

**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Critical Discourse Analysis of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan: An  
Intertextual Recontextualization**

Zahid Mehmood Zahid<sup>1</sup> Khuram Iqbal<sup>2</sup> Tahir Abbas Sial<sup>3</sup>

1. PhD Scholar, Department of International Relations, National Defence University, Islamabad, Pakistan
2. Assistant Professor, Department of International Relations, National Defence University, Islamabad, Pakistan
3. PhD Scholar, Department of International Relations, National Defence University, Islamabad, Pakistan

**PAPER INFO**

**Received:**

April 17, 2020

**Accepted:**

June 15, 2020

**Online:**

June 30, 2020

**Keywords:**

Taliban,  
Identity,  
Construction,  
Intertextuality,  
Rhetoric,  
Securitization

**Corresponding  
Author:**

zmzahid30@gmail.com

**ABSTRACT**

This article presents Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Drawing upon the post structuralist method of deconstruction, this article identifies key persuasive strategies and thematic formations that underlie the rhetoric of Taliban. It seeks to examine how TTP contextualizes the political environment and securitizes Islamic values using identity-mediated discourse of danger to the Islam through speech acts that mediate war against the 'ideological other'—Pakistan. In addition, it attempts to expose the discursive structures upon TTP challenges counter terrorism campaign of Pakistan in an extreme manner by analyzing the articulation, interpellation, and operationalization of militant discourse—sustained through the production, distribution, and consumption of the text. Furthermore, it also discusses how master narrative of Taliban problematizes the existing context and promise to deliver revisionist solutions. Finally, article concludes that, TTP's so-called 'defensive jihad' narrative is a war legitimizing discourse—constructed on religious discursivity and sustained through language.

**Introduction**

Following U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 and resultant War on Terror (WoT), erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) became the new-found home of transnational jihadis—hosting Al-Qaeda's Arab, Afghan, and Central Asian militants (Qazi, 2011). Bin Laden's men bribed tribal elders in exchange for shelter (Hussain, 2007). Most of the fugitives took to the South Waziristan under the protection of Wazir tribes, who because of two decades long affiliation had developed affinity toward both Al-Qaeda and Afghan Taliban (p. 58, 122).

In summer 2002, tribesmen from FATA started to participate in militant activities against US/NATO forces in Afghanistan, notable among them were Naik Mohammed, Abdullah Mehsud, and Sufi Mohammed. At that time Afghan Taliban became interested in organizing an offshore chapter in FATA to sustain their movement. Al-Qaeda also started recruitment of local tribesmen paying each rebel \$250 per month (Hussain, 2007). While these two factors encouraged the radicalization of the locals, it was the 2002 operation by Pakistan Army against Al-Qaeda in FATA that earned the ire of pro Al-Qaeda tribesmen creating a full-blown rebellion (Qazi, 2011). This development paved the way for future military operations (2004-2007), culminating the formation of TTP in December 2007 (Lieven, 2011; Muzaffar et al., 2019).

TTP, claiming to be Pakistani Taliban, was a loose conglomerate of notorious militant groups operating from FATA and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa under different leaders. Baitullah Mehsud became the top commander [*Ameer*]; Hafiz Gul Bahadur of North Waziristan was elected his deputy chief; Faqir Muhammad Mohmand of Bajaur agency was third in hierarchy; and Maulana Fazalullah of Swat was also taken into the fold as general secretary (Yusufzai, 2007). Ideologically, TTP affiliated groups shared Sunni (*Deobandi*) interpretation of Islam.

The mission statement of TTP included a mixture of ideological and practical purposes. They pledged to:

- i. Liberate Afghanistan by waging Jihad against 'infidel' U.S./NATO forces.
- ii. Defensive Jihad against Pakistan Army.
- iii. Enforcing Shria law – a demand that made them religious warriors.
- iv. Liberating Pakistani nation from U.S. 'enslavement'.
- v. Abolishing security check points and forcing end of military operations.
- vi. Ensuring the release of Lal Mosque cleric Abdul Aziz – this was to attract recruits and support against the security forces (Bisit, 2014; Mir, 2010; Abbas, 2008).

For these objectives, TTP used the appeals of victimhood, jihad, independence, resistance, socio-economic injustices, Shria system, and pervasive impiety – interpreted on strict *Deobandi* dogmas. They had pre-selected targets: social (tribal elders and rights activists); political (politicians who believed in democracy and condemned them); religious (Sunni religious scholars who denounced their terrorism as un-Islamic, and Shia Muslims whom TTP regards *heretics*); officials, (from Law Enforcement Agencies). These include slain figures like, Maulana Hassan Jan, Mufti Sarfraz Naeemi, former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, Bashir Bilour, and attacks on Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai, scores of civil-military official, social activists, journalists, and tribal elders.

Critically speaking, emergence of the TTP was a deadly addition to the alphabetical soup of terrorist organizations in Pakistan that influenced the national security priorities by inflicting heavy human and material losses. It was its reign of terror that, within few years, shifted Pakistan from being identified as the 'front-line state' against terrorism to presumed 'central locale of terror' (Yasmeen, 2013). Their narrative and rhetoric during (2007-2014), shifted the attention from 'what is said' to 'how it is said' and left behind an embattled society divided between anti-Taliban and Taliban sympathizers.

### Material and Method

This study defines discourse as "social activity of making meanings (knowledge and identity) with language (written text or spoken words)." 'Making' refers to the 'construction', suggesting subjective ontology and interpretivist epistemology for the claims. Under postpositivist tradition (Jorgensen, 2010), three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of Norman Fairclough has been utilized (Fairclough, 1992). This approach seeks to analyze *text* (description); *discourse practice* (text production, distribution, and consumption); and *sociocultural practice* (social actions). For critical dimension and understanding social structures and practices, this intertextual analysis incorporates Foucault's concept of power relations to understand identity construction. Power, according to Foucault, is not always oppressive but it should be understood as productive, it constitutes discourse, knowledge, and subjects (Foucault, 1980). For him subjects and identities are subjectively produced through discourses of knowing, and identities are designated through speaking (Foucault, 1972). Language, therefore, is not a neutral device for conveying meanings, rather performative when uttered as certain speech act (Smith, 2003).

'Critical' implies unmasking hidden connections and structures of socio-political practices (Fairclough, 1992). Derrida's (1981) deconstruction of oppositional binaries (Muslim/Infidel, moral/immoral, good/evil) help ordinary people understand the relationship between *discursive practices* and *socio-cultural outcomes* (Fairclough, 1992). Furthermore, it provides an alternative interpretation of the text and context.

This discourse analytical framework, when applied to analyze the militant narrative of TTP, answers the 'how' question. How did TTP leadership problematize the context through description; how did they discursively construct WoT and Pakistan's counter terrorism (CT) campaign as 'threat to Islam'; and how did they present the solution by framing within which public could make sense of their social practices.

