

LEGITIMATE VS ILLEGITIMATE: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF AFGHAN GOVERNANCE IN GLOBAL MEDIA

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Abstract

In politically contested contexts where question of legitimacy is central, media often reinforce and challenge underlying power relations. This study intends to investigate the discursive construction of legitimacy and illegitimacy of Afghan governance, examining how authority is represented in media narratives. This study aims to examine how global media construct legitimacy through political and ideological discourse. The data for this study is collected from the articles published in Pakistani (*Dawn* & *The News*) and Western (*The New York Times* & *The Guardian*) media during 2024 to 2025. The study uses Fairclough's three-dimensional model to examine how media shapes public perception about legitimacy of Afghan governance. This study uses qualitative approach to investigate how linguistic and discursive strategies are used to shape discursive construction of Afghan governance. The study analyzes 12 articles from four prominent newspapers (3 from each), at three levels: textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice. The findings suggest that western media construct illegitimacy of Afghan governance by aligning it with international norms and democratic values, while Pakistani media emphasize on regional stability. The study further highlights that different discourses reflect divergent representation of Afghan governance, which reinforce geopolitical perspectives and shape public perception about legitimacy.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language plays an important role in constructing political realities and media discourses are sites which influence the public perception about governance, legitimacy and power. Critical Discourse Analysis views media languages as socially constructed sites that reproduce ideological perspectives and power dynamics rather than simply considered as neutral reflections of events. There is an important shift

in the geopolitical landscape after Taliban's takeover in Afghanistan in 2021, building a system of governance that faced domestic and international resistance for a long time. (Ahmad et al., 2024). Media plays an influential role in shaping public understanding of governance by creating narratives, highlight specific actors, and framing politics in ideologically meaningful ways. News discourse plays role in constructing meanings of governance, legitimacy, stability, and power relations rather than neutrally reflecting

reality. There are divergent media reactions especially in Pakistani and Western media outlets related to Afghan governance. There is an extensive coverage of media during the period of 2024 to 2025, surrounding the events like ongoing economic crisis, restrictions on women's rights and cross border tensions with Pakistan involving TTP attacks and deportation policies. Pakistani media trying to balance the regional stability with domestic political pressure often navigates a complex narrative because of the influence of shared border crisis, ethnic ties, and security concerns (Raza, 2025). On the other hand, Western newspapers representation reflects broader orientalist discourse, and represents the regime through the lens of human rights, democracy and counter terrorism. The current study investigates how Afghan governance is constructed through these discourses, and uncovers power dynamics in media representations.

Critical Discourse Analysis is the strong framework for uncovering such ideological constructions, which are embedded in the language (Fairclough, 1995). Critical Discourse Analysis highlights how media legitimizes or delegitimizes political actors by analyzing linguistic choices, discursive strategies and framing devices, and influences public opinion and policy agendas (van Dijk, 2008).

Although there is an extensive coverage of Afghanistan, relatively few studies have analyzed Pakistani and Western discourses in comparison on post- 2021 governance (Ahmed, 2022). The earlier studies often focus on pre 2021 Taliban period and 2021 to 2022 period, or only analyze single outlets to examines how legitimacy and illegitimacy is constructed through existing frames on security, diplomacy and political stability. In South Asian context, the portrayal of Afghan governance is significant, impacting regional security, migration and diplomacy. International and national media portray it differently, which reflects their interests, cultural proximities and geopolitical alignments. The differences in representation influence whether Afghan governance is portrayed as stable or unstable, independent or externally controlled. Pakistani

media's interest-based pragmatism is contrasted with Western normative critiques, however there is no critical discourse analysis based comparative study exists for the explanation of cross-cultural discursive divergences during 2024 to 2025. This research examines media's role in shaping these geopolitical narratives and ongoing Afghan instability.

