

Resurgence of Violence In Indian Occupied Kashmir: Analysis Of Indo-Pak News Media

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Abstract

In this study, the researchers have analyzed, through content analysis, the mainstream press of India and Pakistan for its coverage of the popular uprising in the Indian occupied Kashmir. Consistent with the scholarship on the nexus between media and foreign policy, the researchers found that the print media of the two countries predominantly reflected the official policy lines and did not remain objective and impartial in their coverage. While daily Dawn stressed to find the political solution to this conflict and framed the protests favorably by declaring these as the democratic right of the people, the Times of India, on the other hand, called for dealing with the uprising with force. It negatively framed the protesters by blaming them of creating law and order situation in the valley. The study concludes that the print media of India and Pakistan can facilitate peace process by digging deep into the root causes of the conflict and educating people about the benefits of peace in the region.

Keywords: Popular uprising; Kashmir; Indo-Pak press; Burhan Muzaffar Wani; nationalism; solution; framing protests; peace.

Introduction

Kashmir is the major conflict between India and Pakistan since 1947 when the two countries got independence from the British Empire. Kashmir was the princely state and according to the Indo-Pak Partition formula, it had to accede either to Pakistan or India as per the aspirations of the people (Tremblay, 2009). Since it was a Muslim majority state, it should have been part of Pakistan but due to the shenanigans of India, Kashmir's Hindu ruler decided against the wishes of the people and joined India. (Ayub 1999). This move infuriated the local Kashmiris and they started agitation in the region. Since this decision was against the spirit of Partition plan, the Pakistani government motivated the Pashtun tribesmen to help the Kashmiri people against the Indian government (Tremblay, 2009). The situation deteriorated in a full-scale war between the two nascent neighboring countries (Ganguly & Kapur, 2010).

The United Nations intervened and both India and Pakistan were persuaded to stop hostilities (Schofield, 2003). Despite armistice, the dispute over the accession of Kashmir state could not be settled and the issue is still simmering (Dixit, 2002). Alongside the 1948 war, the two countries have fought major scale wars in 1965, 1971 and 1999 and a number of deadly cross border confrontations like during the Mumbai attacks in 2008 and Indian Parliament attack in 2001. All these wars and wars like situations have ended with peace agreements, though permanent

solutions to all the intending issues including the core issue of Kashmir could not be found (Iqbal and Hussain, 2018).

After decades of peaceful resistance against the Indian occupation, the Kashmiri people especially the youth started an armed uprising when they realized that the UN and the world community were not interested in addressing their genuine demands for the plebiscite (Dixit, 2002; Cohen, 2003). Since this new phase of resistance, the Indian government resorted to extreme state violence against the masses (Cohen, 2003). However, the guerilla resistance could not be defeated easily due to the massive public support for the cause of Kashmir's independence from India.

The Kashmir conflict got the global limelight in 1998 when both India and Pakistan successfully tested nuclear tests. The world was alarmed with Kashmir becoming the nuclear flashpoint and efforts were made to defuse situation but to of no avail (Iqbal and Hussain, 2018). Next year, both the nuclear countries were involved in a small-scale war but due to effective global diplomacy, the Kargil war ended without further escalation (Ray, 2004).

After the 9/11 incident, the global appreciation for right of self-determination has decreased and now these movements are seen with suspicion (Iqbal and Hussain, 2018; Mohan, 2002). In the war against Al Qaeda and Taliban, Pakistan initially found support from the US and her Western allies but since 2008, its role is suspected due to the changing geo-strategic environment in the region (Hussain, 2017). This has also negatively impacted the Kashmir cause and apart from China and few Muslim countries, the Pakistani stance is weakening despite the fact that the Kashmiri people are engaged in a morally upright resistance movement against the Indian occupiers (Iqbal and Hussain, 2018).

