

## **Abstract**

This study examines the relationship between Pakistani and the Anglo-American media's (read as the Western media in this paper) news framing and how these sources portray similar news events. This comparative analysis examines articles written by mass and alternative media sources within the three principal time periods in Malala Yousafzai's career, namely: - 1) the shooting of Malala by a Taliban gunman and her subsequent recovery, 2) the intervening period when Malala emerges as a brand and is nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, and 3) the period surrounding the winning of the Prize before she fades out from the media limelight. The study found that the portrayal of Malala differed greatly depending on the source. While, the western media articles framed her as a female education activist, a victim of terrorism, a victim of a society largely hostile to women and a beacon of hope for girls in a highly restrictive society, the Pakistani mainstream English media, at times, preferred to tow the western lead without clarifying its own stance. On the other hand, Pakistani alternative media was largely critical of Malala, post western intervention. The results may have far-reaching implications and raise questions about the framing by audience and the modes of communication people adopt for building their knowledge structure.

## **An Introduction:**

News framing may be defined as the "schema of interpretation" within a pre-determined context that enables individuals to "locate, perceive, identify and label" occurrences or life experiences (Goffman, 1986). In other words, as Tankard et al (1991) state, frames provide a context to the news story using "selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration."

The impact of framing is studied through its natural corollaries, agenda setting and priming, which together form one inter-connected process of mediation. Framing may be construed as a "second-level agenda-setting" (McCombs M. E., 1997). It is therefore not wrong to perceive framing as a window to facts or certain aspects of reality which facilitates 'what to think' through negotiated coaxing to arrive at the intended attitudinal change within a given set of references.

McComb & Shaw assert that Agenda-setting theory has a "strong correlation between the emphases that mass media place on certain issues... and the importance attributed to these issues by mass audiences," (1972, p. 176) thereby, positioning Priming as an extension of the agenda-setting theory, which refers to "changes in the standards that people use to make political evaluations" (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987, p. 63). There exists a mutually complementary relationship between framing and priming, as framing selects, highlights or excludes certain aspects of the information, triggering schemas that persuade individuals to think, feel and act in a particular way.

"They use words and images highly salient in the culture, which is to say noticeable, understandable and emotionally charged." (Entman R. M., 2003, p. 417)

In fact, frames are "metaphorical containers that hold information as well as provide us with the structural and cognitive resources for interpreting that information" says Linda Wine (2008). A well-developed frame should ideally be able to provide, according to Entman, "problem definition, causal analysis, moral judgment, and remedy promotion" (2007, p. 164). Frames, according to James N. Druckman, follow two distinctive methodologies. Equivalency framing resorts to the use of different but "logically equivalent" words or phrases to describe the same information, allowing decision makers or the consumers of news to choose from different options (2001, p. 1042). The second approach, Emphasis framing, allows individuals to form opinions based on a particular "sub-set of potential relevant considerations" (2001, p. 1042) that are highlighted by a gatekeeper. The consumers, in turn, perceive certain realities due to "personal locus" and focus on certain aspects of the reality owing to their "knowledge structures" (Potter, 2008, pp. 12-13).

The review of literature yields three salient aspects of media frames - Wine's metaphorical containers, Goffman's schema of interpretation (Goffman, 1986), and Lakoff's opinion shapers or thought manipulators (2008, p. xv).

## **Framing and Construction of Socio-Political Reality**

The perception of reality by media consumers is a construction caused by constant exposure to media framing. This exposure facilitates through the mediated messages a blurring of the line that differentiates the real world from the projected or the mediated reality. Media in effect, provides the materials for reality construction (McQuail, 2010).

Walter Lippmann, in his seminal work, *Public Opinion*, perceived media as a "pseudo-environment" that actively mediates between individuals, with limited immediate experiences, and the real world. Lippmann recognises the crucial role played by this "pseudo-environment" in creating knowledge structures and subsequent decision-making and public opinion (Lippmann, 1922, p. 3).

McQuail conceptualizes this as "social constructionism" by which media does not give an objective account of reality and all facts are interpreted (2010, p. 100). Mass media frame constructs of reality act as references that consumers use to negotiate their versions of reality through interpretation and deliberation. Maxwell McCombs, in his unpublished paper, "The Agenda-Setting Role of the Mass Media in the Shaping of Public Opinion" stresses that journalists play an imperative role in influencing their audience's perception about the world (McCombs M. , 2002, p. 7). The frames draw their power from their capacity and ability to subtly define the terms of any discourse without the audience being aware of mediated priming.

The public's understanding of political matters is a significant indicator of media influence. While Lakoff (2008) asserts that the choice of words and phrases which have the ability to create core value systems are significantly decisive devices that encompass dominant political rhetoric; Iyengar (2005, p. 4) actively argues that "unmediated candidate rhetoric is an increasingly endangered form of political communication," where media audiences perceive their para socio-political interaction with political candidates as adequate for decision making. This may indicate that actual creators of 'frames' are journalists and gatekeepers, rather than politicians or political advisors, though their complicity cannot be overlooked. Nevertheless, it has been argued that journalists subconsciously often tend to construct their text in the conflict frame thereby

encouraging readers to negotiate mediated reality in the context of two opposing forces – protagonist versus antagonist (Smith, 1997, March 15).