This study uses Critical Discourse Analysis to analyze how selected newspapers represent Afghan governance during the period of 2024 to 2025. The study examines linguistic features and discursive strategies within media representations to reveal underlying ideological assumptions and power relations. The study contributes to discourse studies by examining the media's role in shaping political narratives and public understanding of governance in conflict zones. This study critically analyzes newspaper discourse to understand Afghan governance representation during the time period of 2024 to 2025 when Afghan governance made new laws.

1.1 Research Objectives:

- To examine how Afghan governance is linguistically represented in Pakistani and Western newspapers.
- To analyze discursive strategies which are employed to construct legitimacy and illegitimacy in the representation of Afghan governance.
- To examine how Pakistani and Western newspapers frame issues such as security, diplomacy, and political stability in relation to Afghan governance.

1.2 Research Questions:

1. How Afghan governance is linguistically represented in Pakistani and Western newspapers?
2. What discursive strategies have been used for the construction of legitimacy and illegitimacy in the representation of Afghan governance?
3. How do Pakistani and Western newspapers frame issues such as security, diplomacy and political stability in relation to Afghan governance?

2. Literature Review

The discursive representation of Afghan governance in international media has gained considerable scholarly interest, especially after the Taliban's return to power in August 2021. In Critical Discourse Analysis, scholars emphasize the role of media in shaping public perceptions of political legitimacy, governance and power relations. Studies using Critical Discourse Analysis as frameworks such as Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional model and van Dijk (2008) socio cognitive approach, to news discourse highlights how linguistics features such as lexicalization, metaphors, modality and framing ideologically represents political actors. Scholars argue that language shapes public perception and specific lexical choices are used to influence and justify their verdicts and plans of present and future actions (Anwar et al., 2024). For instance, Munir and Ahmed (2024) in their study highlight that how Pakistani newspapers employs discursive devices specifically negative presuppositions and positive lexical choices to delegitimize opponents. Their analysis of political discourse reveals how these linguistic strategies influence public perceptions about governance legitimacy.

The discursive construction of governance relies on rhetorical strategies instead of objective policy reforms; for instance, a recent study highlights that justifications for policy are frequently rooted in persuasive rhetoric to establish political authority through the analysis of U.S presidential speeches using Critical Discourse Analysis (Rani & Anwar, 2026). There are number of studies that examines discursive construction of Afghan governance after 2021 Taliban takeover. A Critical Discourse Analysis of prominent Pakistani newspapers (Dawn and The News) in the time period of 2021 to 2022, highlights a discursive shift towards legitimization of Taliban through the phrases such as "interim government, regional stability" and portraying them as possible recognizable actors. The research reveals that Pakistan's geopolitical interests and border crisis shape their narratives (Ahmad & Hussain, 2025). Comparative analysis of Western and regional media highlights several differences in narratives. This study follows the comparative approach of

(Anwar, 2025) by analyzing how geopolitical and cultural contexts influence the media framing, highlighting that narratives often diverge in Western and Eastern media. The analysis of these regional patterns in this study reveals how Afghan governance is constructed differently in global media influenced by national policies and cultural values. Similarly, the cross-national Critical Discourse Analysis comparing Pakistani, Chinese and U.S newspapers highlight that representation of Afghan governance is shaped by national interests. The study reveals that U.S media frame the regime as threat to human rights and global stability, in contrast other national outlets use different narratives based on their geopolitical positions. These findings highlight the importance of comparing Pakistani and Western newspapers to uncover different ideological perspectives on Afghan governance (Aksar et al., 2025).

There are several studies which focus on media discourse in Afghanistan and highlight the role of language in shaping perception of legitimacy. Research such as (Rahimi, Shah, & Lu, 2025) analyzed Afghan's foreign and domestic media coverage and reveals discursive strategies linked to political pressure and self-censorship, highlighting how power relations and institutional constraints shaped the narratives related to governance. Such studies demonstrate that governance is not only politically contested but also discursively negotiated through media language. Besides Afghanistan specific studies, CDA research on Pakistani media offers methodological insights how language shapes narratives. A recent study by Tanveer, Imtiaz, and Kashif (2023) conducted a frame analysis of editorials in Dawn and The Express Tribune during the Taliban's 2021 takeover, the findings reveals that Pakistani media frame the event positively and offers recommendations for Afghan governance. Similarly, Rasul, Shahzad, Bilir (2017) analyzed Afghan conflict in the coverage of elite English-Newspapers of China, India, Iran and Pakistan and highlight that each media outlet followed its government's official foreign policy positions during the coverage of conflict. A recent study has extended this line of inquiry to the representation of Afghan refugees in Pakistani media, the study

