

## **Comparative Frame Analysis of Coverage of Kashmir Conflict in Indian and Pakistani Newspapers from War/Peace Journalism Perspective**

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### **Abstract**

*The study analyzes press coverage of Kashmir conflict in Indian and Pakistani leading English newspapers from war/peace journalism perspective. The results show that print media of both the countries were more war-oriented than peace. They were following respective national policies in reporting the Kashmir conflict. War journalism indicators in the coverage of the conflict had outnumbered the peace-journalism indicators. The results confirm previous research studies' findings regarding the role (negative) of national media in de-escalation of inter-state conflicts. It indicates that conventional media prioritizes coverage of possible conflict scenario in war frames and ignores peace approaches and hence fuels the conflicts further.*

**Keywords:** Kashmir Conflict, Framing, Indian Press, Pakistani Press, War/Peace Journalism

### **Introduction**

Kashmir conflict arose in 1947 when the undivided India was partitioned into two newly states, Pakistan and India. At that time there were more than 550 princely states in the Indian sub-continent. These states were not governed by the Britishers. The princely states had the option to join either of the newly independent states or remain independently (National Geographic, 2019). The majority Muslim populated states joined Pakistan while the states with predominant Hindu population acceded with India.

The Jammu and Kashmir (J & K) state was predominantly populated by the Muslims (and hence was expected to join with Pakistan) but its ruler, against the wishes of people, acceded it to India through a controversial decision (Hussain, 2009). The people of Kashmir launched armed struggle against his rule and resultantly they were dealt with force. The conflict escalated and led to war in 1948 between India and Pakistan (Lamb, 1994). India approached the United Nations (UN) for mediation in 1948. The UN endorsed this offer and in its resolution of April 21, 1948 stated that “both India and Pakistan desire that the question of the accession of Jammu and Kashmir to India or Pakistan should be decided through the democratic method of a free and impartial plebiscite” (UNSC, 1948). Other resolutions of the UNSC (dated 13.8.1948 and 05.01.1949) gave the right of self-determination to the people of J&K state. These resolutions clearly stated that people of J&K would decide future of the state through a plebiscite. Besides, these initiatives, both the countries inked a few bilateral agreements too. However, even after the passage of about 70 years, the conflict persists. During this period the two countries fought four wars in which caused into thousands of casualties on both sides (Hussain, 2009; Sardar, 2011).

The Kashmiris started an indigenous armed struggle in 1989. It was not an isolated political development. Rather it was a sleeper effect of the Maharaja Hari Singh's decision of accession of J&K State with India. However, among the immediate factors that contributed to insurgency was election of 1987, which people of the valley viewed as rigged in favour of pro-Indian parties. The elections of 1987 are considered to be the most compromised and rigged where the National Conference and Congress Party joined hands to oppose the Muslim United Front (MUF), resulting in uprising by politically conscious Kashmiris (Ganguly 1996). The uprising included militancy, intifada and mass movement reflected through huge public demonstrations in Kashmir Valley and the streets started echoing with slogans of Azadi (freedom) resulting in political disorder where people defied the

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state making difficult for it to enforce writ of the state (Chowdhary, 2014). This insurgency has taken lives of thousands and caused migration of thousands of families (Ganguly 1996) to parts of India and Pakistani-Administered Kashmir (AJK). Till date there are thousands of divided families, having their members scattered either side of the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir, hence giving birth to another human tragedy.

Though the genesis of Kashmir conflict lies in a land dispute between the two neighbouring states, but with the passage of time this issue became a multi-faceted one. Pakistani nation considers the issue more as religious one than territorial. This problem has so far claimed the lives of thousands of Kashmiris, and rendered thousands of children orphan and women widowed or half-widowed. Still thousands of young men and bread-earners for their families are missing. Mentally and psychologically too the residents of Kashmir are badly affected.

Presently, Kashmiris in the Indian Occupied Kashmir (IOK) are facing more problems than before. They have been socially isolated by the Indian society as Kashmiri students studying in Indian educational institutions are expelled (The Nation, 2014; Asia News, 2014, India.com, 2019; Pakistan Today, 2018). Moreover, a great number of Kashmiri families have been divided by the Line of Control, and most of the times they are unable to meet each other even after lapse of years. They cannot timely attend wedding or death ceremonies of their relatives across the LOC. More recently (August 5, 2019) the Modi government in India abrogated article 370 of the Indian constitution which was promising special status to IOK and clamped curfew in the region (Aljazeera, 2019).

#### **Statement of the Problem**

Scholars are of the view that mass media can escalate as well de-escalate conflicts. They play dual roles (Chebii, 2015; Alimba, 2020). Keeping in view this potential escalatory/ de-escalatory role of mass media in situations of conflict the present study has been designed to examine media coverage of the inter-state Kashmir conflict in major English language press of both India and Pakistan under the perspective of war and peace journalism. The researchers wanted to find out that whether media of both the countries see the Kashmir dispute with their own nationalistic lens, and coverage of Kashmir by Indian and Pakistani media will be more war-oriented than peace. The study also aimed to know that whether miseries of Kashmiri people are properly highlighted by the press of both the countries or not.

#### **Media and Conflicts**

Scholars view that audience exposure to mass media (particularly news media) results into information, persuasion, agenda setting, and framing effects (Tewksbury & Schenfele, 2008). Mass media make and change our perceptions regarding people, events and issues. Scholars believe that since people are dependent on media for news and information hence, they (the media) play a pivotal role in people's cognition and perceptions about various disputes/ conflicts among states/ groups/ individuals and other international affairs. Conflicting parties are well cognizant of this fact, and they use media for their warring propaganda purposes. The existing scholarship has found that media cover conflicts from ethnocentric positions that matched the foreign policy and political culture of respective countries. The notion of peace journalism was promoted in the backdrop of this realization and calls for some space to play constructive role towards the reconciliation and resolving contentious issues (Peleg, 2006). Critical media scholars believe that media are like a double-edged sword, which can play a constructive role in diffusing tension, and preventing and de-escalating deadly conflicts and can also be a dreadful weapon of escalating violence, by propagating intolerance, hatred, and disinformation (Patel, 2004).