For data, I collected 68 speeches and propaganda videos (34 hours in aggregate) of TTP leaders, released by Umar Media, media wing of TTP, and a 690 pages book '*Inqilab-e-Mehsud South Waziristan*' published by TTP in 2017. The data was collected from Counter Terrorism experts and security analysts in Pakistan. Once it was available online; however, Government of Pakistan in her Counter Violent

Extremism campaign, removed the hateful content. After initial analysis and transcription, I selected 46 videos and the abovementioned book for detailed analysis of the dominant *themes* and *patterns* for truth claims. The data was then *clustered* into *categories* and compiled for the presentation and analysis of *manifest* and *latent* meanings to the readers.

### **Construction of Identity-Oriented Discourse of TTP**

Identity is the *difference* between 'Self' and the 'Other'. In order to sustain, identity converts the *difference* into otherness—the deviation (Connolly, 1991). Therefore, because of its discursive nature, 'identity question' falls into the domain of post-positivist tradition (Hansen, 2006). Similarly, TTP uses different discursive strategies to construct the identities of *Self* and *Other*, based on *difference* and otherization.

Pakistan's inclusion into WoT and resultant CT operations in FATA acted as emergent causality asking for interpretation. TTP seized the opportunity and contextualized the social world through identity-oriented discourse that mediated war against the 'ideological other', Pakistan. They situated themselves as 'Foucauldian subject' in the context, used existing socio-religious frames, characterized WoT and CT operations as 'Crusade war', and constructed a defensive discourse around 'threat to Islam' narrative and operationalized in Pakistan. Moreover, they divided the world into 'Kufr' – bent on destroying Muslims, and 'Islam' – to be defended entity as the religious obligation. Thereby, Pakistan's CT efforts were resisted with unsurprising impunity.

TTP's discourse is constituted on 'us/them', 'inside/outside' and 'for/against' discursive structures and represented in 'Muslim' versus 'infidel', 'believer' versus 'nonbeliever', 'oppressed' versus 'oppressor', 'moral' versus 'immoral', and 'saviour' versus 'murderous' ideational binaries. These binaries are empty signifiers, but when introduced into a context, construct the meanings around *Self* and *Other*.

Following excerpts illustrates, how identity wrapped language questioned the Islamic credentials of Pakistan and its policies. This construction is grounded in 'believer' versus 'nonbeliever' representations that produces a faith imperative:

Pakistan was created in the name of Islam. ...However, we are ruled by heretics and U.S. puppets. ...they have handed over our airbases to the enemy of Islam - USA. These apostates [Pakistani rulers] are bombing madrassas and mosques on the behest of America. ... an army which was raised to defend our nation and Islam, is defending Americans (Mehsud, 2007).

Pakistan is an un-Islamic state because its constitution is not based on Islamic Law but founded on man-made secular laws. Therefore, flawed. ... must be replaced with Islamic one (Haqqani, 2013).

The first excerpt illustrates the 'deviance' of Pakistan from the path of Islam by representing its relations with U.S. as 'un-Islamic' and its rulers as 'heretics' who do the bid of U.S. against the Muslims. This narrative disarticulates Pakistani leadership from the body of its own people and re-articulate them with the U.S. to represent how a government serves its foreign masters at the expense of its own people. The second in chain, further emphasize the 'un-Islamic' character of Pakistani state by highlighting the absence of Shria as the source of law. This invocation of religion not only necessitates the need of 'guardians of the faith' to defend Islam by arranging actors on 'us' versus 'them' structures, but also attracts public support with a sense of mission to defend the Islam.

You know crusade war against Islam is underway. Islam and Mujahideen are up to a tough task. It is a contest between *haq* (truth) and *batil* (falsity). Divine message [Islam] will not wane and wither, their [West and Pakistan] nose will be dusted (Fazlullah, 2016).

Sharia requires every Muslim to fight against this apostate government and change this anti-Islamic system with Islamic one (Dadullah, 2012).

In above stated excerpts, TTP leadership places 'Muslim' versus 'infidel' identity discourse at the center of their resistance against CT efforts of Pakistan.

TTP's narrative cleverly demonized the existing politico-economic system and persuasively articulated its opponents as criminals. It was aimed at delegitimizing the system and re-appropriating an appeal for an alternative one:

The nation has been enslaved for the last 63 years. Criminals are ruling the country. This system under [these] criminals has lost legitimacy; all three pillars of the state are corrupt and have failed miserably (Rehman & Mehsud, 2012).

People are culturally constructed in relation to the dominant ideas either as oppressor or oppressed (Foucault, 1991). Borrowing from Foucauldian discourse, Hakimullah portrayed ordinary masses as the subject of state repression. This rhetoric is based on emotional appeal that renders self-innocent 'victim' versus 'wicked' identities, constructing Pakistani state as *savage* with no regards for morality:

If the goal of the army in Waziristan is to make the oppressed people cry, make orphans weep, kill people indiscriminately, force the local people to migrate, or to bomb the mosques and madrassas! ... army have achieved their goals! (Mehsud, 2010).

For further naturalization of 'victimhood', Taliban used visual semiotics with *assertive* and *directive* speech acts to construct an inter-subjective submissive/dominant relationship. Their propaganda videos covered sieved bodies of Bajaur (Khan, 2006), with background melodies representing state as 'oppressor'. In their communication, images of dead bodies and wrecked houses are juxtaposed with the images of rulers busy dining with Americans, leaving the audience to decide who is oppressed and oppressor (Aim-tal-Kufr, 2013). This representation is supplemented by invoking a religious image that frames Taliban 'being tested by God', as Allah tests the *Sabr* (persistence) of the believers.

Since TTP lacked religious credentials, they imported and invoked Pashtun norms *Nang* (dishonor) and *Gherat* (honor) to create an oppositional binary, 'we' (TTP) – the *Ghayyur* (honorable), and 'they' (rulers) – *Begherat* (disgraced). Using this vocabulary, Taliban constructed a socially esteemed masculine image of suicide bombers as *Gherti* (honorable), opposed to the *Begherat* (disgraced) rulers of the country (Tajik, 2010). Following statement summarizes the frame:

*Begherat* US allies handed over the honourable sister Afia Siddiqui, to the infidels who stripped her naked, made fun of the dignity of the Muslim ummah, causing us into a painful and disgraceful condition (Mehsud, 2010).

Following statements re-strategize the history and intelligibly construct Pakistani state as 'slave', 'mercenary', and 'immoral' as opposed to 'autonomous', 'soldier of God', and 'moral' entity that operates independently. This identity discourse was self-legitimizing instrument that sought to gain legal status equal to that of state. Taliban's enthusiasm for dialogue was an attempt to gain diplomatic equality as rational actor:

We are independent in our decision making, but the government is American slave that bombs innocent tribal people for dollars. They demolish mosques and madrassas, violate peace deals, and allow drone strikes within Pakistan as US accomplice (BBC, 2013).