involves systematic “othering” through the use of specific linguistic choices that excludes them and legitimate state policies during humanitarian crisis (Urooj, Naeem & Furnaz, 2025). The broader ideological functioning of Pakistani newspaper discourse has also been documented. Pakistani newspapers shape their own narrative using strategies like nominalization and lexical choices to reinforce dominant ideologies in the context of governance, gender or geopolitical conflict, which are distinct from the Western influences (Asghar, 2014).

Despite a number of studies, a notable gap still exists. Several studies have compared media constructions across different national contexts, only few have compared how Pakistani and Western newspapers portray Afghan Governance, by focusing on aspect of legitimacy, state authority. The present study addresses this gap by using CDA Fairclough’s three-dimensional model to analyze the discursive construction of Afghan governance in Pakistani and Western newspapers, highlighting the ideological assumptions and geopolitical interest that shape these divergent narratives.

3. Research Methodology

This study employs Norman Fairclough’s three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis to examine the discursive construction of Afghan governance in a selection of Pakistani and Western newspapers. Fairclough’s model is designed to provide a systematic framework for analyzing discourse by integrating language analysis with social theory, making it an ideal choice for this study. This model conceptualizes the multi-dimensional view of discourse, consisting of text, discursive practice and social practice (Fairclough, 1995), is useful for exploring how media discourse is used to construct political reality, shape perceptions of governance and reproduce ideological positions.

3.1 Textual Analysis

The first level of this model is the level of text, referring to the linguistic analysis lexical choice, grammar, cohesion and text structure. It is used to analyze the linguistic representation of Afghan

governance in terms of lexical choice, metaphor, transitivity, modality and evolution in Pakistani and Western media. The study analyzes the textual choices made, including the lexicalization of governance (as being “stable”, “fragile” or “illegitimate”), its transitivity structure (who is viewed as active agent in the process of governance) and modality (what is the degree of prediction or authority presented in this way of narrating the event). Based on the analysis of these features, the study examines the meanings and ideologies that emerged around Afghanistan’s governance.

3.2 Discursive Practice

Second, at the discursive practice level, the focus is on how newspaper texts are produced, distributed and consumed in conjunction with past discourses, genres and intertextual references. It concentrates on the intertextuality of official discourse, expert opinions and historical narratives in Pakistani and Western newspapers. This also includes the voices of political actors, such as political leaders, international institutions and journalists which are included and excluded from newspapers’ discourse on the Afghan state. Interdiscursivity also analyzes the way the discourses of security discourse, diplomatic discourse and development discourse are taken up in the news. This aspect sheds light on how media institutions affect readers’ understanding of Afghanistan’s governance.

3.3 Social Practice

In the third dimension, discourse is embedded in wider social and ideological contexts as we analyze the representational strategies of the Afghan government in relation to power relations, political agendas and socio-cultural ideologies. The Pakistani and Western print media occur in different political and geopolitical contexts, and may produce different constructions of the Afghan government. The article also studies the discourses to discern apparent and overt themes, such as regional security, international politics,

legitimacy and stability in the Afghanistan government. Scholars might also investigate how media discourse reproduces, or resists, the dominant ideologies, and how these textual and

discursive findings relate to specific social practices, guiding public understandings of Afghan governance.

