

Reporting Taliban Conflict: Analysis of Pakistani Journalists' Attitude Towards National Security

Sidra Agha and Shabir Hussain *

A*bstract:* This study is mainly designed to explore the attitude-change among journalists towards national security after being embedded with armed forces. While conducting interviews of journalists, researchers found that embedding with military troops was an effective tool to report on Taliban conflict, which was otherwise inaccessible to media people. The Pakistani reporters, in this regard, are highly sensitive about national security and would not allow their profession tinkering with it. They believed that as Pakistan was fighting this war for maintaining its territorial sovereignty, they needed to be patriotic, nationalist and work side by side with armed forces. Media should be free and realistic, but in state of war, media should cooperate in terms of national security cause. They considered Taliban as enemy of the State, who challenged the national sovereignty of the country, whereas, they believed in glorifying the security forces of the country, specifically in war against terror.

Keywords: Embedded Journalism, National Security, Patriotism, Conflict, Journalistic Responsibility.

Introduction

National security is a complex term that not only involves military concerns, but also other aspects of political, socio-economic, environmental and human rights. The UN considers national security as a condition that facilitates states with no danger of military attack, political pressure or economic tension. Walter Lippmann (1943) defines national security an environment in which a state does not need to sacrifice its values to avoid or to confront any critical situation.¹ Similarly, Arnold Wolfers (1960) defines national security in the simplest perspective of 'absence of threats and fears that a country feels about sacrificing its values'. National security is not only about military concerns, but it is a strong combination of economic and environmental security.² However, Charles Maier (1990) defines national security through the perspective of national power, explaining it in the context of a power to control those national and international conditions that the public opinion of a given society considers indispensable to experience its own self-determination or sovereignty, prosperity and safety.³

Pakistan is one of those countries that have been going through external and internal crises, where the most essential concern is national security. As Pakistan has

* Sidra Agha is an Independent Media Researcher and Dr. Shabir Hussain is an Assistant Professor at Department of Media and Communication Studies, International Islamic University, Islamabad.

been fighting a war against terrorism, the growing terrorist attacks have raised serious questions about the security structure of the State. According to Ahmad Faruqi (2003), national security is a broader term than defence.⁴ National security has much to do with the socio-economic activities of the State. Along with the military, several different organizations especially media, need to join hands in support of national security. "Media consider itself as a genuine national institution and have to prove its credentials, when security of the state is in question."⁵ The military-media relationship has been subsisting since centuries, when it comes to war reporting. Sometimes, it is on fine grounds, and at times, it is hate and love relationship. Warfare is a critical situation that makes both military and media dependent on each other in order to spread war words and to earn support of the general public. Thus, embedded journalism was practiced officially during war in Iraq (2003). It provided new perspectives to war reporting with different shades.

In Pakistan, the idea of embedded journalism is still vague, as very less journalists are allowed to enter the battlefield. Through, this study, the effectiveness of embedded journalism, is highlighted along with the role embedded journalism can play in ongoing war on terror with its contribution towards national security paradigm. The key objective of this study is to identify the factors that influence journalists' attitudes towards national security after being embedded, and to look for ways and means to ensure constructive reporting of the Taliban conflict. This would help understand the various dimensions of embedded journalism and military strategy during an armed conflict. The research also helps to understand the realities of war and its media coverage accordingly. While, understanding the attitude of journalists being embedded with the military troops, the military public relations department may refine their policies for media to cover future conflicts, if any, keeping the importance of national security in mind.