The indigenous Kashmiri resistant movement has acquired new shape in the past few years. Young people at schools, colleges and universities are spearheading protest demonstrations against the Indian forces and are often engaged in violent confrontations. These young protesters skillfully utilize social media for gathering and motivating other youth. One of the most popular young resistant leader was Burahn Wani who had millions of followers and used social media effectively for spreading messages against the Indian forces. The Indian forces assassinated him in July 2016 in the Anantnag district in Kashmir on charges of terrorism though his family has rejected the claims. His death led to massive uprising in the Kashmir valley. Hundreds of thousands of people gathered and attended his funeral. All the major factions of working for the liberation of Kashmir asked people to come out of their houses and protest against the brutalities by the Indian forces. The massive uprising surprised the Indian establishment and they resorted to force to quell the insurgency. Curfew was imposed for several days in the occupied Kashmir and at least 10 people were killed by the forces to take control of the situation.

The death of Burhan Wani and the subsequent events took the Indian government off guard and many of their policymakers are surprised by the anger and resentment of the young Kashmiri generation. In this resistance movement, thousands of Kashmiri people have been killed, injured and massive damages to the body politic of Kashmiri society. Interestingly, both the Indian and Pakistani governments followed their stated positions on this issue. For instance, Pakistan acknowledged Burhan Wani to be a freedom fighter while India declared him a terrorist. While the then Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif expressed a 'deep sorrow' on the death of Burhan Wani and considered it an undue and illegitimate use of force against the civilians by the Indian

forces, the Indian government 'warned' Pakistan to stop interfering in the internal affairs of India. The existing scholarship on media and conflicts reveal that media mainly follow the national policy during conflicts and it would be interesting to investigate how the Indo-Pak media report on the Kashmir conflict.

Media coverage of conflicts

Many researchers have investigated media coverage of conflicts and found the coverage inflammatory, nationalistic and propagandist (Lynch, 2013; Galtung, 2007; Hussain, 2017; Hanitzch, 2007). News media mainly rely on official sources during conflict reportage, which makes the media narratives very much tuned to the consideration of national interests (Rosenstiel and Kovach, 2001). Barrett (2004) in a detailed analysis of war media coverage concluded that journalists do not remain neutral and impartial rather blindly follow their patriotic feelings. Other researchers who investigated media systems globally argue that alongside the personal and professional constraints that pressurize journalists to do nationalistic reporting are the dominant political and societal environments (Hallin and Mancini, 2004).

Researchers link the prevalent propagandist approach to different factors like commercial needs of media (Carruthers, 2011), professional ethos like objectivity (Lynch, 2013) and ideological orientations of journalists (Herman & Chomsky, 2010; Schudson, 2003). One key problem that war reporters face is to reconcile the canons of professionalism with the considerations of national security. While political and military elites always try to use media for their jingoistic purposes through censorship and secrecy during conflict times, journalists, professionally speaking, are usually interested in impartial reporting of events (Ottosen & Nohresdet, 2010).

Researchers (Hussain & Lynch, 2018, 2015; Hussain, 2017) argue if journalists realize serious threats to national security, they become highly nationalistic and show extreme form of patriotism. "They readily eschew their journalistic independence and openly side with their own country. They believe that their profession should not lag behind other national institutions when it comes to serving the core national interests and readily offer their services as patriotic journalists"(Hussain & Lynch, 2015). Similarly, Hussain (2017) after analyzing various studies conducted in the different parts of the world viewed that media during war times show more patriotic considerations and ignore professional canons.