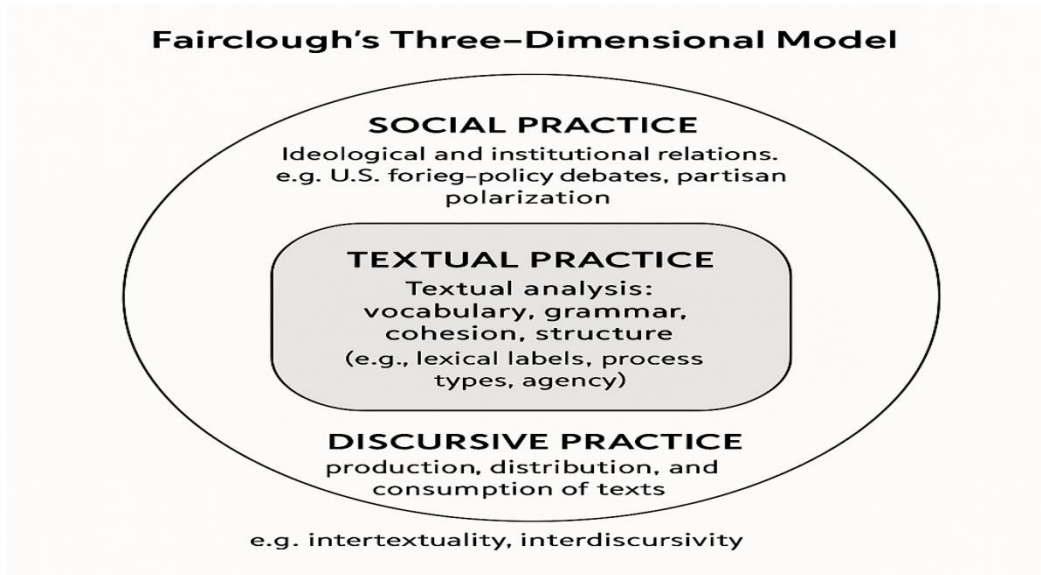


Figure 1:
Fairclough's 3D CDA model

This study follows a systematic procedure for applying Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model. Firstly, at textual level news articles from selected Pakistani and western newspapers are analyzed. Secondly, the study examines how within the broader discourse, these texts are created and how reference to other texts shapes the meaning. Finally, the findings are interpreted in terms of their socio-political frameworks to understand ideological implications. This model facilitates a comprehensive analysis of how Afghan governance is represented discursively and how context shapes representation. This framework provides a strong theoretical foundation for this study to examine how media language shapes legitimacy, authority, and political narratives surrounding Afghan governance.

3.4 Research Design

This study utilizes a qualitative research design using Critical Discourse Analysis for examining how Pakistani and Western newspapers discursively represent Afghan governance. This

qualitative design is suitable because this study aims to analyze how meanings, ideologies are constructed through language. This study employs Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model, which guides the analysis at textual, discursive and social practice level.

3.5 Data Collection

The data collected for this study include news articles about Afghan governance published in selected Pakistani (Dawn & The News) and Western (The New York Times & The Guardian) newspapers during the period of 2024-2025. Newspapers are selected for data collection because they play an influential role in the construction of political realities and in shaping public opinion. Only those articles were selected which focus on Afghan Governance, political leadership, legitimacy, security, diplomacy or political stability, and are published within the time period selected for the study. Purposive sampling is used in the selection of related articles. The study uses total 12 articles that addressed the

research topic, three from each newspaper for an in-depth qualitative analysis. This study selects two Pakistani and two Western newspapers which are widely recognized and influential. Articles are collected from the official newspaper websites.

4. Data Analysis

The dataset for this study consists of 12 articles from four prominent newspapers: two Pakistani (Dawn & The News) and two Western (The New York times & The Guardian). These newspapers are selected because they are widely recognized and influential. This study analyzes how Pakistani and Western newspapers represents Afghan governance by applying Three-Dimensional Model of Critical Discourse Analysis proposed by Norman Fairclough. The study analyzes news articles, three from each newspaper and analyzed manually for in depth qualitative analysis. The analysis highlights how Pakistan and Western newspapers show differences in lexical choices, discursive practices and ideological framing in construction of Afghan governance.