Government violates the truces on the behest of USA. If the government is serious ...., we are open for negotiations (Mehsud, 2012).

For further internalization of nonbeliever identity of the state, TTP narrative draws parallel with Quraish of Makkah, anti-Islam tribe of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH that forced the early Muslims flee to the Medina. This adequation, in return, construct TTP as the *Ansar*, the people of Medina who protected the defenceless Muslims.

Al-Qaeda people are our Muslim brothers they are *refuges* and we are *Ansar*. Our sacrifices are no less than *Ansar* of Madina, we lost everything, .... still we host them (Mehsud, 2012).

### Construction of 'Other': Identity Based Discourse of Danger

The arrangement of the words 'infidel', 'heretic', 'wicked', 'oppressor', 'slave' and Pakistan frequently appear in TTP narrative. This arrangement is then compressed into an enemy category to construct a unified entity, 'Pakistani state.' This identity is further amplified by using the discourse of danger 'the threat to Islam', that is aimed to create sense of insecurity domestically and Taliban as the 'defenders of the faith'. Narrative authority inflates the threat by referring to the U.S. backing of 'apostate' rulers of Pakistan and places themselves 'against' a powerful demon 'for' Islam simultaneously:

In 2001, USA with the help of NATO and Pakistan, attacked Afghanistan. This was the start of a crusade war, and [President] Bush himself declared it (Asim& Mehsud, 2017).

Taliban emirate in Afghanistan was an irritant in the way of Imperial power, however, with the help of her ally [Pakistan], Taliban were replaced with Western puppets [Afghan government]. .... imperial vultures are smashing Muslim governments (Asim& Mehsud, 2017).

This 'for' versus 'against' structure placed Taliban 'in(for)' Islam in the cosmic war of *Islam* and *Kufr* 'out(against)' the Pakistan and US. This process of securitization cannot be done without inflating the threat to the values. Therefore, rhetoric was to be based on religious absolutism that would leave no space for other interpretations.

TTP narrative otherizes the Westphalian nation-state system as human construct opposed to the divine authored—Shria law. It demonizes 'popular sovereignty' (liberal democracy) as a Western ploy to undermine the 'divine sovereignty'. Thereby, otherizing the prevalent politico-economic system by invoking the discourse of danger to the Islamic system and values:

Democracy is secular, hence anti Islam. We will replace it with Islamic one that ensures collective good. Quran warns, "... *who is better than Allah in judgement for people who are certain in faith* (5:50)" (Haqqani, 2013).

We have no faith in democracy. It is the best system for those who are in power with US backing, but for us, it is *kufr* and *satanic* (Mehsud, 2012).

Pakistani system is based on disbelief. Every verdict based on this judicial system is amount to apostacy. It is run by venial sinners who impede Shria (Mehsud, 2012).

Aforementioned statements judge democracy and capitalism deviant from Islam, making the case for 'legal' versus 'illegal'. To promote Islamic value system, the success narrative of the caliphate of early days of Islam is used to convince people for the future. This argument demands compliance for divine purpose.

Taliban held Pak-US alliance in WoT, as evil nexus against Islam. For public consumption, they referred to the instances of their collective action—toppling the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. TTP's discourse on Pakistan's alliance with the Western world developed the next threat, 'secularization of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan', the only nuclear armed Muslim state, at the disposal of USA—a serious threat to the Islam and Muslims:

A country that colluded against the Islamic Emirate in Afghanistan by helping U.S., is a clear sign of defiance from Islamic norms (Mehsud, 2012).

If she [Benazir Bhutto] formed government [American brokered and Musharraf supported], .... she would transform Pakistan into a secular state; therefore, she was killed (Asim& Mehsud, 2017).

Military operations have proved devastating for tribal people, people lost their homes, Madrassas, and mosques. A nuclear capable Army is conducting military operations in FATA for the appeasement of U.S.A. (Rehman, 2012).

Above statements informed the people of Pakistan that their religious values and state ideology were imperiled at the hands of an 'evil alliance'. These excerpts from the speeches develop a logical chain, however, discursive to arrange actors by linking the different signs to the 'other' in the language of security. It also implied that Pak-U.S. alliance required an Islamic response for ideational objectives. For instance, Hakimullah and Baitullah in their speeches reflected this intertextual recontextualization to explain the threat from the non-believer 'other':

We had made up our mind, all praises to Allah, youth have risen against *kafir*(infidel) America and *murtad* (apostate) Pakistan for the final and decisive victory (Mehsud, 2012).

I warn U.S. allies ....., stop supporting *Kafir* and *Satanic* America against Islam, otherwise, you will face worst defeat and destruction than America itself (Mehsud, 2010).

Baitullah's depiction of their armed struggle against 'ideological other' is apocalyptic in which God was actively participating in earthly affairs on their side. This also rendered jihad a spiritual import making it a battle between 'God versus Satan'.

### **Operationalization of Defensive Discourse against the 'Ideological Other'**

Discourses construct versions of the social world and narrative authority present it to the people as 'truth' to the society(Campbell, 1993).However, this production is undertaken out of the socio-cultural and linguistic material that already have established meanings in the society(Weldes, 1999).After constructing Pakistani state as a 'clash regime', a defensive discourse was operationalized by the TTP—a 'truth

regime' (Moghaddam, 2011). Now, TTP leadership activates discursive categories in their social practices as an unsurprising feature of doing things (Ferguson, 1994). This discourse is based on the 'right of self-defense' that, when converted into practice further internalizes the constructed reality:

Pakistan joined WoT and attacked us to gain economic assistance, subdue tribesmen, and replacetribal system with democratic one. Naik Mohammad and Baitullah Mehsud were compelled to act in defense of tribal autonomy (Asim&Mehsud, 2017).

...bombing destroyed homes, madrassas, and mosques. Army wanted to establish the writ by force; however, our resistance has not allowed this to happen, ... we will defend ourselves (Rehman, 2012).

Above statements demonstrate intelligible and persuasive construction of a directional discourse that leaves Pakistan as an 'aggressor' to be defended against. The construction of this defensive war narrative involves numerous value-laden discursive structures to justify TTP's war against Pakistan as faith imperative. Similarly, *badal* (revenge), a core pillar of Pashtunwali (Pashtun way of life), was also imported into the militant discourse of TTP. This is the location where a cultural attribute gets religious colour that allows disproportionate use of power:

English translation of Urdu melody:

"Longing martyrdom forget not to our oblations!

O' devoted, for God sake, don't forget our enemy,

Same is the enemy of our religion and honour,

Forget not my blood-soaked scarf by those, ..." (Murtadeen, n.d.).