Likewise, during border tension with Pakistan in 1999, researchers have found that Indian media were jingoistic and inflammatory. They not only openly sided with their government but what the military positively viewed as force multiplier to win popular support for war efforts (Thussu, 2002). Similarly, in a detailed analysis of Pakistan and Indian media during Kargil and Mumbai attacks, Bose (2011) found that the media of the two countries were 'part of the problem'. She further writes, "The media of both the nations have been fighting a proxy war that is blurring out factual and unbiased coverage of events in the subcontinent. Overly nationalistic posturing and jingoism lie at the heart of this. Journalists, columnists, TV anchors and analysts of the one country are busy exposing the {bias and hypocrisy} of the other, and in the process, adding insult to a 64-year-old injury". Likewise, Seth (2016) found the Indian and Pakistani media were jingoistic and sensationalistic while reporting on bilateral relations. She writes, "media penchant for sensationalism has arisen to such an elevated level that it has overtaken coherent arguments made

by sane voices”. Madirataa (2014) laments that media of the two countries is more preoccupied with security events, to the exclusion of non-security issues such as trade. He believes this approach has minimized chances for peace diplomacy—which otherwise has serious chances for success.

Framing theory

Researchers have predominantly applied framing theory as a theoretical framework while analyzing media coverage of conflicts. It is defined as “to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation”, (Entman, 1993). Entman (1993) argued that Frame in a text could be identified by use of words, images, source of information, sentences and phrases, which provide thematic cluster for judgment.

Though a voluminous literature is available on the framing theory and its application as a theoretical base, in this article, the researchers would review some of the most representative studies on it in the South Asian context. While applying framing theory as a theoretical framework, Ray (2004) investigated the coverage of Kashmir conflict in the New York Times, Los Angeles Times and Washington Post. The researcher found that the US press mainly reported the conflict through the US perspective. While initially, it was framed as a separatist movement with the passage of time especially after the 9/11 incident, the struggle as mainly associated with terrorism and Islamic militancy. These findings were supported by Siraj (2008) also found that the US press mainly discusses issues in the South Asian region through the foreign policy interests of US. Applying the framing theory, he investigated the coverage of Indo-Pak conflict in Washington Post and New York Times to analyze the dominant discourses. Siraj (2008) found that the US press mainly supported the Indian stance on the Kashmir region and applied more escalatory frames.

Similarly, Boss (2010) analyzed the Indian and Pakistani press while reporting on the Kashmir conflict. As very much consistent with the framing literature, the researcher found that the media of two countries mainly serve propaganda purpose for their governments and do not do professional journalism. Boss (2010) argued that media of India and Pakistan could help ameliorate the situation if they start doing constructive reporting by educating people about the benefits of peace and harmony in the region.

Research Hypotheses

On the basis of the above scholarship, the following research hypotheses have been formulated.

- i) **H₀**: Times of India gives more unfavorable coverage to the anti-India protests in occupied Kashmir as compared to daily Dawn.
- ii) **H₀**: Times of Indian focus more on the military aspect of the anti-India protests in the occupied Kashmir as compared to daily Dawn.

R.Q. 1: How the coverage on the uprising on Kashmir is distributed among the key thematic areas?

Methodology

The researchers have applied content analysis technique to investigate the coverage of protests in Kashmir in Times of India and daily Dawn. Both newspapers are considered elite media of the two countries and are influential among the policymakers. Since this study focuses on the uprising in the occupied Kashmir valley in the aftermath of the death of Burhan Wani, so two months period from the start of July 2016 to the end of August 2016 has been selected.

As discussed in the section on media and conflict coverage, media usually follows the dictates of national interests while reporting on conflicts and conflict-like scenarios. Since the uprising in Kashmir is mainly of political nature but has acquired militaristic significance as well, so we are interested to know how the elite press of the two countries frames these. Also, media are considered important tools to forge peace and harmony among nations by highlighting the issues and problems of common people, so the second pair of frame (favorable and unfavorable coverage of protests) has been selected to record the escalatory or de-escalatory propensity of the two selected newspapers. Below follow the operational definitions of the four key frames.

1. Military frame: This frame deals with the level of militarization of the Kashmir conflict. Stories recorded in this frame mainly discussed the conflict in Kashmir in terms of using force to quell insurgency, military as the solution, achievements and losses suffered by the military.

