



RESEARCH PAPER

Media Representations and Refugees Crises: Framing of Afghan Refugees in Mainstream Print Media of Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of the study is to analyze the framing of Afghan refugees in print media of Pakistan and attempts to generate a substantial body of information about the role of Pakistani media in this regard and presents the issues and problems of Afghan refugees after the operation of Zarb-e-Azb and attempts to investigate and compare the policies of leading English print of Pakistan after the incident of APS attack. Quantitative methodology has been opted and content analysis is used as research method. Under the umbrella of framing theory the study concludes that the national security of the state was of prime importance for the media while the problems and issues of Afghan refugees were of least concern. Further, the government policies for Afghan refugees regarding visa facilitation, registration, legal issues, border management crises, educational and health policies were highlighted in media.

Introduction

The issues of Afghan refugees had been analyzed in the print media while keeping in view the status and problems of Afghan refugees in Pakistan. Media representations of immigrants and refugees are important to discuss as media play apart in negotiating and making identities for them and ultimately acceptable for the public (Lawlor & Tolley, 2017). In this modern age no one can deny the importance of Media. Media is giving a vast globe through which people can take view from different angles and its coverage is also responsible to figure the events during war and peace situations. It has the authority to change the opinion of public on its own way. Print media being a traditional and reliable media closest to the minds of the people so its effects are long lasting. It is the most wanted media because of its availability and for in depth reporting and analysis (Patil, 2011). Keeping in view the importance of media in the daily lives of people, the policy of two leading English newspapers of Pakistan had been investigated to find and examine how media frame the refugees residing in Pakistan and to know the level

of news published about Afghans in the widely circulated newspapers. It is a very crucial issue to study and to investigate the problems and issues of Afghan refugees while residing and leaving Pakistan which may or may not be highlighted by the media. Both newspapers, Dawn and The Nation are considered as prestigious and responsible and also popular among educated class due to their diversity in contents and quality of material. Dawn is considered to provide balanced picture of political issues while The Nation is an ideological newspaper that support the ideology of Pakistan. Due to these reasons Dawn and The Nations have been considered to analyze the role of Pakistani media in highlighting the crises of Afghan refugees. The crises of refugees are of diverse in nature including, internal and external issues. Ford, (2011) identified the discrimination and preferences for the immigrants and refugees within the common public. Immigrants and refugees are contentious issues involving unease and uncertainty while media may take advantage of this to create crises (Esses, Medianu, & Lawson, 2013). There are certain factors for the media representation of refugees and immigrants and that is quite contextual (Bleich, Bloemraad, & De Graauw, 2015).

The existence of Afghan refugees in Pakistan is an area of serious concern to the future stability of Pakistan and sustainable friendly relations between the two countries. Pakistan has accommodated more than 5 million Afghan refugees. However, the majority of them around 3.8 million have returned to their home country and many returnees keep trickling back to Pakistan. There are still 3 million registered and unregistered Afghan refugees in Pakistan who remain a pressure to the economy and a severe security threat mostly in the form of support to militant groups operating in Pakistan. After the National Action plan (NAP) and attack on Army Public school in 2014 government of Pakistan has decided and ordered them to leave country especially those who are living without registration and with illegal means. The main concern of NAP was to register all Afghan nationals by NADRA till 2015 and to ensure their early repatriation which resulted in the increased problems for them. Their registration process got delayed and their stay in Pakistan extended till 2017 due to many reasons (Khan, 2017).

Pakistan and Afghanistan have been in conflict, strained and tensed relationships (Siddiqi, 2008). Pakistan hosted large number of refugees since 1979 which resulted in many issues for Pakistan like security threats, fragile economy and temporary displacement of the IDP's. After APS attacks and operation Zarb-e-Azb Pakistan was no more in position to accommodate the refugees anymore (Khan, 2014). But the state of anxiety, threats, violence, and poverty, political and economy instability of Afghanistan was too depressing and discouraging for the refugees to go back. Refugees considered Pakistan their everlasting home as they married there and achieved Pakistani Nationality by any mean. Afghanis' stay in Pakistan claimed to disturb Khyber PakhtunKhwa (KPK) by involving in crimes, kidnapping and murder cases, Although, refugees were not the only the ones held responsible of these crimes(Schmeidl, 2002). Due to which the law enforcing