In short, a large section of literature researched on the effects of the news frames clearly indicates that variations, manipulation, and selectivity of facts while framing news reports leads to creating substantial differences in the audience's responses—in the interpretation and comprehension of the media presentation. The perception of events and issues can change with the alterations in the media text. In fact, such alterations affect recall, stances and perspectives as well (Iyengar & Simon, 1991), (Davis, 1995), (Cappella & Jamieson, 1996), (Rhee, 1997), (Shah, Domke, & Wackman, 2001), and (De Vreese & Semetko, 2002).

### **Malala Yousafzai and the Media**

The relationship between Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Malala Yousafzai and the press is much more complex than it appears on the surface. Malala and her father had actively contributed to national and international media advocating girls' education before a Taliban gunman in the Swat Valley, Pakistan shot at her on October 9, 2012. As she lay in a hospital, 'a passive object of the news media,' (Mufti, 2014) stories about the courageous 14-year old girl flooded the media, and from then on Malala Yousafzai became a brand - 'Brand Malala' (Grayson, 2013), which vested interests were to use to advance their prognosis of the 'terrorist infested region.'

The Pakistani mainstream media, often perceived as a construction of the federal leadership by many Pakistani citizens, responded by echoing the popular western news leads; the alternative media, however, responded on a different note. However, largely sympathetic for the 'girl, who was shot,' many harbour lingering doubts about the intent of the glorification of Malala by the Anglo-American Media (labelled as Western Media in this paper)<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> There exists a significant mirroring of The American narrative in the British media post 9/11/2001 events. Many European countries, despite their reservation have eventually furthered the Anglo-American narrative on 'war against terror.' The concept of 'embedding' in the context of 'information dominance' (to achieve full spectrum dominance by the United States of America) has served well for the players on both the sides of Atlantic in building up and protecting 'friendly' information. Therefore, the researchers have termed Anglo-American media texts as fairly representative of the Western media stance. For further reading see *War, Media, and Propaganda: A Global Perspective* (Kamalipour & Snow, 2004)

# Framing of Malala Yousafzai: A Comparative Analysis of News Coverage in Western and Pakistani Mainstream Print and Alternative Media

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Why Malala? A seemingly innocent question soon grew into an apprehension of Malala transforming into a likely tool of “political propaganda to be utilized by war advocates” (Hussain, 2013). Soon, a large section of Pakistani populists crossed the threshold into suspecting Malala as “being used—rather, misused—in the West by portraying a wrong image of Pakistan as a violent and anti-women society” (Craig & Meshud, 2013).

The study intends to examine the portrayal and framing of Malala Yousafzai in mainstream print media, in both Pakistan and the Western World in the backdrop of the popular, though varied, stances taken in alternative media.

The study focuses on the two major incidents that define Malala Yousafzai— the near-fatal attack on her and the declaration of Malala as winner of the Nobel Peace Prize. Based on these two incidents, the researchers have identified three segments of time during which she was under intense media gaze. The timeline is - 1) the shooting of Malala by a Taliban gunman and her subsequent recovery, 2) the intervening period when Malala emerges as a brand and her nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize, and 3) the period surrounding the winning of the Prize before she fades out from the media limelight. The Agenda setting theory, media framing and priming will be applied to understand how Malala-related news was prioritized, framed and customized by media gatekeepers to facilitate their intended audiences’ consumption. The study seeks to investigate the possibility of Malala being a victim in the larger game of political commodification to further the interests and agenda of parties with stakes.

RQ1.What dominant frames emerge from the Western Media and the Pakistani Mainstream Media’s coverage of Malala Yousafzai?

RQ2: How do frames employed by the dominant Western Media and the Pakistani Mainstream Media compare?

RQ3: How did the Western and the Pakistani audiences react?

## Research Methodology

To address the research questions this study has a mix of quantitative and qualitative content analysis. Two English daily newspapers *The New York Times* and Pakistan's *Dawn* are selected as mainstream media in this study because they cater to a wide and high readership and are influential in setting the tone for the coverage in their respective countries. In fact, it was the *New York Times* which first initiated the media presentation, 'Class Dismissed: Malala's Story,' in 2009 and landed up launching the 'Brand Malala'. The British Broadcasting Corporation has been chosen for its popularity and footprint both in the West and in Pakistan as an alternative electronic media. It was on BBC Urdu that Malala, using a pseudonym 'Gul Makai' in 2008, (Williams J. , 2012) started to chronicle her life and travails in quest for education. Blogs and comments to various online articles were identified for their representational value as popular viewpoints.

The researchers used two principal frames to examine Malala's passage in media from the shooting incident to becoming a Nobel laureate. To analyse the latent and the manifest content of the text, the researchers have adopted an integrated approach to qualitative and quantitative content analysis, intended to study the different frames utilized by news media. The categorization of the frames as sub-sets to the dominant frames: conflict frames and civic frames were further undertaken. The frames are classified according to the overall tone of the media reports - positive, negative and neutral. Positive reports favour Malala as an activist, a victim of terrorism, and as a role model. Further, if they attempt to promote public opinion in Malala's favour and sympathetically portray her cause they would be taken as holding a positive stance. Negative reports are those critical towards Malala's cause, gender and actions. In addition, if they criticize Malala's intents and actions, and portray her as being a pawn in the hands of western players subverting Pakistan's identity as a progressive state, and/or criticize the issue in their analysis along with suggestions it would imply a negative stance. Neutral stands for a general stance which is simply interpretative without having any 'positive' or 'negative' elements.

