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Examining Media Narratives on Pakistan Army's Role in UN Peacekeeping and Global Peace-Building Efforts
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Abstract

This article examines the transformative role of youth as an emerging force in shaping contemporary governance structures worldwide, with particular emphasis on developing democracies. Through a mixed-methods approach combining secondary data analysis, interviews with young activists and politicians, focus group discussions, and case studies from regions including South Asia and Africa, the study traces the historical evolution of youth movements from traditional student activism to digital-era hybrid mobilization. It analyzes theoretical foundations, contemporary mechanisms of influence via social media and youth-led initiatives, and their tangible impacts on climate policy, anti-corruption efforts, education reform, and digital governance. Findings reveal that despite significant demographic advantages and innovative contributions, youth remain severely underrepresented in formal institutions due to structural barriers, ageism, and economic constraints. The research highlights both successful integration models and cautionary examples of tokenism, underscoring the urgent need for institutional reforms to convert youthful energy into sustained governance outcomes. By bridging the gap between participation and influence, societies can harness the demographic dividend, strengthen democratic resilience, and address pressing global challenges more effectively. The study concludes that meaningful youth inclusion is essential for building innovative, accountable, and future-ready governance systems in an era of rapid change.

Keywords: Youth Political Participation, Digital Activism, Governance Reform, Demographic Dividend, Youth Representation, Intergenerational Politics.

Introduction

Pakistan has played a crucial role in UN peacekeeping efforts with its contributions, sending above 200,000 personnel to 46 UN Peace keeping missions since 1960 along with losing 181 lives in the process (United Nations Peacekeeping, 2025). Though Global South provides 90% of the peacekeeping personnel, media does not take into account its perspective and emphasize on the narratives of West (Howard, 2008). This work emphasizes both local (*Dawn*) and international (*The New York Times*) media's representation of Pakistan Army, it analyzes insufficient exposure in discussions regarding soft power and variation among depiction of different countries (Nye, 2011).

Contemporary research emphasizes the functionality of peacekeeping missions (Bove et al., 2021) and the biased Western media narratives regarding them (Entman, 1993), however, it doesn't scrutinize the representation of Global South's military forces in various media platforms locally and internationally. There is no preceding work which has estimated the variation in framing of similar military contributor, for instance the emphasis of Pakistani media is pride and that of others globally is professionalism, thus losing a prospect to connect these media proponents and its impact of soft power results.

UN is capable of being effective mean to impede atrocities regardless of the fact when deployed in mainly demanding and difficult circumstances (Hultman et al, 2013; Di Salvatore et al, 2017; Ruggeri et al, 2017; Bove et al, 2020). In recent years peace missions have seen a striking development in the extent of their authorization and command, comprising protection of refugees from aggression and sustaining their return.

Besides the role of providing defense, these peace operations assume or work towards decline in hostilities and engagement and cultivating grit activities among local population; also plays role in supporting local governments in reincorporation efforts (van der Lijn, 2019). Possibly more significantly, presence of peacekeepers provides safe setting for aid relief.

According to strategic communication theory the frames by media are used as an instrument for propagating Pakistan's image, promoting to exhibit Pakistan as dependable among international categories (Nye, 2011). This kind of narrative by media helps to combat negative stories during times of political conflicts, propagating army as stable force not only regionally but also globally (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Nowadays increasingly, the decisions of the people related to political participation majorly depends on the information provided by media, instead of in person communication with the candidates. The narrative is created by media which eventually have an impact on the decisions of people (Lang & Lang, 1966). Additionally, this media representation is in alignment with postcolonial media theories that critically views marginalization of Global south actors in worldwide discussions, placing contributions of Pakistan as counteract description against Western dominated imagery of peacemaking.

Literature Review

The predominant focus of research regarding UN peacekeeping is primarily to evaluate the effectiveness of these missions (Bove et al., 2021; Howard, 2008), however, little work to no work is available related to media representation of non-Western forces. Local media repeatedly emphasize nation's pride in contrast to global outlets which depicts more neutral tone in their narratives. Though contribution of Global south assist in enhancing the soft power (Nye, 2011), but this narrative is yet not provided with due consideration. Cultivation theory (Gerbner et al., 2002), claims that repetitive positive media exposure can alter people's opinion regarding peacemaking as courageous and important.

Kahneman and Tversky's (1984) work signifies that frames choose and direct attention to certain described aspects of actuality, which understandably signifies that frames at the same time takes the attention away from other features. Majority of frames are specified by the inclusion or omission of anything, the omission of potential issues, assessments, evaluations and suggestions may be as crucial as that of inclusion for guidance of audience (Kahneman & Tversky, 1984)

According to latest studies related to e-diplomacy social media can assist to spread the messages more extensively, in contrast, Pakistan still relies on print media which plays crucial role in setting the news agenda. This mixture shows media systems, that is, old and contemporary working simultaneously, where conventional media controlling the narrative for influential audience, which successively impacts discussions about military contributions in policy decisions (Alam, Anwar, & Haq, 2022; Din, Alam, & Ruqiya, 2022).