Embedded Journalism

It is widely accepted that embedding process has been highly lauded by both journalists as well as media critics, and also the press and government officials have shown interest in employing the process in future conflicts.⁶ However, media embedment with military troops laid emphasis on the news content.⁷ The available literature on the subject is full of debates related to embedded policies vs. unilateral practices. A number of studies found that there were noticeable differences between both embedded and non-embedded reporting.⁸ For example, one study is showing the weak side of Iraqi forces and other is highlighting the resentment of Iraqi civilians towards the Allied Forces. These studies discussed that embedded reporters were reporting from the actual battlefield, whereas, unilateral journalists were highly inspired by newsroom culture. Furthermore, the main theme of attention that

compelled critics to accuse embedding system was one-coverage that relates to the threat caused to journalistic objectivity.⁹

These studies also suggested that embedded reporters produced different stories than non-embedded reporters.¹⁰ With the help of embedded system, American public could view a different face of warfare. Being embedded with military troops, embedded reporters collected raw information from which they made their stories. This act of attachment with troops laid emphasis on the news content. However, it was also found that embeds did not mean in bed. The objectivity of embedded reports was examined and it was found that journalists took extra pain to be objective in their reporting. Whereas, it was also showed that critics' accusations of Soda Straw reporting about embedded system, were justified as they had to see events with a microscope, not binoculars. Non-embedded journalists had enough time to put the different pieces of embedded reporting together, analyse them and complete their stories in detail by adding more information available from other sources.

Amy LeBlanc (2013) suggested that besides playing the role of watchdog for actions of coalition and anti-occupation forces, embedded reporting offered a unique viewpoint on warfare that a unilateral reporter could never provide.¹¹ Both embedded and unilateral coverage provided different, but mutually favourable perspectives on human rights issues, such as civilian casualties in the battlefield. Shahira Fahmy and Thomas J. Johnson (2005) found embedded reporting a bit narrow, but overall embedded journalists showed a positive attitude towards their work.¹² Rather making guesses and assumptions, embedded reporting opened venues for real-time experience. It is not about how journalists report events without witnessing what actually happened, it is about reporting what is seen with open eyes. Along with the study of the embeds, attitude of the soldiers was also probed in, because it is of greater significance to know how soldiers view media regarding reporting of their battlefield stories, which is the core to better military and media relationship.¹³

Alicia C. Shepard (2004) laid emphasis on different conferences about military-media relations during Iraq war and also sought differences in their relationship along with the impact these differences had on reporting the general public.¹⁴ She appraised the success of media from the angle of American public mindset. It improved the self-esteem within the US military. She suggested that embedded system is overstressed and it is not the only way to cover future conflicts. Facilitating unilateral reporters could be a better option too. Yet, changes are necessary for better coverage in the future.

In order to judge war reporting, there are always three perspectives, i.e., journalists, combatants and public opinion. In any issue of the State, public opinion is deemed prudent, because they are the actual critic to the truth and objectivity. Studies and researches done to examine the impact of embedded journalism in shaping public opinion, revealed that public opinion shifted dramatically in favor of US military after embedded reporters started sending in the stories and bringing live coverage of the war from the actual battlefield. Thus, the concept of embedding was welcomed by both military and media. Many researchers probed in the framing of war through the lens of both embedded and unilateral journalists.¹⁵ If embedded reporting was valued, the need of unilateral coverage was also taken into consideration. Embedded system has changed the way media eye up the war and same is the case with military response to media.¹⁶ Studies also depicted that the military-media relationship was the centrepiece to the martial conflicts.¹⁷

This study is designed to analyse journalists' opinion towards national security before and after going to the conflict zone being embedded. The study also looks into the limitations for journalists, while reporting on Taliban conflict. Also, it probes how journalists see the strategy of embedded journalism to report on Taliban conflict. For this purpose, as many as 20 journalists were interviewed for this study, who were embedded with the military.¹⁸ The researchers travelled to their offices and conducted interviews in the reporters' offices. Written notes and audio recordings were taken to collect data for the study wherein thematic analysis had been utilized to analyse the collected data. In Pakistan, the term embedded journalism is not very well received and so it was a bit difficult to persuade them for interviews. However, once the interviews started, they fully cooperated and addressed all the questions. Two of them seemed a bit hesitant to openly talk about their reporting or to appraise military policy on embedded journalism. Also, there were few limitations of the study. Since a limited number of journalists were embedded with the military to cover Taliban conflict, therefore, partial data was acquired. Second limitation was the risk journalists felt to talk about embedment owing to the sensitive nature of the Taliban conflict. It required enough efforts to convince few journalists to be a part of the research.