agencies rouse an unofficial policy of demolishing their camps, harassment, abuses, threats, extortion and compelled them to leave Pakistan. Yet, it was investigated later that only 1.3% refugees were actually involved in crimes and KPK government was found in filing false cases against refugees. Statistics of 2014 showed that 51% of refugees were Pakistani born and at the age of 18 and majority of Afghans set their business considering Pakistan their permanent home establishing the transport, carpet and gem industry. Many refugees established their homes or refugee villages to live, however, the overall presence of refugees who are five million in number put pressure and rouse the state of anxiety and fear to the environment of Pakistan. On the other side the refugees found many issues while residing in Pakistan and are at higher risk of health problems (Khan, 2017).

Literature Review

Pak Afghan relations have been uncomfortable and uneasy since the creation of Pakistan so any change in Afghanistan always affect Pakistan particularly as they are immediate neighbors having conflicting border (Durani & Khan, 2002). 9/11 attack on world trade center also became a devastating and turning point between Pak-Afghan relations. The interference of super and regional powers enhanced the obscure relationship between the two states (Javaid, 2016). Pakistan after the forceful pressure by USA strongly opposed and refused Taliban and found itself as the strong supporter of USA in the war against terrorism. Aftereffects of denying Taliban regime came in the form of horrifying terrorist attacks by TTP militants (Rashid, 2009). Pakistan reported these attacks to Afghan government many times to take actions but Afghan governments have been less forthcoming (Khan, 2017). December 2014 attack on army public school (APS) by TTP became a turning point and roused public anger which motivated the state to take a decision to target all militants groups without any favor and division through operation Zarb-e-Azb.

The two ethical viewpoints always considered in dealing with the issue of refugees. One is totally humanitarian, purely separated from the political attentions, and other is political and military point of views which consider the refugees as the major issue for the host country when to deal with the economic point of view or to provide safety and facilities to them (Grare & Maley, 2011). Refugees became the major issue to resolve in Pakistan due to national restrictions, terrorism threats, fragile economy, foreign aid and refugee fatigue. As a result of which Pakistan shifted its policy from an open door to close door and compelled herself to say good bye to the refugees, consequently they faced many problems including the closure of camps and educational institutions (Ghufran, 2006). Pakistan adopted a visa policy with an estimation of 2000 visas issued to the refugees daily to cross the border officially (Khan, 2017).

Afghanistan is the natural corridor for the traders to import and export goods from west to east and east to west. "Trade Relations" between the Pak-Afghan were refining in the past few years but again worsened after the terrible

attack on Army Public School. Insurgent movements and activities have also been done under the cover of trade apart from the legal crossings. Terrorist groups moved freely across the borders exploiting Afghan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA). Rebellious and terrorist groups had an active presence on the selected trade routes whereas smuggling of weapons and drugs occurs mainly in the regions of Peshawar, Quetta and FATA (Cochran, 2013).

Pak-Afghan border remained controversial and matter of dispute between the two states historically. In the past, relations between the two neighbors had reached their lowest following a number of conflicts along the Pak- Afghan border which had led to mortalities on both sides. The Pak-Afghan border had observed an unparalleled and unmonitored movement of people daily. There was an ambiguity in the statements of Afghanis, first to claim that Durand Line divides families living on both sides of the border, and on the other hand, they allege Pakistan of interfering in Afghan affairs while assisting Afghan Taliban terrorism across the border (Markey, 2013). In the long run apparently the security of Pak-Afghan border had been consciously or unconsciously subcontracted to rebellious groups and elements whose activities have been harmful to the interests of both countries (Cruickshank, 2011).

There is no doubt in the fact that the governments take decisions according to the policies that give advantages to the states. Media as an important part of the states always plays its significance role in establishing and maintaining the external relations with the rest of the world. Pakistani media have been covering and emphasizing the Pak-Afghan relations as Mushtaq and Baig (2015) analyzed the media of both Pakistan and Afghanistan focusing on the foreign policies and domestic interests of the two states and concluded with the close connections between media's projections of the issues and domestic interest according to the foreign policies of both the states. Furthermore, the study added that Pakistani media played a positive role in covering and maintaining the sound relationships between the states while Afghan media became more critical towards the issue. On the other hand, not only the national media of both states but also the international media talked about the uncomfortable relations of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Ahmed and Yousaf (2018) added that USA media played a significant role and covered relations between the two states in a positive manner and concluded that American media presented the soft and satisfied behavior for the leaderships of both states.