4.1 Western newspapers

4.1.1 The Guardian

Women's voices are also deemed to be potential instruments of vice and so will not be allowed to be heard in public under the new restrictions. Women must also not be heard singing or reading aloud, even from inside their houses. "Whenever an adult woman leaves her home out of necessity, she is obliged to conceal her voice, face, and body," the new laws state.

Textual Analysis

The selection of the phrase "instruments of vice" encodes strong negative connotations and construct Afghan governance as restrictive regime. The use of verb "deemed" implies authoritative imposition and the use of passive construction removes women's agency and implicitly attribute it to authorities (governing bodies). The use of modal verbs "must not" again and again indicates obligation and compulsion, which further strengthen the construction of Afghan governance as authoritarian regime.

Discursive Practice

This excerpt from The Guardian employs human rights discourse, particularly gender inequality. The intertextual reference to legal constraints and social control linked it with human rights and global feminist narratives. It does not include any perspectives from Afghan officials, that's why the coverage yield one-sided critical representation.

Social Practice

At social practice level analysis, this excerpt represents a Western liberal framework, in which governance is evaluated against universal human rights standards. The Afghan governance is constructed as violating these norms contributing to its representation as illegitimate in international discourse.

4.1.2 The New York Times

The Taliban government has introduced one decree after another, incrementally stripping away the rights of women and girls to education, employment, justice, freedom of speech and movement, and it has progressively criminalized their existence outside the home. Taliban leaders reached a new low last month when they published rules that, among other restrictions, make it illegal for a woman's voice to be heard by male strangers in public.

Textual Analysis

The textual analysis of this excerpt illustrates that western media employs lexical choices that are evaluative and have negative connotations. The use of phrase "introduced one decree after another" illustrates continuity and accumulation implies that these are not isolated actions rather it is systematic process of governance. The use of verb "Stripping away" metaphorically served to indicate forceful restrictions, which suggests that Afghan governance is actively depriving women of rights. The list, "education, employment, justice, freedom of speech and movement" further intensifies the restrictions which creates a sense of total deprivation. The clause "Criminalized their existence outside the home" is important to discuss, it goes beyond regulations and indicates that simply being outside is illegal. The choice of this clause for Afghan representation is extremely

evaluative stance that heightened perceived severity.

Discursive practice

At discursive level, this excerpt draws on human rights and gender equality discourse by focusing on women's rights, education, employment, speech and movement which aligns with global feminist and human rights framework. The use of cumulative listing and evaluative phrases implies that text is not neutrally just reporting rather it is designed to persuade reader and highlight severity. The text is interdiscursive combines legal terms "decree, illegal, criminalized" with moral evaluation "reached a new low", which further intensifies the delegitimization of Afghan governance. The absence of counter-discourse or statements from Afghan officials highlights selective representation which is a common discursive strategy for constructing evaluative stance.

Social Practice

At the broader level of social practice, the representation in western media reflects Western liberal ideological framework in which governance is evaluated in accordance with international norms. Afghan governance is portrayed as violating human rights, particularly women's rights which reflects illegitimacy of Afghan governance. The discourse clearly constructs the concept of legitimate governance (aligned with international norms) and illegitimate (aligns with restrictions and control). Afghan governance is represented as incompatible with these norms which reinforce its global delegitimization.

4.2 Pakistani newspapers

4.2.1 Dawn

Pakistan is concerned about humanitarian crisis in the neighboring country. We are determined to increase trade and economic relations with Afghanistan," Akram said, reiterating Islamabad's support for the economic recovery of Afghanistan.

Textual Analysis

The use of words "is concerned" shows a diplomatic tone, Pakistani media discourse avoids

direct criticism against Afghan governance. The association of "humanitarian crises" with "trade" and "economic relations" creates a balance between concern and cooperation. This discursive move creates a dual construction of Afghan governance as both problematic and engaging.

Discursive Practice

The excerpt associates humanitarian crises with economy and diplomatic relations which shows interdiscursivity. The use of official statements makes it sound authoritative; it functions as an authorization strategy invoking institutional voice. Instead of denunciation, Pakistani media focuses on constructive engagement.