Journalists' Attitude towards National Security

Almost all journalists found change in their attitude towards national security being embedded, because being on ground, journalist pinpoints different aspects that may impact his vision, work and attitude towards national security. When journalists witness their military fighting against enemies, they stand by them through their thoughts, concerns and writings. It makes them realize that how difficult is the challenge and what actual sacrifice is given by the military, described by a foreign

media correspondent Fakhar-ur-Rahman during his personal interview. During research, it was identified that being embedded journalists got to learn that military and political leadership have taken this issue on serious grounds, while making practical measures to eradicate this menace. As the government has clearly defined the national security policy, being a journalist, it is necessary to report ground realities, despite reporting something that might be under pressure by militants. Additionally, another factor for this change in attitude is several workshops organized by military. For example, National Media Workshop and National Security Workshop were conducted by military that made journalists realize different frontline issues and difficulties military and the State have been facing to secure Pakistan.

Consequently, those media persons, who do not know these realities, they could not understand the complexities of conflicts, instead they criticize. Laeeq-ur-Rahman, a senior correspondent, explained that after visiting different affected areas and meeting with the locals he got the real picture about the atrocities and religion based black mailing of TTP. Journalists believed that the element of patriotism is always dominant over them, where national security is of prime concern. Another media executive, Gauhar Zahid Malik stated that “National territorial and ideological security is uncompromising”. Largely, every media practitioner believed, when a journalist is embedded and he witnesses things on ground, it becomes easier for him to assess things. It ultimately impacts journalists’ thinking, understanding and reporting.

Question of Impartiality

Since the embedment of US media in Iraq war, the partiality in reporting has evoked several scholars to debate over the term “media is in bed with the military”.¹⁹ The same concern is questioned in this research, while considering Taliban reporting to the fore. Being in bed with the military is almost negated by media practitioners that relates to their impartiality to report conflicts, but the negation carries different reasons. The military-media interpretation is believed wrong, because previously media used to report everything (i.e. events were covered in such a way that used to go against public interest for causing terror in public mindset) and nothing (i.e. media had no information on military sacrifices so they used to give minimal coverage to military while naming militants Jihadist). Also, foreign outlets had an open access to the restricted places, from where they used to find surprising reports that were a question to the national interest of the country. Now, media is under check and is brought into a straight line. There are things media may observe, but must not report them, because reporting of such events is not in the interest of country. Whereas, there is nothing wrong, if media is in bed with the military,

because securing the country should be prioritized. Sincerity with national security is the supreme concern, therefore, media relation with military is quite understandable.

There are several incidents, when media has also reported against military or blamed security forces, for instance during Swat operation military was being blamed for killing their own Muslim brothers. There are several incidents when journalists interviewed Taliban that provided them a free platform to communicate their words in public. Asim Rana, a senior journalist, stated that they are not in bed with the Indian military. In Pakistan, there is very weak regulatory supervision of the State over media and there are many things that cannot be controlled, if media reports them. At times, media attacks the government and the State. Therefore, it depends how things are moving on. Once a journalist is assured that military is fighting against terrorists then he should support national cause. In this regard, a journalist, Khalid Jameel, during his interview, clearly stated that “it is no more tribal concern, but Pakistan’s”. Journalists assented that professional journalism is justified even being with the military, because journalists can see what is actually happening.

Journalists’ Attitude towards Taliban

Journalists believed that militants are enemies of the country, but this perspective never impacted them. It is a conflict that must be reported accordingly. There should be in-depth information to analyse things and report them owing to their complex nature. Journalists affirmed that as militants are anti-Pakistan, therefore, there is no if and but to report against them. Previously, media used to portray militants’ perspective, but after their terrorist activities, things changed. Their violence has confirmed them as enemies of Pakistan. In this regard, a defence reporter, Muhammad Asghar stated that, “we cannot correct their perspective, we cannot glorify them”. Journalists reasoned that media persons can report impartially, no matter, if they have a firm belief that militants are terrorists, because media men have a clear direction of factual information. Also, after many incidents, media got to single out things in which military and State perspective started dominating.