The Research design incorporates identification and classification of media presentations into Mainstream Pakistani Media, Mainstream Western Media, Alternative Media (Western), and, Alternative Media (Pakistani).

## **Observations:**

### **Malala and Media Prior to the Shooting Incident**

The Western media first report on a girl in Pakistan's Swat valley being deprived of education as her father loses his all girls' school to Taliban's repressive and regressive stance on girls and education. The article's narrative is about Mr. Ziauddin Yousafzai and the two-part documentary, it only refers to Malala in passing (Ellick, 2009). Ironically, the documentary has Malala as a principal protagonist (Ellick & Ashraf, Class Dismissed: The Death of Female Education, 2009). This article receives 48 comments of which two (2) are categorised as negative. One sees the documentary as western propaganda and the other is of the opinion that people like Yousafzai should be left to their own fate and America refrain from doing anything. The documentary, however, does depict Malala, like her father, as courageous and determined to defy Taliban's edict on girl education. The frame is largely civic. The narrative sets the tone for all western narratives on Malala – Malala, the courageous; Malala, the crusader; Malala, the victim; and the Taliban, the zealots; Taliban, anti-women radicals; Taliban, anti-girl education terrorists. This was soon to transform into Pakistan, the Talibanised society, an imperialist narrative justifying military intervention, drone attacks, and the larger 'war on terror' in the region. Malala emerges as an appropriated victim whose cause of girls' education fit the West's dominant narrative of education being the only precursor to democracy and, thereby, an effective tool to counter the threat posed by radical Islam.

On the other hand, the Pakistani mainstream media, initially, idolizes Malala Yousafzai for her courage and crusade against the regressive Taliban policy of denying education to girls. On December 21, 2011, the *Dawn* newspaper publishes a laudatory story (Shahid J. , 2011) on the recipient of the National Peace Prize, Malala, and her progressive ideas on the girl child's education. The keywords used in the front-page article, 'inspiration,' 'voice of all the girls,' 'standing up,' with a constant thematic refrain of 'bravery, thy name is Malala' indicate a

positive tone, civic frame, and courage as a sub-frame. The news website's story page registers 29 comments, of which 24 falling in line with the newspaper's media presentation; one (1) comment being neutral; and four (4) being negative responses. The negativity is restricted to a moderate opposition to what Malala may herald for traditional Pakhtun society. However, only one negative comment, which exists in the grey area of correct classification, claims that actually it is Malala's father, Ziauddin Yousafzai, who is the true architect of the girl-child-education narrative and the writer of BBC Urdu's diaries published in Malala's name. The commentator questions how a 6<sup>th</sup> grade girl who cannot even speak the language properly could be the writer of a diary in Urdu. Soon, Pakistan-centric polarized views surface and Malala emerges as the west's tool in an anti-Pakistan and anti-Islam narrative, the sub-alternity of Malala and the subsequent appropriation by the dominant power to inject secular, capitalist, and democratic norms in Islamized Pakistan.

### **Phase I (October 2012 - January 2013): Malala in Pakistani Media**

Despite Malala winning the National Peace and Youth Awards in Pakistan and being the principal character of the *New York Times* two-part documentary, she remains out of intense media gaze. However, it is on October 9, 2012 that the media's eyes come to re-discover Malala. The near-fatal attack has the whole nation and the world rise in support of the 'young activist' who "dared to criticise Taliban's attack on schools and school-going girls" (Bacha, 2012). The keywords used throughout this phase by the Pakistani mainstream media portray her as a 'champion,' 'peace campaigner,' 'young activist,' 'voice of all girls in Swat,' 'tender-aged' who was targeted by a 'banned terrorist' group. She is treated with a positive and admiring tone while her attackers find words like 'barbaric', 'cowardly', 'dastardly', 'extremists', and 'killers' associated with them. This indicates that the tone of the articles is positive towards Malala and negative towards the Taliban. Sub-set frames of human impact, fight for education, campaign for peace and anti-terrorism leads to a dominant conflict frame, which also has a civic angle to it.



The majority of online comments<sup>2</sup> to the articles by *Dawn*, which express the public sentiment, remain highly sympathetic and favourable. Malala is described as the pride of Pakistan, a girl child peace activist espousing girls' right to education. A miniscule minority do sound a cautionary note about western media's agenda to glorify Malala in order to malign Pakistan and Islam. One online comment goes to the extent of suggesting that the attack on Malala would be used as an excuse by the USA to launch a new set of drone attacks.