Social practice

This excerpt illustrates a practical political approach which frames Afghan governance in term of regional interdependence. It considers stability and cooperation more important than criticizing their ideas or values (Ideologies).

4.2.2 Dawn

Frustrated by a surge in terrorist attacks, Pakistan has adopted a mix of hard and soft power tactics to pressure the Taliban administration in Kabul into acting against the TTP.

Textual Analysis

The excerpt from Pakistani newspaper uses neutral and strategic lexical choices. The use of phrase "a mix of hard and soft power tactics" is derived from political and diplomatic rather than emotional and evaluative language. This type of lexical choices portrays Pakistan's actions as multifaceted and complex rather than aggressive. The noun phrase "Taliban administration in Kabul" is significant as it sounds formal and official instead of ideological labels such as "militant regime" these lexical choices served for the normalized depiction of governance. Agency is distributed by positioning Pakistan as primary actor (has adopted), on the other hand Taliban as responding entity (into acting against the TTP). This marks a shift towards functional responsibility from ideological critique.

Discursive Practice

The excerpt uses security and diplomatic discourses, use of “hard and soft power” reflects international relation theory indicating that text aligned with policy-oriented framework. It combines military discourse (hard power) with diplomatic discourse (soft power) which marks interdiscursivity. The reference to TTP (Tehreek e Taliban Pakistan) situates discussion in the context of counterterrorism discourse. Unlike Western media discourse, Pakistani media avoids moral judgment and pay attention to practical outcomes.

Social Practice

It indicates Pakistan’s geopolitical positioning and security priorities at this level. Afghan governance under Taliban is constructed as neighboring authority and its cooperation is considered vital for regional stability. It emphasis on counterterrorism instead of human rights discourse which depicts that governance is assessed by its capability to manage threat like TTP, not by human rights standards. Pakistan’s representation of Afghan governance aligns with broader socio-political context influenced by border security, internal stability and diplomatic engagement. Afghan governance is therefore, subject to strategic engagement instead of delegitimization.

5. Discussion and Findings

This study analyzes 12 news articles (three from each, Dawn, The News, The New York Times and The Guardian) published between 2024 and 2025 by using Fairclough’s Three-Dimensional Model of Critical Discourse Analysis. This study addresses three research questions, firstly the linguistics representation of Afghan governance in Pakistani and Western media. Secondly, it analyzes discursive strategies used to represent legitimacy and illegitimacy. Thirdly, the study examines how Pakistani and Western media frame security, diplomacy and political stability. The findings reveal the divergence as Western newspapers represent Afghan governance as illegitimate and oppressive through moralizing

language, while Pakistani newspapers construct it as legitimate in term of regional stability.

5.1 Textual Analysis

At the level of text findings suggest that Pakistani and Western media show differences in terms of lexical choices, modality, and agency. The evaluative and normative vocabulary is used by Western newspapers such as, “restrictions”, “human rights violations”, “authoritarian rule”, and “extremism”. Western newspapers construct Afghan Governance as oppressive and incompatible with democratic norms through these lexical choices. In transitivity structure, The Taliban are often portrayed as active agents for instance in clauses where they “impose bans, restrict rights and freedom or consolidate power”. These patterns reinforce negative evaluation of Afghan governance and assign responsibility to governance. In comparison, Pakistani newspapers represent Afghan governance by using more neutral and policy-oriented vocabulary for instance “regional stability, engagement, security cooperation, and bilateral relations”. In a broader regional context, Afghan governance is represented as political actors. Agency is frequently distributed and use of modal verbs indicate careful interpretation and policy discussion. The linguistic pattern in Pakistani newspapers represents Afghan governance as complex instead of illegitimate. Through textual analysis, it is demonstrated that linguistically Afghan governance is constructed through evaluative and moralizing language in Western newspapers while Pakistani newspapers focus on regional dynamics by using diplomatic and analytical language.