Journalists suggested that without knowing actual facts and figures, they must not make conclusion. They should verify things instead of fabricating stories. It is obligatory to use logic, detect both sides and report objectively. Since, it was believed by all media persons that a journalist is a movement; a movement for the righteousness and justice. It is always a part of debate whether to give media access to such people that may endanger civilians. Ahmed Qureshi, a media practitioner stressed that “there comes a time, when survival of the state and its citizens become

important than basic rights”. However, it was also reasoned that a journalist can never be neutral; patriotism and nationalism is there. Javed Bhatti, a senior journalist, categorized it as, “idealism does not work out”. Journalists emphasized that an article analysis is different than news reporting, where one cannot put his personal views. A journalist should view national security with a broader vision despite one subject of militants. Moreover, it is a job of a journalist to dig out facts behind militants’ anti-national cause. Equally, media needs to work professionally. Ahmed Mansoor, a defence reporter explained it as, “in the name of free journalism, we play on the expense of our own State”.

Journalists Attitude towards Military

Journalists stressed that they follow the ethics and norms of reporting. They report according to the nature of incident along with its impact and end result. Since, all journalists largely believed that journalism is all about what is right; there is no question of taking a side of a terrorist. On the other hand, no journalist can report pro-militant owing to their policy. Besides, anti-Taliban or pro-military reporting is based on journalists’ channel policy and somehow on their own frame of mind. Journalists accentuated that a reporter should be a thorough professional. He should not propagate terrorists’ words in media as that version will go into the side of extremism and may spread the same thing in the society.²⁰ However, Ahmed Qureshi explained that there is no free and fair journalism, because being a human being one can never be neutral and in electronic media, opinionated journalism makes more business than any boring and neutral journalism. He further detailed that, “I think it is a very beautiful, wonderful abstract, idealistic thing, we can aspire to which as a media, but it does not exist”.

Other Alternatives to Embedment

In a reply to other alternatives to report on Taliban activities apart from embedding, journalists suggested several ways to learn the environment of militancy as well as its background. Such as, social media and radio should be used to make people aware of militancy. Public can be informed in advance than anything coming out as a surprise. “That is why, you see, people coming out on the roads in immediate reactions, burning cars and everything back and forth”, stated by a foreign media correspondent, Hamza Ameer. Anticipatory measures may help a lot to ensure national security. Those terrorists, who are captured, should be investigated in terms of their psyche and the reasons behind their terrorism, whether it is poverty, social injustice, exploiting Islam and whatsoever it is; security forces and investigation departments should make reports on such things that should be shared with media as well as lawmakers and policymakers.

Moreover, journalists stressed that it should be a part of National Action Plan²¹ by all means. There are law and order issues in the country that need political engagement to help resolve these. A committee comprising government and military officials should be constituted to brief media on different security related issues. Film and cinema should also be utilized to promote military's narrative. There are many forms of embedding for which better media management is required. But, one of the journalists considered that embedding happens in much smarter, much sharper way; we unfortunately in Pakistan are not good at it. Also, a cultural reporter and an economic affairs reporter may portray many things relating to terrorism. Cultural damage of Pakistan can be reported as a result of terrorism. In a question to key limitations for journalists covering Taliban conflict, the researchers explored following factors: Issues faced by journalists being embedded with military, information through embedding, military-media relationship, and major communication issue between the Inter Services Public Relations(ISPR) and media persons.