Without the retribution of the killing or humiliation, peace cannot be ensured in the society. It is the fear of revenge that ensures peace and justice in a society (Asim& Mehsud, 2017).

This is our first attack to avenge the death of Hakimullah Mehsud, ... it is just the beginning. We have avenged one, remain hundreds (Ahmed, 2014).

To avenge the martyrdom of Osama Bin Laden, we have carried out attacks on Mehran Base and Shabqadar forts. .... (Khorasani, 2011)

SifwatGhayur was an apostate who had killed many Mujahideen, ...we killed him in reprisal (Karbla, 2010).

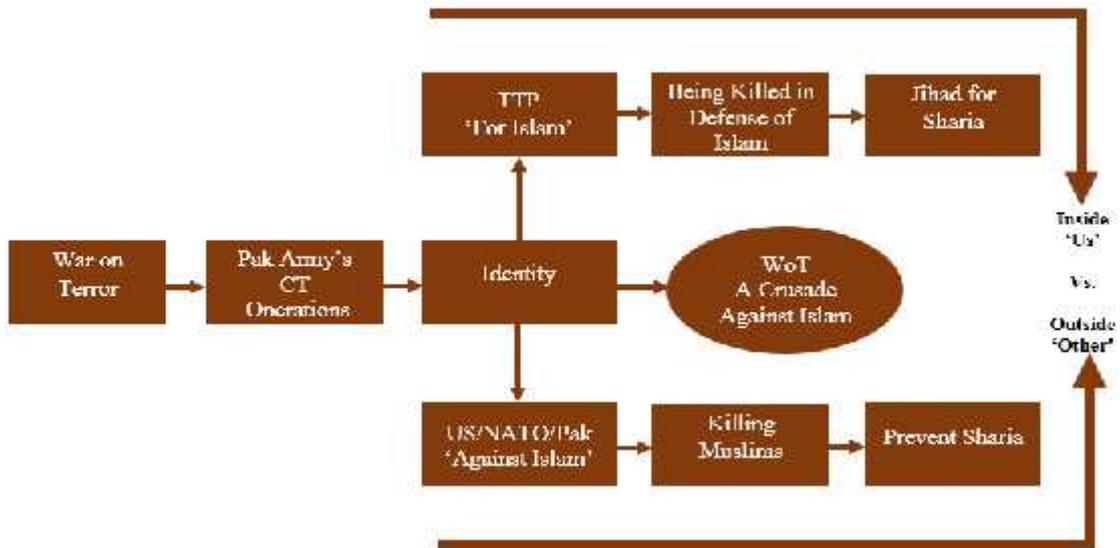
After otherizing the state, anti-state narrative requested for unity among 'us' for the faith imperative. TTP constructed religion 'to be defended object' in the times of retreat against the monstrous enemy. As, "times of great injustice not only bring people together but also cause them to behave irrationally to defend themselves" through "self-righteous violence" (Furlow & Goodall, 2011). This rhetoric was wrapped into educative language that reminded the audience their duty to defend Islam by forging a united front against the Pakistan Army:

We are being bombed! We are subject to barbarism, why don't you realize the hardships Muslims are going through, how could you stay oblivious of the plight of your fellow Muslims? We have been humiliated, our ulema have been killed,....we have become so *begherat* (Islamabad, 2009).

Above given operationalization of defensive discourse illustrates that it is the ideology that, as postulated by Fairclough, not only interpellated TTP as subject, but also embedded in their discursive practices that naturalized their discourse as common sense (Fairclough, 1992). They situated themselves as 'religious authority' in the context and constructed the enemy image of the state through *directive* and *commissive* speech acts (Smith, 2003), developing a *casusbelli* for waging a 'holy' war against the state.

Textual analysis also revealed that how Taliban securitized (see Buzan, Wilde, & Waeber, 1998) the God and Islam (as collective identity) by representing them as referent object facing existential threats from US and Pakistan in the pretext of WoT.

Theoretically, in the case of religious groups, securitization is not a widely discussed theme, since securitization theory is ontologically West-centric that aims to securitize Western values, and according to its assumptions, only powerful state actors can securitize a referent object. However, Sheikh's work is a new addition in the field that challenges the state monopoly over securitization and highlights the shortcomings of the theory (Sheikh, 2018). Securitization by the powerful social/religious actors, like in the case of Taliban, leads to a well-accepted reality, however, constructed. They, like civil society actors in the West, convinced the public about the existence of the threat and discursively expanded their jurisdiction as policymaker by charting out the future direction. In the case of TTP, I believe, securitization and otherization occurs simultaneously, as the Fig. 1 illustrates:



**Fig. 1 Otherization and Securitization**

TTP’s discourse objectifies Islam, Shria law, madrassas and mosques as ‘to be defended’ entities from the dangerous other –Pakistan and the U.S.For that matter, Pakistan Army is reduced to mere US ally. As if their alliance with ‘infidel’ U.S. is the only thing people should know and understand ‘who they are’. Exactly, the way liberal values are securitized from the terrorists in the West (Zahid, 2019),Taliban reversely securitized Islamic values in their contest, and derive legitimacy in the process.

The structure of identity mediated securitizing narrative of Taliban has three parts: labelling an existential threat - X, a referent object - Y, and drawing necessary directions - Z (Sheikh, 2018).Along these lines, securitization model reflects an offensive defensivedirection; X - Y = Z (Existential threat posed by Pak-U.S. WoT efforts - Islamic values = Jihad against Pakistani state). This securitization narrative utilizes identity, ideology, fear, morality, and obligation to amplify the threat that necessitate an indispensable defensive response – Jihad.

**Recontextualization of Defensive War against the Dangerous “Other”**

After operationalization of defensive discourse, TTP’s narrative authority intertextually imports inferential analogies from the past for recontextualization of what is still vivid in the public conscious. This practice of adequation inserts history into the text to produce a new context(Kristeva, 1975).In terms of consumption, intertextuality not only produces the text but also help the audience interpret what is being conveyed (Fairclough, 1992). Re-introduction of the pastin this way, allows the subject to constitute identities in the new context as guided by the past:

Yazidi Army has unleashed their reign of terror on the people of the faith, exactly the way Yazid did to the Hussain (Karbla, 2010).

Tribesmen raised the banner of jihad against the British from 1849 to 1947, they resisted the British Raj and defeated their anti-Islam system, ... we will do the same against Pakistan and U.S. (Asim&Mehsud, 2017).

Pakistan Army will meet the fate of *Banu Quraiza* (Jewish tribe decimated by Muslims), as Allah is not happy with what they are doing on the behest of infidels (Fazalullah, 2012).

Discourses tend to be reductionist and deterministic. Similarly, exclusionary discourse of TTP used religious frames and constructed the 'savage' identity of Pakistan Army by drawing a parallel with Yazid, Christians and Jews. This adequation, in return, constructs TTP as 'defenders of Islam' like 'Hussain' and the revered 'Sahabah' of the time.