The review of existing body of literature identified the gap that there are many studies that focused on Pak-Afghan relations with reference to the nature of bonding, issues, problems, nature of dialogues and role of media in the times of conflict and crises between the two states however, the literature was not dealing with the issues of Afghan refugees and specifically after APS attacks when Pakistan shifted its policies for internal security.

Theoretical Framework

Framing has effect on the minds and perceptions of the people and this fact has increased its significance. Goffman (1974) presented that frames are a set of concepts and theoretical viewpoints that organize experiences and guides the actions of individuals. Goffman offered that a certain person portray anything which is happening around him through a certain or a primary framework, which is taken for granted by that person. Rogers (1993) termed Framing, as a theory of mass communication, which states that how the media news packages highlight specific issues and adjust it within a particular context to boost or depress specific interpretations. McCombs (2002) indicated media framing as a procedure of placing story of the news altogether containing the means in which a story is designed and planned making it important for people at agenda setting phase and helping the people how to understand that story at framing phase. Media highlight and made the issues important by different textual features such as headlines, audio-visual components and metaphors. Fairhurst (2010) mentioned the seven famous methods which are used by media to utilize framing as the use of metaphors, stories (narration), tradition, jargon, artifacts, and contrast and spin.

Media made the news priority for its audience by the technique known as Agenda setting. Media after the collection of news by various sources present it with a particular dealing thus giving the news specific and desired meanings (Gene Zucker, 1978). Framing is the next step of Agenda setting. So this is not only about what to think about the specific events in the agenda setting phase but also how to think about in the framing phase (Shaw, Weaver & McComb, 1997). Keeping in consideration the importance and role of Framing in the narrations of media contents the stories related to Afghan refugees has been analyzed in the print media of Pakistan.

Material and Methods

Content Analysis is a systematic way of compressing many words into fewer words based on rules of coding. It is the method of giving answers to the researcher questions (Neuendorf, 2002). The universe of this research study comprised of Dawn and The Nation from March, 2015 to February 2017 considering the most prestigious and widely read English dailies of Pakistan and crucial two years of time period of registration and evacuation of Afghan refugees. The units of analysis were news and editorials. The categories to analyze the nature of the content and treatment given to the issue were favorable, unfavorable, and neutral.

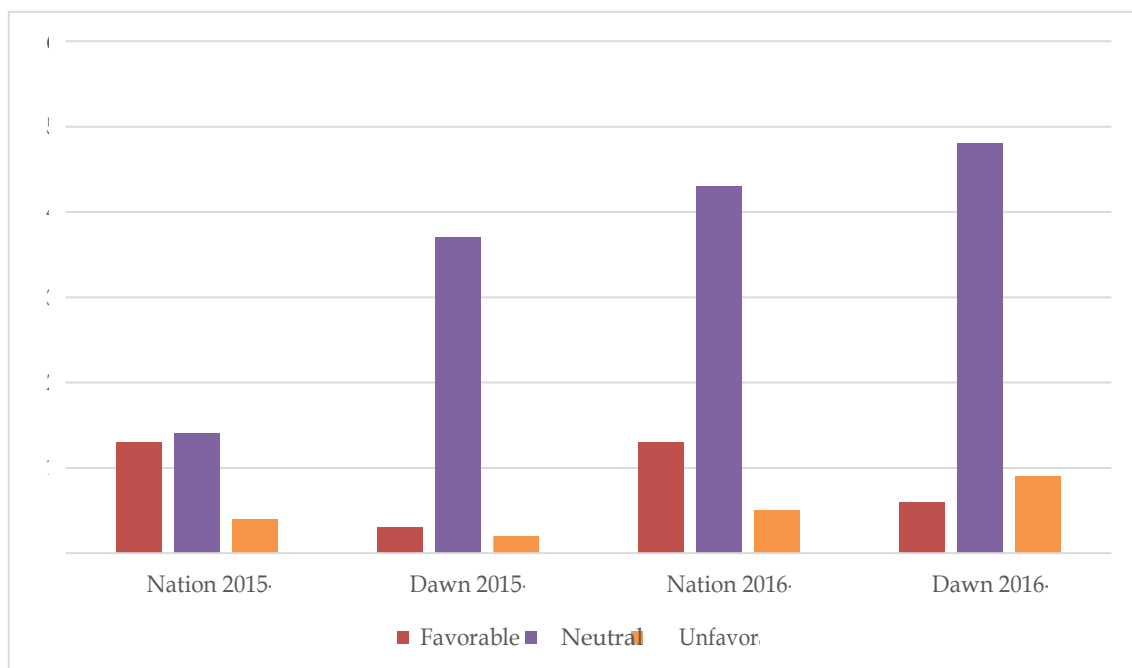
Key terms	Operationalization
Framing	Emphasis of some features of a given event or issue and the appearance of them as more conspicuous than other features or aspects of the event or issue in the newspaper.
Treatment	Coverage of the Afghan refugees, what topic and issues