Issues faced by Journalists being Embedded with Military

In every conflict reporting, a journalist has to face some issues, but the nature of issues depends upon the conflict scenario. However, the researchers found that security is the main concern for journalists. They go in a military helicopter or in a military vehicle, and they feel equally vulnerable to be attacked by the enemy. Journalists are also threatened by militants for not covering their viewpoint. Along with security concerns, restriction to free reporting and limited access to conflict areas are also identified. Journalists highlighted that access to affected areas, limited freedom to reporting, dependency on military, and short time to collect information, are the main concerns for them. Since, day long visit is not enough for a journalist. Also, military people do not understand their requirements, because they do not have media exposure. Some journalists want to cover the other side of the story too, but if they do so they are claimed at wrong side. Also, journalists underlined that embedded journalists are taken as military agent. Consequently, people do not trust them. A senior journalist accentuated that if they go in the conflict zone with the security forces, the same people of Pakistan, they are not ready to believe them.

Information through Embedding

In this research, three main elements of information were questioned as if journalists obtain correct, extensive and timely news through embedding. Majority of the media persons stated they do not get timely information owing to the level of framework and lack of coordination. Information is released through a process that takes time. It is not released immediately and sometimes it is not extensive. It lacks

details. However, it is always factual. Besides, it depends upon the mental level of journalists that how they understand things. While, embedding system educates a journalist; without embedding, a journalist cannot report to that level of authenticity. Nothing is hidden in this era, so journalists get foremost information through embedment. It is one of the tools that media use to reveal the reality, because once a journalist is embedded, he gets to find different stories of the war zone that how soldiers are fighting there, under what conditions, what are the difficulties they face, what are the threats and so on. If embedded journalism is not implemented then people will not be getting this kind of information in national media as such.

Military-Media Relationship

The military-media relationship is not considered as friendly, but of interdependent. Journalists drew attention for better military-media relation. Media is considered as the fourth pillar of a state; therefore, they should be welcomed despite directing them. Media should go out in the field and report situations responsibly that needs active coordination based on friendly grounds. There is lack of trust on both sides. Once, trust deficit is decreased, things get better. Open communication helps to educate people in a better way that must be understood especially in terms of militants' conflict. Media persons laid emphasis on the responsibility of the military to guide journalists, to train them about different terms and aspects of military and conflicts. There is no education about the paradigm shifts and ideological changes in media. Journalists have access issues and military does not rely on journalists. Journalists concurred that media persons should report things responsibly in this regard. Everything should not be reported.

Military-media relation is very limited. Journalists do not have enough access to military department, for instance, the way they can easily access other departments. Additionally, military is about secrecy, whereas, media is about openness. They both need to understand each other's nature of job. Journalists should understand and respect military, that is in the state of war. Sensitive information is not only accessible to own people, but, it can also available to the enemy. Putting critical questions to military is a journalistic methodology, but putting allegations on military, while working on some agenda is something dangerous. Generally, the relationship between both institutions should be improved and liaison with defence journalists should be increased. Journalists suggested that media persons should be educated on different matters of warfare. There should be detailed briefing on issues, whereas, media should not show a speculative attitude in return. Journalists should change their viewpoint about military. There should be a balance between both sides. Journalists should be

responsible towards their work that will not harm national cause. While, military should tolerate media criticism, if it happens constructively.

Major Communication Issues between the ISPR and Journalists

Lack of communication and limited information provided by army are the major issues between military and media. Since, military personnel keep rotating due to the nature of their job, therefore, communication does not remain consistent between them. Also, human communication has been decreased owing to the usage of other communication ways, such as, Twitter and email that does not help in understanding the conflict in its true perspective. At least, once or twice in a month there should be an interaction, especially when a war against terror is going on. Journalists also pointed out the non-availability of footage, another major drawback that creates problems for broadcast media. Journalists' queries should be addressed in time, whereas, journalists should understand why they are given limited access. Previously, journalism was usually based on principles, but now it is more about commercialism. To be in media, a journalist has to compromise one way or the other. However, overall communication has been improved somehow. Military tries to respond and facilitate journalists as much as they can.