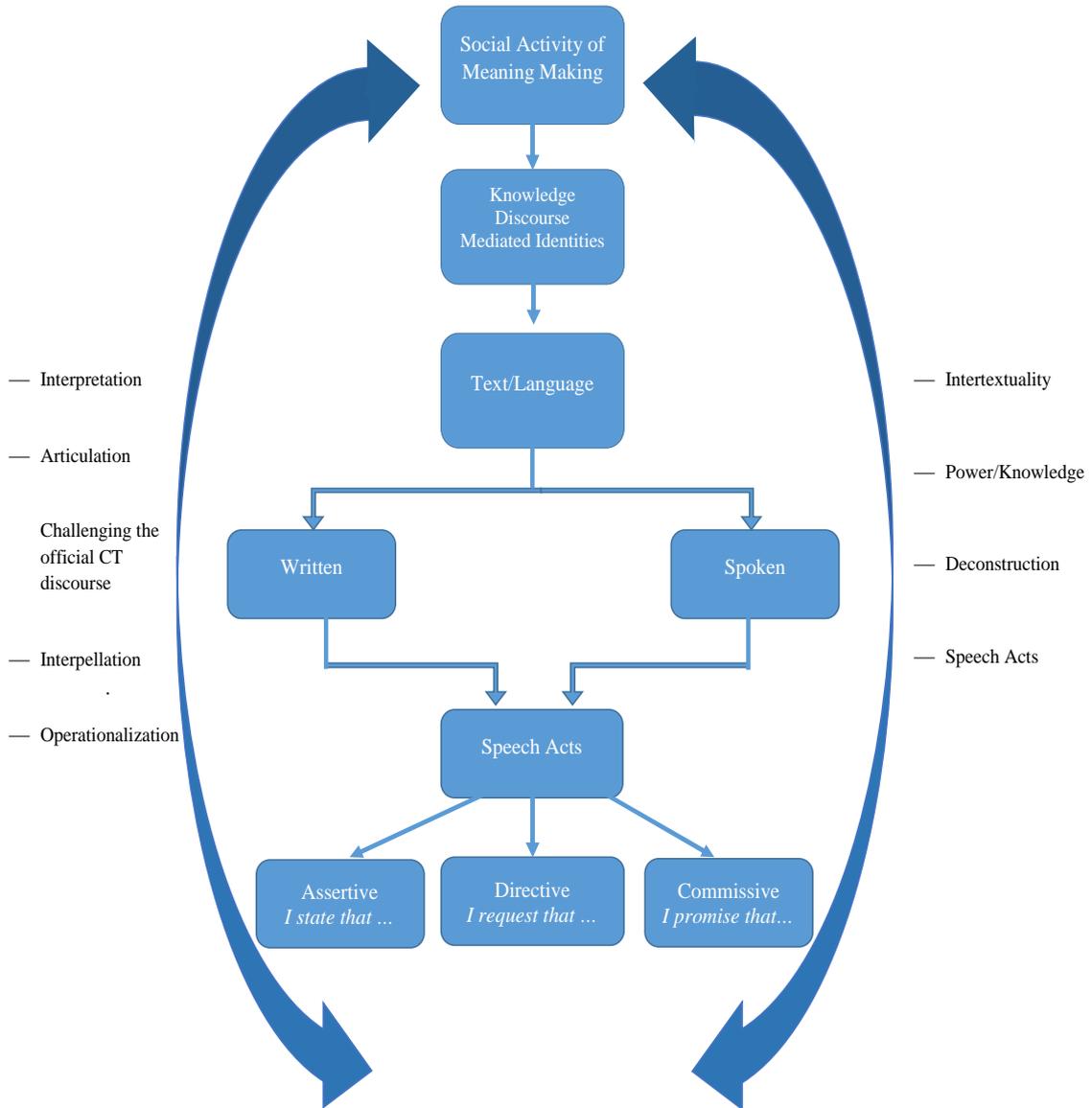
Following statements refer to the era of the Prophet and discursively construct historical continuity to create a self-serving analogy. This narrative is built on the ideational structures 'inside versus outside' and in(for) versus out(against) that characterize the TTP as representative of the Prophet against the Pakistani state equal to the Quraish and Pharaoh:

We must protect our fellow Mujahideen, like *Ansar* did to *Muhajireen* and Prophet Shoaib to the Prophet Moses, when he escaped from the Pharaoh (Haqqani, 2012).

Like Quraish, military operations [by Pakistan Army] forced people to leave their homes (*hijrat*), ... (Haqqani, 2013).

Following

Fig. 2 illustrates how TTP discourse is meaning making and action-oriented:



**Fig. 2 Discourse of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan.**

**Master Narrative of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan**

Master narrative of TTP, appears two-fold: one, informative (constructed); second, revisionist (ambitious).

- (1) Imperial West and their ally –Pakistan, form an ‘evil nexus against Islam and Muslims’.

Secular nation-state system, liberal democracy, and capitalism are against Islam.

Pakistani rulers are apostates, corrupt, and exploitative.

Pakistan leads the crusade against Islam and Taliban are defenders of the Islam.

TTP victory is inevitable, as 'Islam cannot be defeated'.

- (2) Solution lies in implementation of Shria in Pakistan and jihad against Pakistan Army.

### **Presenting the Revisionist Solutions: Jihad and Implementation of Shria**

Master narrative is a transhistorical narrative used to frame issues in ways that guide attitude and behaviours (Halverson & Corman, 2011). It promises to resolve a problem by establishing audience's expectations according to the prevalent socio-cultural trajectories through a rhetoric which acquires a societal legitimation (Lyotard, 1992).

TTP's discourse promised the Muslims that they would use their power to change the world according to the divine design to promote virtue against the vice. For their revisionist program, Muslims are represented as an 'exceptional' nation that "enjoins what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah (Quran 3:110)," hence, asking for promotion and protection of Islamic values as divine mission that places them as guardian of Islam. This ideational self-perception is self-fulfilling that designate TTP to punish those who challenge and show non-conformity. This constructed rationalization questions the existing system and offers an alternative system of utopia, roots of which rests in the past. It also casts Taliban as the torch bearer of a political system based on Islamic identitarianism opposed to the existing Westphalian territorialism with the divine mandate and prophetic mission to bring people to the right path:

After Pakistan joined the war [WoT] we decided to form a powerful alliance. ... this is against the *Kufr* and for the Islamic Shria (Mehsud, 2012).