	are highlighted and how the salience is emphasized.
Favorable	Story has been coded as a favorable if the content is having positivity with reference to the Afghan Refugees. If the tone of the story highlights the issues and problems more about Afghan refugees or the Pakistan face the loss in economy and other industrial sector because of absence of Afghan refugees as they are the productive part of the country and the man power is decreased then it is said to be favorable.
Unfavorable	The story has been coded as unfavorable if it highlights the problems faced by Pakistan because of Afghan refugees such as security issues, terrorism, overpopulation, economic crises and rehabilitation etc.
Neutral	The story is said to be neutral if contains any impartial content as statements, announcements or policies related to the Afghan Refugees.

Quantitative Findings

A comparative graph of the news regarding Afghan refugees in The Nation and Dawn newspapers from March 2015-February 2017:

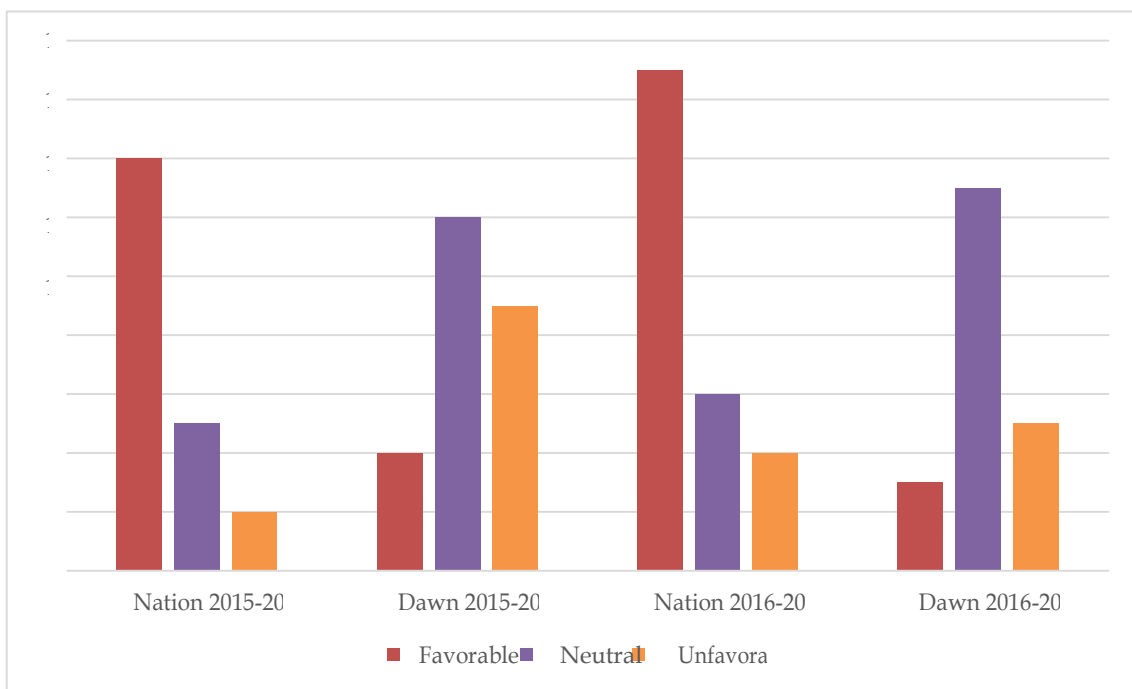
The figure 1 showed the comparison between the newspapers of different years. In the year March 2015 to February 2016 the number of favorable news