Embedded journalism in Pakistan is not fully implemented like other countries of the world. While, interviewing media persons, it was found that Print media journalists are not taken to conflict zone to that extent like broadcast media persons have been given enough opportunities. But, what has been achieved so far under the shadow of this journalism is probed within following terms: Embeds contribution to national security, embedded journalism as a good choice, framing of Taliban conflict by embedded journalists and suggestions for a successful embedding policy.

Journalists Contribution to National Security being Embedded with the Military

Journalists considered embedded journalism as an important tool to cover Taliban conflict, that significantly contributes towards national security. It may help portraying national security policies to the world, because using any medium, electronic or print, a journalist has a better understanding of the issue, and should be reported in such a way that it does not harm country's national security. Embedment's framework helps ensure national security especially for a country like Pakistan. It helps to know military point of view towards national security, and it also helps to understand different angles of things that a journalist cannot find in routine reporting.²²

Journalists believed that embedded journalism, in war against terror, is of great magnitude to counter militants' propaganda against the State. Embedding system is very much important for national security that has been compromised owing to the terrorized situations being prevailed in different areas of the country. Before being embedded, journalists never knew how militants terrorize people. Embedment helps making public opinion as it enlightens the realities of warfare, where security forces are fighting for their national cause. It helps to create a counter narrative against militants' perspective. Without embedding journalists, it would be tough to portray hidden facts to inform the public. Being embedded, a journalist brings the entire nation under one umbrella, while reflecting war through different angles; what is happening on ground with military forces. Journalists drew attention to the need of embeds in terms of national security owing to the current scenario of the country. Private broadcast media is not playing its due role, despite they work on their own agenda. In embedding system, a journalist gets training that helps the perspective of national security. Conversely, few journalists took it as a propaganda of some institutions that does not contribute to national security.

Embedded Journalism as a Good Choice

During personal communication, journalists gave enough prominence to the practice of embedment for both the government and military, because without embedment, how can a journalist report true picture of an issue. A journalist may find different aspects of an issue but can never understand the reality without embedment. Atif Khan, a defence reporter, pointed out that "without being embedded, actual details of a war cannot be found, and possibility is there that it might ignore the successes, military achieves". Journalists proposed that through embedding system, success stories of military can be published that may boost the morale of the military.²³ Journalists stressed repeatedly that embedment helps them to find answers of those questions that they have been answering by their own.²⁴ They assumed that the application of embedded journalism in war against terror is the need of time. It is a powerful tool in a war of narratives.

Framing Taliban Conflict by Journalists

Journalists identifies difference between embedded and non-embedded information. Embedded reports are more valued than non-embedded in terms of Taliban conflict, because embedment is based on facts and proofs that cannot rely on unconfirmed reports. An embedded report is credible enough to be rechecked, whereas, non-embedded information can be false or fabricated. Embedded reports are more authentic, more objective, more authoritative and closer to the facts. Journalists pointed out that Taliban reporting depends upon the level of exposure, a journalist has, because those journalists, who do not have enough exposure, their

reporting differs in many ways. Additionally, embedded reports are always detailed owing to their access to the affected area, whereas, non-embedded reports are based on theoretical, analytical and untrustworthy sources; such reports are written, while, sitting in office.²⁵ In fact, embedded information comes with a perspective, which is very important for the public to know about an issue, and also get primed about the measures taken by the State in this regard.

Besides, non-embeds highlight militants' perspective and also glorify them, which is wrong, because militants are not legitimate source. Journalists stressed that non-embeds should keep supreme national interest in view, while reporting about militants. Non-embeds should also report on those soldiers, who sacrifice their lives for the sake of nation, whereas, they only highlight terrorists.²⁶ But, in contrast, an independent journalist can report more freely and more truly. Additionally, it depends on the credibility of a reporter how he reports.

Suggestions for a Successful Embedding Policy

For a successful embedding policy, there should be a proper policy guideline. Journalists should be provided trainings to understand hostile environments of the war and learn different tactics to protect themselves. They are not even trained enough to cover a bomb blast. Journalists need to learn about government policies and military objectives regarding different issues. There should be open and better in-depth communication between military and journalists, because they have limited access to conflict zones owing to security concerns. However, they should be given access to those areas, which have been cleared by security forces and where IDPs have been returned.