The Pakistani mainstream media narrative centres around the near-fatal attack on a girl who wanted to go to school; the secondary narratives of the impact of terrorism on the Swat Valley, dispersion of an estimated 1.2 million people from the militant infested region, and the adverse effect on the region's tourism, accompany this. Further, narratives surface about right wing and conservative leaders refraining from public denouncement of the Taliban and the Taliban's reason to attack Ms. Yousafzai; yet, the media presentation is factual while the tone remains sympathetic of Malala. The counter narrative of appropriation by the dominant power, the USA, and the use of the 'attack on Malala' as an excuse to launch military intervention on militant bastions in Waziristan continue to re-surface but in a distant corner far from the public sphere of discourse. The counter narrative is all about the western agenda of pro-west, pro-capitalism, pro-democracy, and anti-Islam imperialist design. Despite all these narratives, media texts are Malala-centric and have primary conflict frame. The media presentation, after the initial coverage of the 'barbaric act' (Agencies, 2012) is framed using a human-impact perspective with sub-frames of education, peace activism, medicine and health care in Pakistan. It is noteworthy that the usage of strong moral negatives to describe the Taliban is found to be prevalent amongst Pakistani and Western civil leadership and they are quoted in *Dawn's* reports (2012). However, their own bureau uses expletives like 'terrorist,' 'extremist' and 'banned,' and sees the Taliban as an organization vis-à-vis the legality and right-of or left-of centre stances. Expletives like 'chilling' (Bacha, 2012) and 'Islamist militants' (2012) are rare and conspicuous by their

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<sup>2</sup> One of the limitations faced by the researchers is that demographics cannot be established and conclusively verified of the individuals who have commented on Dawn's news stories website. However, syntax and cultural references indicate that these people, in all probability, use English as second language. Therefore, they are likely to be from Pakistan or of Pakistani origin or people of different nationalities posting on Dawn's webpages. However, they do represent an elite class who can access English newspaper website and posts their comments in English.

extremely low frequency. In fact, the higher frequency negatives are the same as that used by western agencies, as credited by *Dawn* in their reports, the usage of 'Islamist' (AFP, 2012) being an exception. *Dawn's* October 10, (2012) report carries a statement issued by the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) through their spokesperson, Ehsanullah Ehsan, who cites from the Shariah to defend the attack on Malala. The newspaper devotes 581 words to allow TTP a platform but does a delicate balancing act through conflict framing between the '14-year-old peace activist' and the 'banned militant organisation'; 'widespread condemnation' and 'silent voice for peace and education'; 'Islamist militants,' 'Taliban atrocities,' 'burned girls' schools,' 'terrorised the valley' and 'her struggle.'

The comments to the newspaper's website provide an interactive platform for alternative discourse in the public sphere. They however, raise a spectre of doubt about the filtration by the gatekeepers and the contributor by editing (if allowed) or withdrawal. Other platforms like Twitter, which provide a platform for Malala supporters and Taliban or likeminded organisations, are a less-controlled arena for discourses. The President of the Jamat-e-Islami Women's Wing in Pakistan, Samia Raheel Qazi, repeatedly posts on Twitter, a photograph of Malala along with her father in apparent negotiation with Caucasian men. The photograph labelled "Malala Amreekee fojee hukkaam ke saath" meaning "Malala with American Military Officers," (Qazi, 2012) posted out of context is, in fact, a still frame from *The New York Times* documentary, 'Class Dismissed'. This misinformation campaign fails to drum up anti-girl child sentiments but operates within the niche-audience framework. Most responses to Samia's tweets question the timing (as Malala battles for her life in the hospital), the political intent of Samia, and not the authenticity of the posts. This indicates that though framing operates but priming is not a directly controlled element as text can only mediate responses with the audiences' knowledge structure. One noteworthy observation recorded in this case of tweets and responses is how one response may influence the other responses – bandwagon effect and the spiral of silence.

## **Phase I (October 2012 - January 2013): Malala in Western Media**

Like in Pakistan, in the West too Malala was a dormant currency. It is only post the October 9, 2012 incident that the West discovers a media object that could be used to drive home the dangers of the volatile circumstances prevailing at the edge of civilisation engulfed in a war against terror. The *New York Times* reports '*Taliban gun down girl who spoke up for rights*' (Walsh, 2012). The frame for the media text is conflict with prominent sub-frames of human impact and terrorism. The keywords 'symbol' and 'defiance' are set against 'Taliban' and 'subjugation.' Thus, tone and frame are clearly established in the lead itself.

The October 11, 2012 article (Walsh) meticulously lays down facts a day after the attack when Pakistan's mainstream media was bereft of facts and figures, and the stories tended to be charged with emotions. The headline, '*Pakistanis Unite in Outrage over Girl's Shooting by Taliban*,' hints at a divided society coming together in its condemnation over the shooting of the 14-year-old education rights campaigner. Similarly, the BBC (The Editors) Blog chronicles the chain of events systematically and historically along with the BBC's involvement in Malala's case. The international audience is made aware how despite the BBC's effort to keep Malala's identity anonymous, her father chose to reveal it when she was nominated for the National Peace Prize. The BBC appears to be clarifying its stance of any complicity that might befalls in the near-fatal shooting incident (Williams J. , 2012). The comments posted indicate how its audience, primarily Western, is sympathetic and questions the wisdom of the father in dropping the veil of anonymity for his daughter. Posts also talk of the right to education and hold the BBC somewhat accountable for its share of responsibility in bringing Malala to the forefront. No comment is recorded holding Islamic ideology responsible for the 'heinous' act. The mediated response appears to be balanced and logically structured when constructing an image of Pakistani society.