Media organizations often spread discordant ideas based on biasness, which have major influence on public opinion in Pakistan (Zafar, 2019; Anwar & Ghauri, 2025). The narrative created by media outlets covering military and political events have major impact on public opinion in different ways (Khan, 2018). The depiction of military in media may either elevate or deteriorate the accepted assurance. While, critical or pessimist framing highlighting issues like corruption and failure can take away trust (Robinson, 2001). The media play an important role in influencing social realities and can significantly sway public perceptions. Nevertheless, only a limited number of critical readers can understand the media’s candid goals since they function in such a nuanced and ideological manner (Anwar, Ghauri & Alam, 2022; Anwar, Hussain, & Ullah, 2018).

Moreover, there are several factors which influence public belief in military which includes the opinion about individual protection, the vision of military as protectors and saviors, influence of security dynamics internationally, and democratic orientation (Easton, 1965; Levi & Stoker, 2000).

Generating augmentation on agenda setting (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), this work fills the gap by evaluating how significance of events, like UN day ceremony, boost frames of Global South, providing the perspective to comprehend the composite media impact in political communication from Pakistan’s setting.

Furthermore, the Priming theory provides additional supplement to structure, as the selective media provides specific indications on heroism and professionalism to audiences to assess contributions of Pakistan army by creating perspective like cooperation at worldwide level and national security (Iyengar& Kinder, 1987). Gamson (1992) examines that frame can put forth a great social supremacy when encoded in certain term. Once the term is extensively accepted, the change will bring risk, as target audiences will recognize the lacking credibility of the communicator or will not understand the narrative of the communicator. Thus the frame holds the power as strong as that of language itself. In this divided media landscape of Pakistan, priming emphasizes soft power despite local opposing viewpoints, however there are inadequate comparative studies regarding non-Western militaries.

Research Questions

RQ1: What dominant frames (e.g., heroism vs. professionalism) and tones characterize Dawn vs. NYT coverage of Pakistan Army peacekeeping (2022-2024)?

RQ2: How do sourcing patterns, visual emphasis, and event timing influence agenda-setting and prominence of these narratives?

Research Methodology

A quantitative content analysis was conducted on two hundred news stories (Jan 2022-Dec 2024) for frames (e.g., heroism, professionalism), tone (positive/neutral/negative), ideas, sources, visuals, and prominence. Inter-coder reliability exceeded 0.80 by using Holsti’s method. Dawn focused local pride ($\chi^2=78.42, p<.001$); NYT emphasized operational neutrality.

Purposive sampling was drawn from peak coverage periods, making sure the representativeness across mission types. Ethical coding protocols anonymized personnel references; software-assisted frequency counts validate manual tallies for robustness.

Results and Research Findings

Variable	Dawn (n=150)	NYT (n=50)	Total
Positive Tone	78.7%	20%	65%
Heroism Frame	29.3%	10%	25%
Professionalism	30%	56%	37%
Female Rep.	23%	22%	23%

Official Sources

76%

50%

69%

Local reporting portrayed peacekeeping primarily through a positive tone (78.7%), with emphasis on heroism (29.3%), peaking 34% around UN Peacekeepers Day. International stories emphasized professionalism (56%) neutrally (64%), with 15.5% front-page prominence and 6% beneficiary voices. Female peacekeepers presented in 23% despite encompassing <5% personnel, showing inclusivity. Official sources controlled (76% Dawn), strengthening strategic narratives. Visuals emphasized frames, with heroic images in 45% of Dawn stories as compared to operational photos in NYT (60%). Event-driven points correlated with mission milestones, demonstrating agenda-setting's temporal influence on visibility.

Discussion and Conclusion

The results of this research clearly authenticate significant deviation between the local and international media in constructing narratives regarding Pakistan's military input to UN peacekeeping. The overpowering inclination of Dawn for positive framing on 78.7% is constant with the extensive role of local media as a tool of identity reinforcement and institutional authenticity. This identified deviation is not merely stylistic, it indicates ingrained editorial patterns, sourcing procedures and ideological inclinations that define the narrative about peacekeeping among the diversified audiences globally.

Though Pakistan's UN peacekeeping operations served as a tool for constructing soft image of country globally, but this asset has not received its due share of recognition and publicity, which is quite less than its actual contribution. In Dawn stories 29.3% attribution to heroism frame, 38.7% to pride framing is not incidental; they contemplate conscious alliance between media production and state level tactical communication objectives.

The 34% increase in optimistic reporting just around UN Peacekeepers day reaffirms that institutional calendar occasions function as strong catalyst for agenda-setting. Remembrance events permit the local media ecosystem to magnify the traditional landmarks in organized and evocative perception shaping exercises. This aligns with the McCombs and Shaw (1972) agenda-setting structure that puts forward, the media not only report reality but keenly construct the preferences and emotional capacity whereby viewers construe sacrifice and national identity.