were 13 while on contrary in the same year Dawn only gave coverage to 3 news

items on favorable aspects. While in 2016-2017 in which Dawn covered 6 news items in favorable manner while Nation has same number of news items as in the last year. Through the graph observed that both the newspapers in the two years showed neutral coverage about the Afghan refugees mostly. The Nation and Dawn published neutral news as 14 and 37 from March 2015 to February 2016 respectively. While from 2016 to February 2017 the number of neutral news coverage remained high with a frequency of 43 news in Nation and 48 in Dawn. The negative or unfavorable coverage can also be seen in the graph. The Nation published 4 while Dawn covered 2 news items from March 2015 to February 2016. There was an increase in the number of unfavorable coverage in the other year that were 5 news in Nation and 9 news in Dawn.

A comparative analysis of editorials published regarding Afghan refugees in The Nation and Dawn newspapers from March 2015-February 2017



The Nation adopted favorable policy towards refugees with high frequency of editorials that was 14 from March 2015 to February 2016 and 17 during the year 2016-2017. The number of neutral and unfavorable editorials were less than favorable in the Nation. The number of neutral editorials were 5 in the year March 2015-February 2016 and 6 in other year. The Nation also covered unfavorable some aspects and wrote 2 editorials in unfavorable manner in former year and 4 in later. On the contrary, Dawn showed very little attention to favorable editorials regarding refugees. The number of favorable editorials was 4 from 2015 to 2016 and 3 from 2016 to 2017. Dawn being traditionally unbiased remained neutral in its editorials. So it wrote 12 neutral editorials in former year while 13 in latter year.

The unfavorable editorials in Dawn were more than Nation as it published 9 editorials from March 2015 to February 2016 and 5 from March 2016 to February 2017. So it can easily be concluded that both the newspapers adopted entirely different policies regarding the issues of refugees of Afghanistan in Pakistan.

Thematic analysis

Favorable coverage of issues regarding Afghan Refugees

The refugees in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa faced serious persecutions especially after APS attacks including police harassment, abuses, threats and bribery. Media highlighted the issue of refugees giving a favorable space to them as:

“No end of harassment of Afghans despite government orders” (Dawn, 2016).

Afghans has the potential not only to contribute their part in raising the economy of Pakistan but they are maintaining certain cultural traditions and artifacts as there are Afghan artists who kept alive the traditional music. In the current situations of Afghanistan they are not being recognized and finding their space. Dawn while highlighting the importance of Afghan refugee artists wrote:

“It is necessary for Pakistan to acknowledge the contribution of Afghan musicians who have kept alive certain strands of musical tradition here, and who have introduced several barely remembered instruments” (Dawn, 2016).

The law enforcing agencies and other governmental organizations in KPK claimed refugees responsible for terrorism in Peshawar and consider that Afghan refugees are facilitators for terrorists. The media while highlighting the case of KPK government wrote:

“KP prosecution data gives lie to claims against Afghan refugees” (Dawn, 2017).

While highlighting the issues of violence on refugees by law enforcing agencies, Nation wrote:

“Afghan Refugees Speak Up Following Police Mistreatment” (Nation, 2017).

Second and third generations of Afghans are living in Pakistan now, making their homes and establishing their business here. Those people do not want to go back to Afghanistan, The Nation highlighting them as:

“Afghan refugees in Pakistan reluctant to return” (Nation, 2015).

For the refugees settlement issue is the serious crisis as Pakistan does not want to keep them in its state anymore and Afghanistan being a poor country not going to keep them. Ultimately they lead such a life which is sorrowful and

miserable with no happiness and forever struggle. Nation highlighting this aspect in its editorial with caption: "Homeless" (June, 2016).

Unfavorable coverage of issues regarding Afghan Refugees

Most of the news was giving one sided perspective in the case of repatriation process that refugees were given aids and money, but this was not enough at all. For the refugees it was very painful to leave their homes and struggling for their life necessities. Moreover, Afghan government also taken them for granted and did not show any warm welcome to them.

"Aid agencies struggle to assist wave of returning Afghan refugees" (Dawn, 2016).

Carrying out the census in Pakistan in the presence of Afghan refugees was very difficult task for the administration as most of the political leaders took it as political issue and criticized then whole process. Pakistani media was also reporting the existence of refugees as a hurdle as:

"Census can't distinguish between citizens, aliens" (Dawn, 2017).