“Interesting article you linked to there... a balanced view but the poll on it suggests otherwise in terms of public perception of Islam. I agree that in reality it might be just a small minority holding such extreme views but sadly it looks like the public is quite happy to brand all Islam as violent. This Malala incident won't help the cause of the majority either.” (Staples, 2012)

BBC News creates an online public space (2012) for people to post their messages to Malala while she is in the hospital, something conspicuous by its absence in Pakistani media. One salient observation that arises is that the BBC addresses, unlike *The New York Times*, the identity of the 'Pakistani girl' in all of its stories, thereby acknowledging her agency.

Seven (7) out of ten (10) *The New York Times* headlines published use the phrase 'girl shot by Taliban.' Despite having featured in their two-part documentary, Ms. Yousafzai's name is not mentioned in any of the ten headlines while the term 'Taliban' features in a majority of them. The media presentations liberally provide background information about the atrocities committed by the Pakistani Taliban. Nevertheless, the *New York Times* succeeds in giving its readers a relatively comprehensive coverage of Malala's progress throughout this phase when compared to the *Dawn*.

The keywords and phrases employed to describe Malala throughout this phase, 'outspoken,' 'mature beyond her age,' 'potent symbol of resistance,' 'figure of wide-eyed optimism,' 'education rights campaigner,' 'education activist,' 'teenage activist,' all place her as a powerful force of defiance against the Taliban's strictures. The Taliban, on the other hand, are associated with the terms 'turbaned,' 'masked,' 'brutality,' 'twisted ideology,' 'cowards,' 'Islamist extremism,' 'hostility,' and 'revenge' which places them within the frame as cowards though ruthless, brazen and fanatic. The above factors indicate the conflict as a dominant frame with sub-frames of human impact, health and terrorism.

There is a rising din, amongst sympathisers of Pakistan and Islamic ideologue, about the typical imperial narrative of appropriation and subsequent sub-alternity of the 'brown girl.'

“White men are saving brown women from brown men...” (Spivak, 1988, p. 299)

According to Assed Baig, in his *Huffington Post* article, the “white saviour” narrative strips the power from the brown man. Malala becomes an object.

“This is a story of a native girl being saved by the white man... It is a historic racist narrative that has been institutionalised... The story of an innocent brown

child that was shot by savages for demanding an education and along comes the knight in shining armour to save her. The actions of the West, the bombings, the occupations the wars all seem justified now, “see, we told you, this is why we intervene to save the natives.” (Baig, 2013)

Potentially, Malala seems to be a candidate for a stereotypical subaltern voice as she, ‘a passive object of the news media,’ (Mufti, 2014) awaits appropriation. However, this questions the agency of Malala.

### **Phase II (February 2013 - September 2014): Malala in Pakistani Media**

Malala’s post recovery period is marked by decreased frequency and currency in Pakistan, which is offset with the concretisation of Brand Malala - the brand, which is officially launched on July 12, 2013 as ‘Malala Day,’ when on her 16<sup>th</sup> birthday she addresses the UN Youth Assembly. The girl who defied ‘turbaned militants’ giving ‘voice to her dreams of education’ will be nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, will call on the 44<sup>th</sup> President of the United States of America, Barack Obama, will address the UN, will write an autobiography, *I Am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban* refusing to be a ‘passive media object,’ will find herself forced to live in the UK far from her homeland. Yet, her homeland seems distant and sceptical of her – no one can “hear” the real Malala.

Though there is no watershed demarcating the end of Phase I from the start of Phase II; there exists an overlapping grey area where Pakistan’s love for Malala still bears a strong semblance of passion even though, there is an inadvertent, if not systematic, attempt to erase her identity by a small section of Pakistanis. Malala’s lack of physical proximity due to her opting to stay in the United Kingdom, some 6000 kilometres from Pakistan coincides with the *Dawn* opting to use agency reports. This spatial isolation seems to make a minority anti-Malala viewpoint more vociferous but for a large majority of alternative media users Malala continues to be viewed favourably.

On February 1, 2013, the *Dawn* informs its readers that Malala has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize (AFP, 2013). The story is a departure from its earlier conflict frame to that of civic

with the sub-frames of peace, reward, education, human rights, and democracy. Malala is now in the league of ‘Belarussian human rights activist Ales Belyatski and Russia's Lyudmila Alexeyeva’. The story receives 18 comments with 14 supporting the ‘14-year old’ ‘symbol of opposition to the Taliban's drive to deny women education and religious extremism.’ There is an indication of louder expressions of opposition, not only in Pakistan but in societies beyond its national boundaries. The comments indicate that despite unconfirmed demographics there is an unyielding anti-Malala sentiment. This sentiment may be more prevalent amongst people with a certain conservative or orthodox mind-set.

Another news text that draws attention is a report dated July 18, 2013 (Agencies & Dawn), ‘*TTP commander wishes Malala attack never happened*’; the headline appears to indicate a pro-Malala sentiment as if the TTP commander, Adnan Rashid, regrets attacking the ‘campaigner for the right of girls.’ The story, framed as conflict, reveals in its body why the ‘peace activist’ was attacked – for her running a “smearing campaign” against the militants and promoting ‘anti-Islamic’ views. The media text gives equal coverage to Malala and the Taliban, despite providing TTP a platform to justify its attempt to execute a ‘14 year old peace activist.’