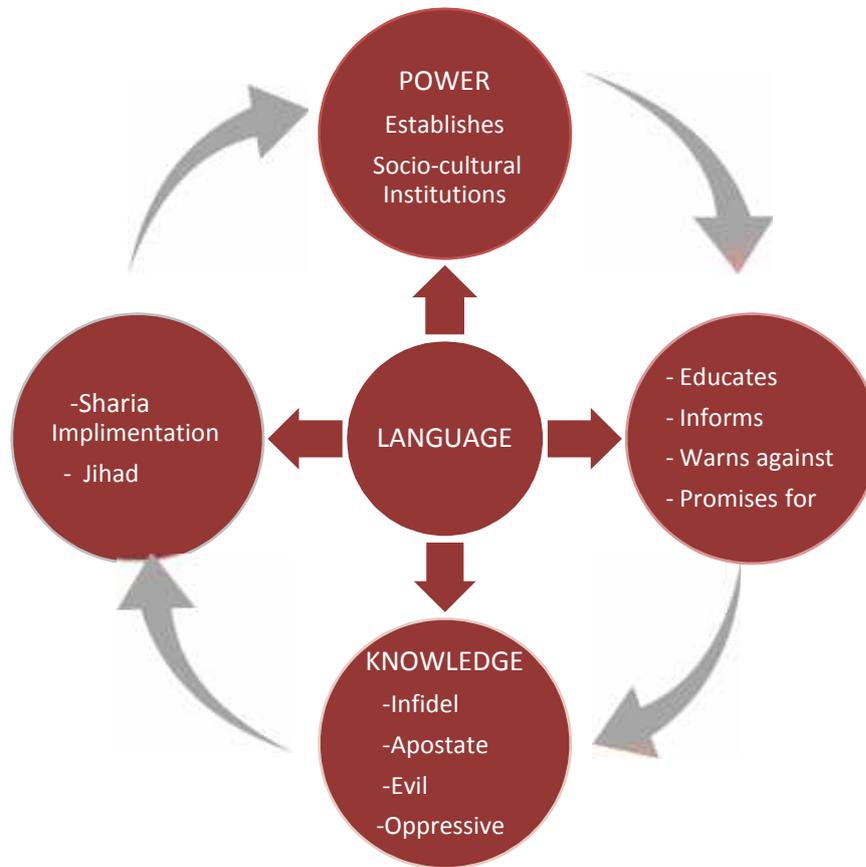
Our target is Sharia, ensuring welfare for everyone and every region. This exploitative capitalist system ... must be changed and Shria is the solution (Azzam, 2013).

The first and foremost objective of our struggle is to establish caliphate on the footings of Khilafat-e-Rashida (the guided caliphate of early four caliphs of Islam) (Rehman, 2012).

This interpretation of the social world by Taliban leadership is ontologically discursive and epistemologically subjective, where *Ameer* (leader) holds the power to speak, whose abidance is mandatory and part of faith of the followers. Ameer thereby, having the authority sanctioned by the faith, speaks from the position of power, reflect in their social practices of knowledge production (Foucault, 1972). This knowledge in

return has the power to assert itself as 'truth' in social sciences (Foucault, 1980), as depicted in the following Fig. 3:

### Foucauldian Power/Knowledge Nexus



**Fig. 3 Power Knowledge Nexus**

This compliance is fomented discursively by invoking religious authority – *Quran* and *Ahadith*. Hence, a cognitive convergence takes place around an ideology – Islam, against an antagonist ideology – *Kufr*/apostacy (Moghaddam, 2018). In-group proceedings further entrench the authority of the leadership when it [group] pretends to be in pursuit of prophetic path, leading the vulnerable *Muslims* against the emboldened *Kufr*.

### Jihad: A Religious Obligation against the Ideological 'Other'

'Jihad' in TTP's rhetoric is a 'war legitimizing' discourse (Leeuwen, 2007). Since TTP leadership lacks soft power, they strategize 'defensive self-presentation' versus 'aggressor other presentation' (Dijk, 1993). This is instrumental legitimization in call-to-arms discourse of TTP, as this pitches moral 'us' versus wicked 'other' creating a cult for martyrdom among followers. This construction is constituted in jihad's output aspect – heavenly rewards in the life hereafter. Therefore, for jihad justifications TTP

counts on existing fatwas introduced by Muslim Brotherhood and Al-Qaeda ideologues, Abdullah Azzam. His edict individualized the concept of armed Jihad making it individual obligation – *Fard ul Ain*, that requires Muslims to rise against the infidel control of the Muslim lands (Azzam, 2002). In fact, Azzam's edict is the combination of *Fard ul Ain* of Syed Qutb (2007), *near enemy* of Faraj (Kenny, & Koylu, 2003), and *apostacy* decree of Ibn-e-Taymiyyah, resulting 'privatization of authority' and 'globalization of jihad' in the contemporary world.

Taliban's 'jihad for Shria' rhetoric required them to invoke religious authority of the Quran (8:39, 9:111, 61:4), though a-historically with literal sense, numbing the cerebral capability, causing cognitive closure where individual cannot process information and simply succumb to the temptations for Shria:

TTP's topmost objective is waging a defensive Jihad against Pakistan and implementation of Shria (Asim & Mehsud, 2017).

Our aim is to establish Shria law. ...we want to ensure the salvation of the people through Shria, ...[and] Shria cannot be ensured without Jihad (Fazalullah, 2012).

English translation of Urdu melody:

O' the defenders of my religion, rise against this evil system.

It's time to take the sword and destroy the falsehood.

Let's be accustomed to the struggle, thus, love the land where bodies bleed (Jamhoriyat, 2013).

Jihadist narrative gives TTP foot soldier a sense of being 'Allah's chosen one', 'immortal' (Kruglanski et al., 2009), and 'part of an exalted elite' chosen to carry out jihad (Crenshaw, 2007). Therefore, TTP leadership described them as the 'Allah's lions' and 'slaves of the Prophet' (Fazlullah, 2012), the lexis that reflected that they were close to the God.

### **Taliban's 'Jihad for Shria' Rationalization Meets a Response**

TTP's lopsided interpretation and subjective recontextualization of the holy text encountered a response from the renowned Muslim scholars, who have vehemently denounced what TTP stands to do in the name of Islam. For instance, Dr. Qadri (2010) decreed terror acts of TTP as un-Islamic. Rashidi pronounced, "suicide attacks is a war weapon of the weak states [non-state actors disqualified], however, using it in peace times, is unauthorized" (Cited by Farooq, 2009).

On the obligation of Jihad, according to Nasir (2009), "Jihad is a national duty and state prerogative". This line of reasoning amounts to two conclusions: one, reassertion of state by 'reclaiming the authority to declare jihad'; second, criminalizing

the efforts for transnational projects—ummah and caliphate. Hence, leaving no space for religious militants to rally around.