Furthermore, media ethics and code of conduct should be reformed; media persons must know what is right and what is wrong. The ISPR department should give briefings and orientations to journalists and also educate them in war-reporting. Mock practices may help journalists understand war in a real-time situation. In Pakistan, embedding is not utilized to a better extent.²⁷ Journalists should be given access to conflict zone and should be allowed to report with their own angle under protected arrangements. Journalists believed that they can report fairly without compromising the national interest and nobody can question their report as a fabricated story. Additionally, government should not keep information hidden, because when things are covered, curiosity increases and journalists make assumptions that ultimately fume the speculations. It is also recommended that workshops and seminars should be conducted at national level. Sideeq Sajid, a defence journalist, emphasized that "the closer we come, the more information is exchanged, the more trust will be preserved". On the other hand, few journalists viewed embedding system as the need of the situation, it is not about making a

policy, but if any situation demands embedment then it should be implemented, otherwise it must not be imposed.

Conclusion

Embedded journalism is not employed in Pakistan up to that level as it has been adopted by other countries to cover conflicts, especially during Iraq War. In Pakistan, embedment is at an initial stage with many of the journalists not even knowing the term. This embedment seems to be a refined form of the pool system implied by Americans during Operation Grenada and Operation Panama. Embedded journalism brings a significant variation in the journalists' attitude. Before embedded journalism, journalists used to get news through their own sources, whose credibility always remained questionable. They had no idea about the battlefield, what actually happened in conflict zones, and how war terrain looked like.

Since, its large-scale implementation in Iraq War, embedded journalism is also under strict criticism. The reasons vary, such as, being embedded media is in bed with the military, or being embedded with their own security forces, journalists already have a clear definition of enemies. In this way, they report one sided stories whether in favour of security forces or against enemies. As a result, these elements hinder impartiality in reporting conflict. The military-media interpretation of being in bed is considered wrong by journalists because during conflicts, affected areas are not accessible without the help of military or on the contrary without the support of militants. If an embedded journalist is said to be in bed with security forces then non-embedded journalists can also be assumed to be in bed with militants. Thus, it is better to get embedded with military, because the information, they provide, may not breach national security. Moreover, having known their enemies does not mean journalism can be partial, standards of journalism should be followed that means news reporting is different than news analysis. A conflict should be reported as a conflict unless it goes against national security perspective. On the other hand, neutral approach seems a myth during conflicts. Working on one-sided approach affects the balance of reporting. But, then again, disseminating terrorists' words in media may go into the side of extremism that may spread the wrong picture in the society. Media should also be controlled to a degree that may not go against national cause, because, there comes a time when survival of the State and security of the citizen become essential.

Every media channel has set certain rules and regulations to follow. But, somehow, journalists' personal attitude is reflected in their reports. However, it is necessary for a journalist to be exposed to conflicts that may add to his knowledge and experiences that is ultimately mirrored in his reports. Social media, film and

cinema may also be used to make public mindset, whether in favour of military operations or against militancy. In fact, embedment has no alternative for war reporting. Regarding limitations pertaining to militancy reporting, security threats and limited access to conflict areas are the most common issues. Threats from militants are much common since media has started condemning militants and portraying military perspective. It has increased journalists' dependency on military, being on ground, for factual reporting. On the other hand, lack of coordination and direct communication between media and military, keeps a tight rein on conflict reporting. Military may understand the nature of media persons, who need facts and information in a timely manner. Besides this, journalists should also practice self-censorship. Therefore, both, military and media, need to understand that everything should not be reported as well as everything should not be censored.

Embedding system not only helps journalists to contribute to national security, but it also educates journalists to know military's perspective in this regard. Since embedment is taken as a propaganda tool working for the State institutions, therefore, it should be properly used in support of achieving national security objectives.