The satire published on October 13, 2013, *Malala: The real story (with evidence)*, mocks some of the popular anti-Malala conspiracy theories (Paracha). Despite all incorporated disclaimers and inherent absurdity, a large section of the audience accepted it as a cardinal truth. The *Pakistan Christian Post*, and *The Lahore Times* as cited by (Dewey, 2013) and Press TV as cited by (AlJazeera, 2013) posted intensively citing the satire as a true story and whipping up anti-Malala sentiment. *The Lahore Times* and Press TV subsequently withdrew the story. Caitlin Dewey, in the same report, adds that the alternative media was abuzz with the story going viral on “Facebook and Twitter, racking up well over 30,000 shares and stirring debate even after 24 hours online” (2013). However, the *Pakistan Christian Post* continues to have the report on its website citing it as a true story (Iftekhhar, 2013).

Ms. Yousafzai’s speech to the United Nations Youth Assembly on July 12, 2013 to mark ‘Malala Day,’ a UN global education initiative, is reported in *Dawn*. The story by exclusion fails to point out that it was not the General Assembly but the UN’s Youth Assembly. Further, it is also

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interesting that the editor's frame by exclusion of certain text was liable to prime national-audiences on predictable lines.

“Malala invoked the legacy of Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela and other legendary peace advocates brought quick praise.” (AFP, 2013)

This evoked a popular reaction. One comment under a pseudonym questions, why Malala invokes the legacy of Gandhi and not that of Jinnah (JUSTFORCRAP, 2013). But what is stranger, the *Dawn* never mentions Gandhi in its text. The reader is definitely drawing his or her own inference from an alternative source.

The speech by Malala clearly invokes the legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr., Nelson Mandela, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Gandhi, Bacha Khan and Mother Teresa (UN, 2013). It is intriguing why a Pakistani national mainstream medium would exclude its own nation's architect from the story. Such handling of news is bound to fuel conspiracy theories and alternative discourses in public as well as in private spheres. This point is further highlighted by another comment to the same story:

“It is a shame that whereas CNN and BBC gave full live coverage to Malala's UN speech, the only coverage in Pakistan was from PTV. We have so many channels who say they are champions of women's rights but they failed miserably when it came to the real coverage. We as a nation do not walk our talk, we are hypocrites and bigots. Malala is indeed a brave girl but she should not have politicized her speech to mention Benazir. Otherwise it was a good projection of Pakistan.” (Hamdany, 2013)

This selectivity and exclusion, salient components of the framing context, may have been one of the reasons for allowing much of mistrust and misinformation to percolate through the alternative media. By choosing not to air the speech, the Pakistani media with the exception of the state owned Pakistan Television (PTV) indicates an agenda. If the agenda of the gatekeepers at *Dawn* was to avoid controversy by omitting all Asian references, it surely misfired.

The alternate media could not have expressed the love-hate sentiment that plagues many Pakistanis more poignantly than a blog entry by Kunwar Khuldune Shahid.

“Do you honestly believe that it’s easy for me to accept that a young girl from our neck of the woods, with all the societal handicaps that one can think of, can single-handedly orchestrate a global rude awakening? The thought rips the bigoted, discriminatory and misogynistic ideals that I’ve grown up with, into tiny little shreds.

How can I accept Malala... was able to highlight who our actual enemies are, when grown up men in our parliaments are still hell bent on befriending them?

How can I rejoice at Malala’s global achievement when I’ve been taught all my life that a girl’s place is in the kitchen? I just can’t.” (Shahid K. K., 2013)

The Phase II Pakistani media texts continue to use the keywords and phrases 'recognised symbol of opposition', 'women education', 'peace', 'peace-activist', 'education', 'activist', 'brave fight', 'struggle for women's rights', 'Nobel Peace Prize', 'knowledge', 'Peaceful', 'favourite', 'defeat terrorism', 'fight militancy', 'widely tipped to win the Nobel Peace Prize', 'championing girls' right', and 'continued fight', in association with Malala. These keywords indicate that 'peace' as a sub-set frame emerges as a prominent one in this phase. It apparently builds up to the grand-finale where “overlooked Malala” for the Nobel Prize 2013 emerges as a case for re-nomination in 2014!

## **Phase II (February 2013 - September 2014): Malala in Western Media**

The *New York Times* in the second phase continues to address Malala as the ‘girl shot by Taliban’ in its reports until she makes her first UN appearance on ‘Malala day’. Malala is virtually born this day on her 16<sup>th</sup> birthday – as the West forges a new identity for the girl saved from her ‘savage people.’ The brand is positioned and launched by a premier global PR firm – Edelman (Usborne, 2013).



The report, '*Girl Shot by Taliban Vows to Continue Activism*' (Mackey, 2013), elaborates on her first video appearance since the attack and Malala's intention to continue as an 'outspoken advocate of the right for "every girl, every child, to be educated.'" All 24 comments below the article published on the newspaper's webpage support Malala and her cause.