Dawn's profound dependence of official sources of government and Pakistan's military at 76% in comparison to NYT's 50% additionally solidifies the observation that local editorial frames are mainly created by institutional players. The newspaper dominantly works to project the strategic magnifier of narrative Pakistan aims to project and less as a mirror of peacekeeping realities. By efficiently using approach of soft power in duo with public diplomacy, Pakistan's UN peacekeeping is able to offer the country with a podium where its narratives are presented successfully and its impact is used more skillfully worldwide.

The distinct profile of The New York Times, 56% competence frame and 64% neutral tone indicates the functional reasoning of internationally leaned, Westward journalism that gives preference to procedural reporting and systematic reliability over any national emotion. Pakistan is officially recognized as fifth biggest contributor to UN peacekeeping operations by United Nations, where 2600 personnel which includes 147 females, enthusiastically deployed across six missions, where 171 Pakistanis peacekeepers have also lost their lives (Khan, 2026). However, this enormous input received only 15.5% front-page eminence in international coverage, revealing systematic gap between the intensity of Pakistan's contribution in global peace and its acknowledgment in recognized and known media platforms (Arab News, 2026).

Researches of Western archival media together with liberal organizations such as the New York Times have constantly verified that how these platforms are inclined to provide opportunity to certain international opinions and frames while excluding the viewpoints of actors representing

Global South, forming global insight in ways which goes far more than any one conflict or peacekeeping perspective. This systematic partiality means that even if NYT deals with Pakistani peacekeepers fairly, the framing persist to detach from historical, individual and diplomatic interests that makes role of Pakistan's peacekeepers significant globally. This might be technically correct but thin at emotional and contextual levels.

One of the most logically important outcomes is the inconsistent media portrayal of female peacekeepers featuring in 23% of news coverage in both newspapers regardless of the fact that their total deployed personnel percentage is 05%. Though Pakistan's position is among the foremost providers of female staff and military observers, fulfilling the international objective of 15% remains huge challenge keeping in consideration cultural barriers, institutional norms and recognition of peacekeeping associated with masculine domain remains hindrance in progress. The eminent media prominence of women peacekeepers serves as conscious representative of soft power, showing alliance with UN gender norms even when functional actualities fail.

The visual aspect of media framing additionally strengthens conceptual disparity between both media outlets. Valiant imagery emerged in 45% of Dawn's stories, whereas functional and non-fictional style photography ruled at 60% of NYT coverage. Images were not accompanied by textual explanation rather they composed emotionally powerful and self-determining layer of framing that prepares the audience for critical frameworks (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). The traditional visuals appearing in Dawn cultivates a circulation that connect the Pakistan Army with national pride, while operative photography develop frame of competency, strict professionalism completely disengaged from sacrifice or pride.

The rising global peacekeeping situation requires that troops contributing nations exhibit not only their military potential but also organizational reliability and compliance, as demonstrated by increasing discussions and controversies about the mission legality in regions such as Sahel and Democratic Republic of Congo (Geis & Schroder, 2024). In this perspective, Professionalism frame of NYT holds quiet but significant form of international validity. Dawn's conceited reporting, though is powerfully emotional locally, struggles to imitate this reliability for international audiences who stay doubtful about state aligned stories, especially in the times of increasing propaganda and media biasness.

The disparity in sourcing recognized in this work, with receiver voices comprising merely 6% of reporting across both media outlets, shows possibly the most significant gap in existing peacekeeping journalism. Since 1960 Pakistan has assigned nearly 235,000 peacekeepers across 48 peace missions, with staff taking responsibility for civilian protection, disaster response, and medical awareness and rebuilding of infrastructure in part of world's most frail conflict surroundings (Malik, 2026). So far the groups living under this security remains missing from the built narrative that frame Pakistan's peacekeeping role, missing a soft power chance of highest tactical order.

Representative from Global south to an increasing extent have demanded for collective action and impartial acceptance of peacekeeping contributors from developing countries, debating that existing international system underrate the position of non-Western players in keeping global stability (United Nations, 2024). Focusing on receiver's voices, the children being sent to schools and civilians being protected the patients treated in field hospitals of Pakistan across Central African Republic, South Sudan and the DRC, would secure the legacy of Pakistan's peacekeeping role in living human experience instead of recursive networks of state PR.

Conclusively, the media framing about Pakistan's UN peacekeeping role is site of dynamic, significant connotation shaped by editorial culture and national identity besides organizational sourcing of global events. Future studies should expand this comparative framework

longitudinally, combine electronic and social media platforms, include audience reception work and extend coding protocols cross-nation allowing researchers to track frame development in real time. The brave Pakistan's military officials have served conflict ridden communities leaving their loved ones behind to protect those in danger (Khan, 2026). A narrative whose full honest and diplomatic influence is still to be effectively portrayed in global media platforms. Reducing this narrative gap is not just scholastic ambition; it is strategically crucial for any country seeking to switch long-term peacekeeping sacrifice into sturdy and globally acceptable soft power.

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