms perceptions, sets the agenda in elite discourse and provides diplomatic leeway to policy action. There is a pressing need to understand the way these frames are evolving and moving apart hence, being in a position to see the broader regional picture of what the Taliban is up to in its governance. Relating the media discourses to the diplomatic and security calculations of South Asian states, the following paper hints at the need of the scholars and policy-makers to consider the role of the narrative power as a significant parameter of the regional politics and international relations.

Future Research Directions

Looking ahead, future research should extend this comparative analysis to Chinese, Russian, and Middle Eastern media outlets. Including these perspectives would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how global narratives about the Taliban regime are constructed, and how differing geopolitical contexts shape discourses of security, legitimacy, and humanitarian concern.

Recommendations

Pakistan needs to pursue a multi-faceted approach in controlling the international media discourse of the Taliban. The aggressive use of international outlets can help to overcome one-dimensional representations, and more robust media diplomacy can help to make national interests consistent with the media narratives. The help of Afghan and regional journalists will also allow another voice to be heard and minimize coverage in the West. The shared problems such as refugees, humanitarian crisis, and stability can be tackled through regional media forums between Pakistan, Afghanistan and the South Asian countries. Media analysis should be incorporated in making the foreign policy since it affects the legitimacy and aid. The role of the media in China, Russia and the Middle East countries in representing the Taliban should also be examined in future studies.

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