5.2 Discursive Level

Pakistani and Western newspapers used different discursive strategies for the construction of legitimacy and illegitimacy of Afghan governance. Nominalization and prediction strategies are used by western newspapers and label Afghan governance with terms such as “hardline”, militant, or unrecognized. These form of labels indicate the delegitimization of Afghan governance by linking it with extremism and

exclusion. In addition to it, references to international organizations, human rights groups, and global institutions, are authorization strategies which are used by Western media discourse. Western newspapers reinforce the claims about illegitimacy and lack of recognition through enlisting these authoritative voices. Moral evaluation in Western discourse is also an important strategy. Based on international norms the Western newspapers pay attention to women's rights, education restrictions and democratic shortcomings which indicates legitimacy. Intertextual references to global conventions and international responses underpins the narrative which raises questions about government's legitimacy. In contrast, pragmatic legitimation strategies are used by Pakistani newspapers. In order to maintain regional stability and to control security threats, Afghan governance is constructed as legitimate in functional terms. Rather than global institutions, validation is usually drawn from diplomatic circles, government officials, and regional experts. There is also evidence of rationalization strategies, where for the sake of border management, trade, and counterterrorism engagement with Afghan governance is justified. The study highlights that illegitimacy of Afghan governance is constructed through moral evaluation and international norms in Western newspapers, Pakistani newspapers on the other hand construct legitimacy based on pragmatic and functional considerations.

5.3 Social level

The differences between Pakistani and Western newspapers are also highlighted by framing of security, diplomacy, and political stability. In Western newspapers, security is often portrayed using the lens of global threats such as terrorism, regional instability and humanitarian crisis. Afghan governance is represented as a source of instability which can affect international security. This narrative aligns with broader geopolitical concerns and considers Western actors as stakeholders in maintaining the global stability. Western discourse often represent diplomacy as conditional engagement. In Western newspapers article recognition debates, sanctions, and

international pressure are common themes. Political stability in Western discourse is associated with inclusivity, governance reforms, and democratic norms which implies that legitimacy is based on international standards. Pakistani newspapers in comparison to Western newspaper portray security in regional terms, focusing on cross-border militancy, border management, and bilateral cooperation. In Pakistani newspapers Afghan governance is constructed as key actor that can affect the Pakistan's internal security. Diplomacy is constructed as ongoing interaction, dialogue and negotiations between neighboring countries. In Pakistani media discourse, instead of associating political stability to democratic reconstruction, it is linked to economic cooperation, refugee management, and regional peace. The overall analysis of this study highlights that Afghan governance in Pakistani and Western newspapers is constructed differently by using different discursive strategies. In the representation of Afghan Governance, Pakistani and Western media focus on different issues. Western newspapers pay attention to illegitimacy, human rights concerns and global security risks while Pakistani newspapers focus on cooperation and regional stability.

6. Conclusion

This study uses a Critical Discourse Analysis Framework developed by Norman Fairclough to analyze how Afghan governance is represented in Pakistani and Western media. This study compares articles from Dawn and The News (Pakistani) with The New York Times and The Guardian (Western) to address three research questions, firstly the linguistic representation, secondly discursive strategies of legitimacy and thirdly, framing of security, diplomacy and political stability. The findings reveals that representation of Afghan governance is not neutral, rather it is shaped by distinct ideological and geopolitical contexts. Western newspapers use evaluative and nominative language to construct Afghan governance by paying attention to human rights concerns, democratic issues and global security risks. The strategies such as moral

evaluation and authorization through international institutions Construct Afghan governance illegitimate and incompatible with international standards. On the other hand, Pakistani newspapers use a pragmatic and regional based approach for representation. Afghan governance is represented in terms of complex regional dynamics, such as security and diplomacy. The legitimacy of governance is judged by its effectiveness in maintaining stability rather than global norms. This results in a more balanced representation that focuses on practical outcomes instead of moral evaluation. Overall, this study highlights how perception about governance in conflicted regions is influenced by international media. It analyzes influential role discourse in shaping public perception of legitimacy. This study also illustrates that Critical Discourse Analysis a relevant methodological tool used for revealing the underlying power relations and ideological positions in media texts.

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