On July 13, 2013, *The New York Times*, like the *Dawn*, carries a story on Ms. Yousafzai's speech on 'Malala day'. *The New York Times* too paraphrases a segment of the speech; it mentions Indian leaders, unlike *Dawn*, but like *Dawn* fails to mention the two prominent Pakistani leaders.

"She included the Rev. Dr Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela, Gandhi and Mother Teresa as among the leaders who have inspired her." (Preston, 2013)

Subsequent comments to the story are positive and support Malala and her cause. The absence of the names of the Pakistani leaders seems to go unnoticed amongst the readers of *The New York Times*.

BBC News (online) however decides to exclude any of the names and manages to stay apolitical on this issue (2013). The Western media, too, in its enthusiasm for Malala is too happy in not reporting that the speech was in fact delivered at the UN Youth Assembly.

Most media presentations in this phase have dominant civic frames with the sub-frames of terrorism finding lesser ground as compared to peace and education. Here, we see how the media helps build the 'Brand Malala' as a construct seen through the eyes of a dominant political hegemony. The identity of the woman in the context of the nation evokes a strong resonance with the western audiences and those who have assimilated Western values. Yasmine Hafiz in her article published in the *Huffington Post* calls her, 'The voice of Islam's next generation of moderate Muslims.'

"Malala presents an alternate narrative to the hijacking of Islam by the Taliban; using the Muslim faith as a framework to argue for the importance of education rather than making Islam a justification for oppression." (2013)

### **Phase III (October 2014 – January 2015): Malala in Pakistani Media**

This phase is singularly important in assessing Pakistani media's reaction to 'Brand Malala' and how she defines a nation beset with conservative and ultra-right mind-set. *Dawn* continues with its dominant frame of conflict with a sub-frame of human impact. The ever enthusiastic media makes Malala the appropriate voice of every subaltern Pakhtun girl (Sherazi, 2014). Malala is a distant currency and the nation continues to have a love-hate relationship with a girl who demonstrated her agency and refused all attempts by a patriarchal, feudalistic, male-dominated society, be it Western or Eastern (Reuters, 2014) & (AFP, 2014). The society views her with a mixture of 'suspicion, fear and jealousy.' She continues to be seen as a Western plant, a stooge, with an agenda to undermine the Islamic fabric that the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan 'zealously' builds. She is not without her admirers and followers (Dawn, 2014). *Dawn* tests the aspirations of the commoners by running its stake on Malala's interview with BBC's *Hardtalk*, in which she expresses her desire to be the future Prime Minister of Pakistan (Dawn, 2014). The story draws popular flak as evident in the various comments posted. The "hometown needs Malala" (Yousufzai, 2014) but the conservative society at large does not want a Western educated woman sitting at the helm of affairs as evident by widely orchestrated 'Anti-Malala Day' (AFP, 2014). The comments posted for the story again betray the love-hate sentiments for Malala.

### **Phase III (October 2014 – January 2015): Malala in Western Media**

The phase celebrates the emergence of a political icon and a force to reckon with as Malala is seen rushing to Nigeria to campaign for the release of girls held hostage by a radical extremist group, Boko Haram (Kantor, 2014). She donates money for rebuilding a United Nations school in Palestine (AP, 2014). Earlier, she visits Stockholm to receive the prize money announced by the World's Children's Prize (Reuters, 2014). Malala has emerged as a stable currency worldwide. The Western media reports and builds this currency even though its coverage and frequency has diminished. *The New York Times* publishes some five reports, with an impressive word count of around 3100, on Malala during this phase. While the BBC also shows a decrease in frequency and coverage but provides extensive reports on how the 'media darling' (Mufti, 2014) of the world finds it difficult to draw anything but ire from her homeland though tempered

with love and appreciation in equal proportion (Khan, 2014). If the social media in the West is congratulatory on her winning the Nobel Peace Prize, so is Pakistan's only they are followed closely by scornful and sarcastic responses.

## **Conclusion**

Malala is as much a creation of the Pakistan Taliban as she is of the West. She is the only women from the non-Pakistani political elite class to rise up beyond mundane activism and politics. Malala, in 2012 was ranked as 'the sixth most influential thinker in the world' (Wittmeyer, 2012). She remains the only Pakistani to have advised the American President on futility of the 'America's Drone War' policy, is the youngest and the only Pakistani woman Nobel laureate. Malala is the brave new moderate face of Pakistan, whether sections in Pakistan like it or not.

The study finds that Malala is reported within the frame of conflict during phase I of her career in both Pakistani and Western Media. It was observed that the national media acknowledged the identity of the girl by naming her and placing her within the context of the terrorism infested Swat Valley. Their narrative was of a girl denied education by extremists. One salient inference drawn is that coverage about the shooting incident used a conflict frame where the Taliban only served as a peg to construct a Malala-centric narrative by Pakistan's media. The mainstream continued to be governed by the gatekeepers to achieve a delicate balancing act without appearing hostile to a potential enemy. The alternative media, however, while being vociferous was unbridled enough to criticise ultra-right wing groups and expressed support for Malala. The same media however provided a rich breeding ground for the expression of pro-Taliban ideologue.