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- ¹² Shahira Fahmy and Thomas J. Johnson, "How we performed": Embedded journalists' attitudes and perceptions towards covering the Iraq War," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 82, no. 2 (2005): 301-317.
- ¹³ Ryan D. Mayfield, "Correspondents in Combat: The effect of Embedded Journalism on American Service Personnel" (hons. thesis, Leland Stanford Junior University, 2013), http://fsi.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/Mayfield_Ryan_Thesis_Final.pdf.
- ¹⁴ Alicia C. Shepard, *Narrowing the gap: Military, media and the Iraq war* (McCormick Tribune Foundation, 2004), www.mccormicktribune.com.
- ¹⁵ Stuart Allan, Barbie Zelizer, *Reporting War: Journalism in wartime* (Routledge, 2004), <https://books.google.com.pk>.
- ¹⁶ Christopher Paul, and James J. Kim, *Reporters on the Battlefield: The Embedded Press System in Historical Context* (Rand Corporation, 2005), http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2004/RAND_MG200.pdf.
- ¹⁷ Kylie Tuosto, "The "Grunt Truth" of Embedded Journalism: The New Media/Military Relationship," *Stanford Journal of international relations* 10, no. 1 (2008): 20-31.
- ¹⁸ Following Journalists were interviewed during this research: Hamid Mir (Geo TV), Arshad Sharif (ARY News), Ahmed Qureshi (Neo TV), Hamza Ameer (NDTV), Asim Rana (Samaa TV), Tariq Mureed (CCTV China), Haroon Rashid (BBC), Atif Khan (The Nation), Khalid Jamil (Abb Tak Tv), Muhammad Imran (Dunya Tv), Muhammad Asghar (APP), Ahmed Mansoor (Express TV), Sohail Abdul Nasir (Nawaiwaqt Daily), Laiq-ur-Rehman (ARY News), Javed Bhatti (Jang Group), Hamza Malik (APP), Fakhar-ur-Rahman (Anadolu Agency Turkey), Zahid Malik (Pakistan Observer), Siddique Sajid (Neo TV), and Rana Shahzad-us-Salam (PTV News).
- ¹⁹ Yahya R. Kamalipour, Nancy Snow, *War, Media, Propaganda: A Global Perspective* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004), <https://books.google.com.pk>.
- ²⁰ In an email communication, Laeeq-ur-Rahman discussed that being a journalist, he was aware of the moral and legal obligations and why TTP is anti-Pakistan. 99% citizen of this country are not standing behind them, because one cannot mislead and misguide masses and cannot impose one's personal agenda.

²¹ The government of Pakistan established a 20-point action plan in January 2015 to put concentrated efforts on countering terrorism in the country and extending the ongoing anti-terrorist efforts in North-Western Pakistan.

²² In a personal interview, Ahmed Qureshi from NEO TV stated that “no amount of reading and no amount of research can answer some questions, and those questions always remain ambiguous and because of that ambiguity, there is always a chance you might misreport certain things or you become harsher than necessary”.

²³ Rana Asim, a senior correspondent from Samaa TV, discussed in a personal interview that “Media has a key role in such kind of scenario to boost the morale of the country men, and to boost the morale of the armed forces as well”.

²⁴ In a personal interview, a foreign media correspondent, Hamza Ameer said that “I think embedment is very important and it needs to be implemented with a clear direction, clear direction of dos and don’ts for journalists because still now we don’t have that”.

²⁵ While discussing the framing of media reports being embedded, Hamza Ameer highlighted that “now it is much better being embedded; now you have a guideline. You have certain limits, not defined limits but certain limits that I cannot fake a news. Black sheep in the vicinity are now no more in comfortable grounds because of embedded journalism”.

²⁶ Atif Khan from the Nation told about non-embedded journalists that “they have different agendas to follow whether to demoralize military or to create the bad image of Taliban”.

²⁷ While discussing embedment with military Haroon Rashid from BBC said that “It is not being used as a good propaganda tool”.