Similarly, on Shria implementation, Usmani testifies that, Muslim states are free to establish collective discipline of welfare system in their societies; hence, TTP claims are unfounded (Nasir, 2016). Perhaps therefore, to hold some legitimacy, TTP leadership invoked *near enemy* thesis, “there is no legitimate Islamic government in the Muslim world, since all Muslim rulers have reneged to apostasy”. Even on this question, Ghamidi(2018) argues that Allah considers apostasy asin, and only Allah [emphasis added] can punish the perpetrators in the world and in life hereafter. No government, group, or individual have jurisdiction to declare a person—infidel, leave alone punishing or killing.

On state level, in May 2017, a body of 1829 Islamic scholars and academics issued a unanimous *Fatwa* holding armed struggle in the name of Islam and implementation of Shria, categorically illegal and forbidden (Paigham-e-Pakistan, 2018). This Fatwa is strongly backed by the Quran (4:93, 4:29, 5: 33-34, 49:9) and Hadith(*Sahih al-Bukhari* 5333; *Sahih Muslim*,158, 4768) references.

### Conclusion

Using poststructuralist method of deconstruction, two overarching areas have been analyzed herein: one, critical analysis of the patterns of discourse production, distribution, and consumption; second, master narrative of TTP that promised revisionist ‘jihad for Shria’ solution. Based on the totalizing narrative of religion, TTP’s rhetoric otherized Pakistani state by representing it as existential threat to Islam and designated following identities:

#### Discourse-Mediated Identities of TTP and Pakistani State

TTP (Self)	Pakistan state (Other)
Moral	Immoral
Muslim	Kafir/Apostate
Good	Bad/evil
Defenders of Islam	Enemies of Islam
Independent	US Slaves
‘for’ Islamic values	‘for’ Western values
Islamic	Secular
Saviors	Murderous
Oppressed	Oppressor
Ummah (Islamic identitarianism)	Westphalian territorialism
‘for’ Divine-authored Shria	‘for’ man-made secularism
Muhajir/Ansar	Quraish

After discursive construction of a dangerous ideological other, narrative authority operationalized a defensive discourse to mediate war as ‘faith imperative’ against Pakistan. This construction is ideologically driven, zero-sum in practice, and

hierarchic in structure: where, 'inside' rules over 'outside', 'good' over 'bad', and 'Islamic' over 'secular'—leaving no option for co-existence. At the same time, TTP leadership securitized 'Islamic values' by representing the signs of the looming threats of secularism, imperial connections, and liberal democracy to the Islam. That in turn re-appropriated an armed response against Pakistan. Taliban imported notorious anti-Islam figures from the past and recontextualized them in the present context that equated Pakistan Army with Yazid, Pharaoh, Britishers, and Quraish. This identity adequation constructed a context that demanded 'jihad' against the 'tyrant of today', Pakistani state. However, discredited by contemporary Islamic scholars, as war legitimizing discourse constructed on literalism and sustained through language.

Overall, Taliban's discourse is exclusionary and revisionist; however, utopian in its solutions prescription. Like other dogmatic discourses, this militant discourse is also reductionist, deterministic, and founded on ideational auxiliaries. Rooted in religion, this discourse produced meanings, constituted identities, created social effects, and shaped political outcomes during since 2007.

Religious conservatism born out of the triumphal sweep against the 'godless' communists during 1980s and Taliban's rise in Afghanistan in 1990s raised the specter of the 'religious figure'—the norm entrepreneur equal to the philosopher king of Plato, that shifted the social hierarchy in favor of 'Mulla' against the 'Malik' in the post 9/11 tribal belt of Pakistan. Religion, in the presence of ethnic and religious commonality, became the political tool of inclusion and TTP attracted people by attributing to the victories in Afghanistan as the sign of 'Allah being on their side'. Finally, this article finds TTP claims ontologically discursive and epistemologically subjective; hence, [a] constructed 'reality' that was made to look 'objective' inter-subjectively and operationalized through religious images. Therefore, this deconstructive explanation, calls for alternate interpretations of the militant phenomenon through psychological and social prisms.

## References

- Abbas, H. (2008). A Profile of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan. *Combating Terrorism Centre* 1 (2), 1-5.
- Ahmed, M. (2014, June 10). Taliban Declares New War, Pakistan Responds with Old Narratives. *New Pakistan*. <http://new-pakistan.com/2014/06/10/taliban-declares-new-war-pakistan-responds-with-old-narratives/>
- Asim, A. M., & W. Mehsud, M. N. (2017). *Inqilab-e-Mehsud South Waziristan: Farangi Raj se Amreeki Samrajtak*. Paktika: Alshahab.
- Azzam, A. (2002). *Defence of the Muslim Lands: the First Obligation after Imam*. <http://johnclamoreaux.org/smu/islam-west/s/azzam-def.pdf>
- Azzam, M. A. (2013, May). Posted by Umar Media. *Islami Nizam Ka Hasool Jihad-e-Fi SabiLillah hi Say Mumkin Ha*. [YouTube video].
- Basit, A. (2014). Talking Peace with Pakistani Taliban. *Counter Terrorist Trend and Analysis* 6 (5), 4-9.
- Buzan, B., Wilde, J. D., & Waever, Ole. (1998). *Security: A New Framework of Analysis*. London: Lynne Rienner.
- Campbell, D. (1993). *Politics without principles: Sovereignty, ethics, and the Narratives of the Gulf war*. Lynne Rienner.
- Connolly, W. E. (1991). *Identity\Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox*. London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Crenshaw, M. (2007). Explaining suicide terrorism: A review essay. *Security Studies* 16(1), 133-162. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636410701304580>
- Dadullah, M. (2012, July). Posted by Umar Media. *RukoNahiThamoNahi*. [YouTube video].
- Derrida, J. (1981). *Positions*. University of Chicago Press.
- Dijk, T.A. V. (1993). *Elite Discourse and Racism*. California: Sage.
- Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and Social Change*. UK: Polity Press.
- Fairclough, N. (2013). *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*. New York: Routledge.
- Farooq, Dr. M. (2009, January). DehshatGardi: Chand Mazameen ka TanqeediJaizah. *Alshria*. <http://www.alsharia.org/mujalla/2009/jan/dehshat-gardi-dr-farooq>