On the other hand, the Western media narrative appeared to be about a schoolgirl who was courageous, and took on the 'turbaned' and 'masked' Taliban gunmen but the text soon was found to be existing within the ambit of 'brutal' 'guerrillas' who espouse Islamist ideology. These mediated texts indicate that Malala served as a news peg to select, highlight, and elaborate on the 'Taliban' and 'Talibanisation' of sections of Pakistani society by the Western Media. However, the principal player seems to have changed. It is the Taliban and not Malala. It is because of this

framing of the Malala construct that many in Pakistan sense a Western conspiracy theory behind the entire narrative. The counter imperialist narrative of appropriation appears to be apt for many in Pakistan as the western media continues to frame news stories as ‘progressive west’ against ‘primitive Pakistan,’ and ‘good Muslim’ against ‘bad Muslim’ binaries.

The phase II marks a watershed where we see Pakistani media negotiating its relationship with an activist – whether it wanted to love the girl who defied Taliban or hate the girl who was emerging as a puppet in the hands of her Western masters to undermine everything that was Pakistani and Islamic. It seems that a conservative pro-Taliban ideologue section of the society was too eager to deny Malala her agency.

Meanwhile, in the West Malala was recognized as a potential brand. Malala offered a counter narrative in which not only did she establish her agency, criticise American drone attack policy, portray Taliban as an organisation resorting to religious ideologue to achieve its political agenda to silence oppositional political discourse, humanises and, in fact, feminises Taliban – from ‘masked militants’ to ‘misguided boys’ in the perspective of worried mothers and daughters awaiting their ‘return’; by distracting the western media from its dominant narrative of terrorism, radical Islam, and revenge to seeing extremism in the region within the context of denied opportunities, unequitable social justice, and class conflict.

Malala’s popularity, despite being a Muslim, in the west may be attributable to her presenting a human face of her religion as moderate and progressive minus the dogmatic aggressive stance associated with it. She packages pluralist democracy as a Muslim value, which finds favourable resonance with the pan-European and American civic society. Her willingness to accommodate the Western value system potentially makes her a soft target for the typical hegemonic narrative of appropriation and subsequent agent of Western agenda in a part of the world which is in constant flux. Yet, her agency and strength of character makes her a woman that many modern developed societies would love to embrace. The sub-frame of terrorism, in this phase, is slowly replaced by that of human impact, education and peace as she frames her quest for universal education for children within an ‘international human rights discourse’.

The Western media by acknowledging the role of education in ushering democracy and peace in Pakistan not only decided to support Malala whole-heartedly, but also rally around her to establish her credentials to be declared the Nobel laureate and a future political commodity.

It is in the third phase that the Pakistani and Western media reveal Malala Yousafzai as a singular polarizing figure. In the Western media, she presents a counter narrative to an otherwise stereotypical imperialistic narrative about a religion which seems to be shrouded with everything that is barbaric and constantly seen in the backdrop of a historical perspective of conflict. She succeeds in feminising the Taliban by highlighting the plight of their mothers and daughters while portraying them as ‘the bad people.’ Her reasoning though sophisticated appears to stem from the innocence of a young girl as she assails the Taliban’s atrocities but will not use it as a justification to launch drone attacks in the region. Yet, she continues to be a person viewed with suspicion and scepticism in her own homeland.

“Despite the fact that liberals hail Malala as a symbol of pride for the country, the teenager has become an extremely divisive figure in Pakistan.” (Shams, 2014)

It is ironic, as pointed out by Shamil Shams that a nation which is capable of providing a safe haven to various extremists and militant outfits finds it difficult to provide its own women with a safe environment and fails to create a change in the patriarchal mind-set which supports violence against women.

Throughout the three phases of Malala’s movement from a ‘14-year old activist’ to ‘a Nobel Laureate’, the Pakistani media is primarily pre-occupied with conflict frame. In contrast, the western media’s initial narrative of terrorism and Taliban makes a departure from conflict to a civic frame capitalising on the potentiality of Malala as a political commodity.

This apparent eulogy of Malala is a testimonial to the Western Media framing the ‘brand’ and priming its audience in accordance. The knowledge structures support the archetype as the Western values of democracy, education, gender parity, and basic human rights form a shared commonality in most civic society discourses in public as well as private spheres. All this was happening while Pakistan was struggling with the dichotomy of its ambivalent love and hate

response to Malala and the Western narrative of Islamophobia. The gatekeepers in the west appear to be focused and have a clear agenda – initially anti-Taliban, Pakistan's complicity, appropriation of Malala, and subsequently, construct the Brand Malala. Whereas, gatekeepers in Pakistan remain unsure, seem to await endorsement from the dominant power group every time they report on Malala. Never, even once in the discourse did they re-iterate historically accurate time-line or observable facts. The regional media swings like a pendulum with hate and love, two diametrically opposed stances as Pakistani media gatekeepers preferred assumed neutrality. They presented an emotionally charged discourse which degenerated into anti-Malala rather than anti-terrorist discourse. The gatekeepers did little to clear the air of suspicion; they have an unclear narrative of the west's agenda, nor attempt to place a counter-narrative discourse on Malala's agency or her consistent pro-Pakistan stance. For them it remains a lost opportunity to initiate discourse in public sphere and priming on dangers of home bred terrorism and undermine domestic support for terrorists.

The results may have implications and raise questions about the framing by audience and modes of communication people opt for in building their knowledge structure.

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