The camps of Afghan refugees are commonly considered the safe places for terrorists to give support for terrorist activities. Media also reported the involvement of external powers in the criminal activities and Afghan refugees as a support to the terrorists as:

"Foreign Powers" for terrorist attacks" (Dawn, 2017).

The Nation reported Afghan refugees as:

"Afghan refugees Repatriation at any cost" (July 2016)

"Time over for Afghan refugees" (June 2016).

Neutral coverage of issues regarding Afghan Refugees

Many policy announcements for the refugees were observed as neutral. One of the important policy about Afghan students studying in Pakistani institutes was reported in this way:

"Afghan students may get permission to stay" (Dawn.2017).

"Government grants scholarships to 3000 Afghan students" (Dawn, 2017).

Various policy announcements regarding extension in repatriation process were covered as:

"Afghan Refugees PoR cards to be extended till 2017". (Dawn, 2015)

“Registered Afghan refugees may be allowed to stay till Dec 2017” (Dawn 2015).

“Nawaz allows Afghan refugees to stay in Pakistan for six more months.(Dawn 2016).

The government policies regarding the repatriation were also covered in balanced way so refugees can be informed. The policy statements appeared in print media as:

*“No one is allowed to cross into Pakistan from Afghanistan even if they have travelling documents. Patients with serious condition were allowed to enter in Pakistan only.”
(Dawn, 2017).*

Afghan ‘brothers’ can stay for six more months (Nation 2016).

Timeline for Afghans return not to be extended (Nation, 2015)

“Pakistan urges humanitarian approach to resolve refugee crisis” (Nation 2015).

Discussion and Analysis

The present study was focused to analyze the nature of coverage given to Afghan refugees by the selected print media of Pakistan. It was observed that media reported many issues and extensive coverage to Afghan nationals. Daily Dawn shortly while The Nation mostly highlighted problems faced by refugees. The selected print media were found silent on the issues of Afghan refugee’s right to education and right to speak. The media was also not raising the voices on the issues of accommodation of refugees, facilitation in the travel documentation so that they may move in or out easily. It was also observed that the Afghans living in Pakistan were frequently reported and covered as refugees, even with their second or third generation here in Pakistan, instead of nationals. Generally yet globally refugees are taken and appreciated as the man power of the host country but the media portrayed afghan refugees as burden on economy of host country. The contributions of Afghans in the economy of Pakistan were seen unnoticed.

The study was also aimed to compare the policies and coverage of Afghan refugees in both the newspapers. The findings indicated that comparatively neutral coverage of Afghan refugees was higher in both newspapers. Most of the coverage was on observed on the inner pages of newspapers which indicated that media do not gave much importance to be published on front pages. A few news items regarding policies for Afghan refugees were placed on the front pages which were related to the policies like visa issuance, border management and repatriation, deadlines, health and educational policies, funds and regarding residence and registration etc. Both the newspapers published and framed the news according to the policies designed by them. It seemed quite clear that both newspapers gave importance to the national security and defense. It was also found that The Nation gave extensive coverage to the refugees in a favorable

manner while Daily Dawn adopted neutral policy more. The Nation adopted the soft tone while Dawn adopted hard and strict tone for refugees. The editorial policy of both the newspapers was entirely different. It was examined that mostly neutral editorial policy was developed by Dawn however, it went unfavorable sometimes. The Nation editorial policy was in favorable manner and highlighted the problems and issues of Afghan refugees in repatriation. It gave much attention to the refugees by publishing reports and interviews of refugees as well. The Nation tried to focus the conditions of refugees residing in camps that aided to help them in crises. The paper also wrote for the early rehabilitation and diverted the attention of government towards the early repatriation as well as other issues of refugees.

Conclusion

This study concludes that there is a need to solve the problems of Afghan refugees and provide them with facilities and ensure their early and save rehabilitation. The study demonstrated that problems of refugees were highlighted by mainstream media but on some core issues that demands the whole and empathetic analysis of Afghan refugees. As the national security was seen as prime importance for the media in accordance so media favored governmental policies and emphasized the early repatriation of refugees. But the media also highlighted the crises and problems in this process and raised the voices for refugees. It was also concluded that there is a clear difference in the policies of both the newspapers.

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