- Fazalullah, M. (2012 October). Posted by Umar Media, *Ghazwa-e-Hind*, [YouTube video].
- Fazlullah, M. (2016, March 12). Uploaded by zmaswat. *Mullah Fazlullah New Video Part (01)*. [YouTube video]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bC-CDUKJCIU>
- Ferguson, J. (1994). *The Anti-Politics Machine: Development, Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Foucault, M. (1972). *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. London: Routledge.
- Foucault, M. (1980). Truth and power. in Colin Gordon (Ed.), *Power/Knowledge. Selected Interviews and other Writings 1972–1977* (pp. 109-1330). New York: Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, M. (1991). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of a Prison*. London: Penguin.
- Full text: BBC interview with Taliban's Mehsud. (2013, October 9). BBC. [Transcript] <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-24466791>
- Furlow, B., & Goodall, H. L. (2011). The War of Ideas and the Battle of Narratives: A Comparison of Extremist Storytelling Structures. *Cultural Studies, Critical Methodologies* 11(3), 215-223.
- Ghamidi, J. A. (2018, December 16). Uploaded by Ghamidi Translated. *Are Shia Infidels?* Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1gvX287rAis>
- Halverson, J. R., Goodall, H. R., & Corman, S. R. (2011). *Master narratives of Islamist extremism*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hansen, L. (2006). *Security as practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*. New York: Routledge.
- Haqqani, S. K. (2012 July). Uploaded by Umar Media. *Islah-e-Nafs*. [YouTube video].
- Haqqani, S. K. (2013, May 20). Uploaded by Umar Media. *Mouqaf Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan*. [YouTube video]. URL removed.
- Hussain, Z. (2007) *The Frontline Pakistan: The Struggle with Militant Islam*. London: IB. Tauris.
- Islamabad se Islam Abad HonayTak Jihad Jari Rahe ga. (2009 July). Posted by Umar Media [YouTube video].
- Jorgensen, K. E. (2010). *International Relations Theory: A New Introduction*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Karbla kay Baad. (2010, April 2). Posted by Umar Media. [YouTube video].

- Kenny, J., & Koylu, M. (2003). *Philosophy of the Muslim World: Authors and Principal Themes*. CRVP.
- Khan, A. (2006, October 31). 82 die as missile rain on Bajaur: Pakistan owns up to strike; locals blame US drones. *Dawn*, <https://www.dawn.com/news/216918>
- Khorasani, O. K. (2011, June 6). Pakistani Taliban pledge to attack US. *The Telegraph*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F1jprYZBs5o>
- Kristeva, J. (1975). *The system and the speaking subject*. Peter de Ridder Press.
- Kruglanski, A. W., Chen, X., & Dechesne, M. (2009). Fully committed: Suicide bombers motivation and the quest for personal significance. *Political Psychology* 30(3), 331-357. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2009.00698.x>
- Leeuwen, T. V. (2007). Legitimization in Discourse and Communication. *Discourse and Communication* 1(1), 91-112.
- Lieven, A. (2011). *Pakistan: A Hard Country*. New York: Public Affairs.
- Lyotard, J. F. (1992). *The Postmodern Explained to Children: Correspondence 1982-1985*. Gardner Books.
- Mehsud, A. (2007, August 24). Posted by Umar Media. *Intqaam Shaheed Abdullah Mehsud*. [YouTube video]. Link removed.
- Mehsud, B. (2012, September 30). Posted by Umar Media. *Hataa La TakunaFitna*. [YouTube video].
- Mehsud, H. (2010, April 11). *Operation Rah-e-Nijat and the Actual Facts* [Transcript]. <https://siasat.pk/forums/threads/reality-part-1-operation-rah-e-nijat-and-the-actual-facts.34155/>
- Mehsud, H. (2010, April 4). Uploaded by Umar Media. *Bash-rl-Momineen Bi Halak-al-Kafreen*. [YouTube video].
- Mehsud, H. (2012 December). Posted by Umar Media. *Shariatya Shahadat*. [YouTube video].
- Mir, A. (2010). *The Bhutto Murder Trail*. Chennai: Tranquebar Press.
- Moghaddam, A. A. (2011). *A Metahistory of the Clash of Civilisations: Us and Them Beyond Orientalism*. London: Hurst and Company.
- Moghaddam, F. M. (2018). *Mutual Radicalization: How Groups and Nations Each Other to Extremes*. Washington: American Psychological Association.

- Mullah Fazlullah New Video Part (01). (2010, August 18). Uploaded by Umar Media, [YouTube video] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bC-CDUKJCIU>
- Murtadeen ka AsalChehra. Uploaded by Umar Media. [YouTube video]. No date description.
- Muzaffar, M. Khan, I & Yaseen, Z. (2019). End Game or a New Great Game? Indo-Pakistan Rivalry and Post Withdrawal Afghanistan, *Asian Journal of International Peace & Security (AJIPS)*, Vol. 3 (2019), 1-11.
- Nasir, M. A. (2009 Nov-Dec). Jihad kiFarziataur us ka Akhtyar-chandGhalatFehmian. *Alshria*. <http://www.alsharia.org/mujalla/2009/nov-dec/jihad-farziyyat-ammar>
- Nasir, M. A. (2016, February). Daulat-e-Islamia aurQayam-e-khilafat: AikSangeenMughalintah. *Alshria*. <http://www.alsharia.org/mujalla/2016/feb/daulat-islamia-khilafat-ammar-nasir>
- Paigham-e-Pakistan. (2018). Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Islamic Research institute International Islamic University, Islamabad.
- Pakistan and the Threat of Extremism: Turning Point. (2012, October 20). *Economist*, <http://www.economist.com/news/asia/21564907>
- Qadri, Dr. M. T. (2010). *Introduction to the Fatwa on Suicide Bombing and Terrorism*. London: Minhaj-ul-Quran International.
- Qazi, S. H. (2011). Rebels of Frontier: origins, organization, and recruitment of Pakistani Taliban. *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 22 (4), 574-602. [doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2011.601865](https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2011.601865)
- Qutb, S. (2007). In the Shade of the Qur'an Vol. 1 (*Fi Zilal Al-Qur'an*). Islamic Foundation.
- Rehman, W., & Mehsud, H. (2012, May). Uploaded by Umar Media. *Infidel Democratic System Vs. Divine Shria*. [YouTube video].
- Rehman, W. (2012 December). Posted by Umar Media. *Shriatya Shahadat*. [YouTube video].
- Sheikh, M. K. (2018). Recursion or rejection? Securitization theory faces Islamist violence and foreign religions. *Global Discourse* 8(1), 26-38.
- Smith, B. (2003). John Searle: From Speech Acts to Social Reality. In Barry Smith (Ed.), *John Searle Contemporary Philosophy in Focus* (pp. 1-33). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Tajik, S. H. (2010). Insights into a Suicide Bomber Training Camp in Waziristan. *Combating Terrorism Center* 3(3), 10-13.
- Umar Media. (2013 February). *Fa QatiloAima-tal-kufar*. [YouTube video].
- Weldes, J. (1999). *Constructing National Interests: The US and The Cuban Missile Crisis*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Yasmeen, S. (2013). Pakistan, militancy and identity: parallel struggles. *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 67(2), 157-175. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10357718.2012.750640>
- Yusufzai, M. (2007, December 16). Militants seek end to military operations. *The News*, p. 7.
- Zahid, M. Z. (2019, December 20). Islamophobia: Securitization of Liberal Values. *Daily Times*.