2: Political frame: The political frame on other hand, mainly reported on the Kashmir conflict as a political problem, stressed on the political solution and focus on the political debates.

3: Favorable coverage of protesters: This frame includes all the news stories that positively portrayed the protests like Kashmiri people struggling for the right of self-determination, against the Indian brutalities, that the demands of protestors are legitimate and that they are demanding for safety of live and properties.

4: Unfavorable coverage of protesters: This frame includes all the news articles that labeled the protesters negatively like disturbing the law and order situation, working against the Indian interests and promoting terrorists.

5: Other: This category included all the other news stories that did not fit the above four categories or the four frames were mixed in a way that no arbitrary decision could be made on the one particular category.

Coding scheme

A news story was considered unit of analysis while a paragraph was the recorded unit. If a news story was coded in a particular frame category on the basis of the number of paragraphs. For example, if there were three paragraphs related to favorable coverage of protests and one paragraph on the unfavorable coverage of protests, the entire news story was coded in the favorable frame.

However, in case of equal number of paragraphs for different frames, the headline was consulted. In case of ambiguity in the headline, the news story was placed in the neutral category.

Research Findings

The content analysis for two months from the Times of India and daily Dawn on the uprising in Kashmir yielded a total number of 224 news stories in which the daily Dawn published 94 stories while the Times of India published 130 news stories. Below is a discussion on the three hypotheses.

H₀: Times of India gives more unfavorable coverage to the anti-India protests in occupied Kashmir as compared to daily Dawn.

Table 1: Major frames in daily Dawn and Times of India

	Military frame	Political frame	Unfavorable	Favorable	Others	Total
Daily Dawn	4	47	2	26	15	94
% of Daily Dawn	4%	49%	2%	28%	16%	100%
Times of India	53	2	48	13	20	130
% of Times of India	50%	1%	37%	4%	8%	100%

As shown in the above table 1, Times of India framed the uprising in the Kashmir valley mainly in negative terms. As many as 37 percent news stories used unfavorable remarks in the Times of India out of all the news stories published in this newspaper. Daily Dawn on the other hand, merely reported 2 percent news stories in the unfavorable category as compared to the 28 percent news stories in the favorable category of all the news stories published in this newspaper. These findings are quite consistent with the existing literature that on important national security issues, media usually follow the official guidelines (Lynch, 2013; Hussain and Lynch, 2018; Hanitzch, 2007; Siraj, 2008; Boss, 2010).

H₀: Times of Indian focus more on the military aspect of the anti-India protests in the occupied Kashmir as compared to daily Dawn.

As shown in the table 2, the Times of India mainly reported the uprising in Kashmir valley through the military perspective. As many as 50 percent news stories were reported in this category. On the other hand, daily Dawn reported 49 percent news stories in the political frame category as compared to the other categories. It shows the two newspapers adopt entirely different approaches to report on the Kashmir conflict. These framing strategies are supported by the war-media nexus scholarship that media show patriotism and narrow nationalism during conflict times (Galtung, 2007; Lynch, 2007; Wolsfeld, 2004). Since Indian government view the popular uprising in Kashmir through military perspective, Times of India apply this frame. On the other hand, Pakistan government view the Kashmir conflict as a political one and hence the daily Dawn follow this official line (Siraj, 2008).

R.Q. 1: How the coverage on the uprising on Kashmir is divided among the key thematic areas?

Table 3: Distributions of key thematic areas

Daily Dawn			Times of India		
	Indicators	Frequency		Indicators	Frequency
Military frame			Military frame		
	Military as solution	8		Military as solution	28
	Military Actions	13		Military Actions	7
	Military Troops	1		Military Troops	4
	Military Equipment	2		Military Equipment	9
Political frame			Political frame		
	Political solution	16		Political solution	14
	Statements	8		Statements	32
	Allegations	3		Allegations	2
(Un)favorable			(Un)favorable		
	Protests illegitimate	1		Protests illegitimate	22
	Genuine demands	20		Genuine demands	6

In this research question, the researchers have identified the key thematic areas operating within the four selected frames. As shown in the above table 2, different indicators are highlighted in the four frames. The Times of India emphasized on the sub-frame of military as a solution in the military category as compared to other indicators. Quite differently, Daily dawn predominantly highlighted the sub-frame of military actions in the overall category of military framing on this conflict. Similarly, Times of India mainly adopted the sub-frame of political statements in the category of political frame and daily Dawn focused on the sub-frame of political solution in the overall strategy of political frames. In this category, the two newspapers differed from each other as well. Likewise, both the dailies applied different sub-frames while reporting on the favorability or un-favorability of the protests against the Indian oppression. While Times of India mainly framed the protests as illegitimate, daily Dawn mainly reported that the demands of Kashmiri protesters were genuine and addressable.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, the researchers investigated the reportage of the popular uprising in the occupied Kashmir in one elite Indian and Pakistani newspapers. Though a number of researchers have analyzed the reporting of Kashmir conflict in the international and regional press, no study is available on the recent popular uprising in the valley ensued by the killing of Burhan Wani.

Quite consistent with the political communication scholarship, the press of the two countries framed the protests and uprising in the valley through the perspective of each country's foreign policy. The Times of India negatively portrayed the popular uprising and implicated Pakistan. For example, in one representative news story, Times of India (August 22, 2016)

reported, "Pakistan is responsible for the Kashmir conflict". Pakistan and Kashmiri terrorists are responsible for the unrest. We won't compromise on the safety and security of the country". Boss (2010) also found that Times of India follow the state policy on important national issues. Elsewhere, researcher agree that due to the pressure of public opinion and state institutions, media do not remain objective and impartial while reporting on conflicts and wars (Lynch, 2013; Ottosen & Nohresdet, 2010).

As shown in the study, the Indian newspaper stressed on the use of force against the Kashmiri people who were engaged in the uprising. While producing the speech of Indian Prime Minister Modi verbatim, it reported "When weapons have been seized in such huge numbers, so many foreign terrorists have infiltrated to spread death and destruction, the world will never accept the false propaganda of Pakistan, even if it speaks a hundred thousand lies (Time of Indian, August 14, 2006)." Many conflict communication researchers have found that during attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq, the US media openly supported the jingoism of US and called for attacking these two countries to take revenge of the 9/11 incident (Carruthers, 2011; Herman & Chomsky, 2010; Schudson, 2003; Bennet, 2004).

Unlike the Times of India, daily Dawn on the other hand, did pacified reporting to deal with the situation peacefully. In most of its reports, it stressed on the Indian authorities to hesitate from use of force against the protesters and called for addressing the real causes of this conflict. "Kashmir is the bone of contention between India and Pakistan and the two sides should sit and resolve this conflict amicably," Daily Dawn reported (August 10, 2016). The findings of the study also suggest that daily Dawn framed it through political perspective unlike the Time of India, which militarized it. The approach taken by the daily Dawn is very much aligned with the Pakistan foreign policy of dealing with Kashmir as an unfinished agenda of the partition plan that needs to be resolved in the light of UN resolutions (Siraj, 2008).

The findings of this study are in line with the work of Sreedharan (2009) who also found that while reporting on Kashmir, both the Indian and Pakistani press mostly rely on the official sources. Majority of the news stories in the selected newspapers originated in the government offices and hence the official perspective was dominant. Researchers who have analyzed the Indo-Pak media argue that the media of both countries is jingoistic, war-oriented and escalatory due to lopsided notion of ultra-patriotism and decades old enmity (Boss, 2010; Sreedharan, 2009; Siraj, 2008; Iqbal and Hussain, 2018). These researcher believe the Indo-Pak media can facilitate peace process between the two neighbors if the real causes of tension are reported and benefits of peace are shared with the people.

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