Peace journalism is a proactive non-violent and solution oriented journalistic approach (Çiftcioğlu, 2017). However, there are scholars who maintain that peace journalism alone cannot transform conflicts peace. Reaction to conflicts emerges from a society and culture, and journalism is just a part of that whole structure. Scholars view that as journalists are production of their respective cultures and societies, so why should they be expected to be better humans than the listeners, viewers and readers of that society. Hence, we have to look for other aspects too and journalism should not be considered as the main problem. The problems and inequalities including poverty, limited access to education and healthcare, unemployment, corruption as bad governance result in aggressiveness, envy, fanaticism and other menaces that the peace journalism alone cannot address.

Application of peace journalism in conflicts is not an easy job so the practitioners and advocates of this kind of journalism have to go through several challenges in efforts to apply it in different situations. According to Rukhsana Aslam(2011), since there is no global standard of dealing with conflicts, so the peace journalism practitioners and advocates have been facing many challenges in its application.

### **Media and Kashmir Conflict**

Earlier studies showed that mass media of both the countries (India and Pakistan) have been propagandist, escalatory, and jingoistic. Lena Bose viewed Indian and Pakistani media are nationalistic and reflecting respective government policies on the conflict (Kashmir) (Bose, 2010). According to Lee and Maslog (2005) the coverage on Kashmir conflict was more war journalism oriented than peace. While examining Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, Indonesian and Philippines newspapers for war and peace journalism frames they found that in coverage of regional conflicts voices for peace were ignored). Futehally and Shaheen (as cited in Patel, 2005) analyzed print media content and found that press of both the countries support the official stand of their leadership—military or political. It indicates that the press has played vital role in mounting war sentiments. Comparing indicators of peace and war journalism, they concluded that media instead of peace journalism follow governments in articulating opinions as well as relations between the two countries. Patel (2005) while examining press coverage of Kashmir issue concluded that press coverage was mainly war oriented. It focused more on violence, which according to him leads to further escalation of the conflict.

Findings of Anjum Zia and Hajra Syedah (2015) showed that instead of objective and neutral coverage, Indian and Pakistani press framed the issue of Kashmir in the context of their respective government's policies. And the coverage was war oriented, blaming the other party for the conflict. Print media of both India and Pakistan ignored their conflict resolution role. However, keeping in view the interest of the country and foreign policy stakes coverage of conflicts may differ in terms of peace/war journalism framing. Lee, Maslog and Kim (2006) in their study titled "Asian conflicts and the Iraq war: a comparative framing analysis" found that media of the selected eight countries framed local conflict different that the international conflict (Iraq war). They were peace oriented in coverage of the Iraq war, and war oriented in local conflicts. However, findings of Syed Abdul Siraj(2008) study did not substantiate the findings. In his study of the coverage of India-Pakistan conflict in major American newspapers he maintained that the overall coverage on the selected topic of American press was bent towards war journalism.

### **Research Hypotheses**

Based upon the above discussion, the following research hypotheses have been devised.

- H1. Instead of peace journalism Indian and Pakistani newspapers will frame the conflict of Kashmir more in war journalism.
- H2. As compared to Pakistani media Indian media are more war oriented than peace.
- H3. In the coverage of Kashmir conflict Pakistani and Indian newspapers will follow respective national policies.
- H4. Indian and Pakistani newspapers will not give fair representation to Kashmiri people, media coverage is more uni-perspective than multi-perspective.
- H5. As compared to views, news coverage regarding Kashmir conflict is more war oriented.

### **Research Methodology**

The researchers adopted content analysis technique and analyzed The News International (Pakistan) and Times of India (India). Availability of these papers online is an important reason for their selection. Unit of analysis was all types of stories which were covering Kashmir conflict. Topics of the study were firing at Line of Control, casualties, displacement, strikes/ processions, talks/ meetings of Indian and Pakistani leadership at United Nations and regional forums like SAARC. Keeping in view the Dov Shiner model, the researchers used indicators of peace journalism in coverage of the selected newspapers by presence of background/ context/ causes (contextualization), coverage to all parties (multi-perspectives), introduction of new options for the conflict resolution (creativity), exposing brutalities of state authorities/ forces of the respective country (impartiality), and conflict resolution/ peace keeping/ peace building measures by any side and prevention of war (solution-oriented). They coded war journalism if a story does not provide cause/background of the conflict (de-contextualization), if the coverage focuses only on the two warring parties, especially armies of the

two countries (uni-perspective), if it lacks content regarding new ideas for conflict resolution and focus more on war as the solution of the problem (routinized), if the coverage does not expose the excesses committed against the people (civil society) (partiality), and if the coverage is about differences between the two countries and lacks peace initiatives (differences oriented).

**Timeframe**

The timeframe in the present investigation was four months (01.10.2014 to 31.12.2014). The period has been chosen to analyze coverage of three important Kashmir related developments that occurred during this period. During this period there was a session of United Nations General Assembly in September where prime ministers of both the countries spoke and attracted huge media attention by explaining their stances on Kashmir. The second incident that was highlighted during this period was the intensification in tension on the LoC, which resulted in many military and civilian casualties on both the sides. Third important event was 18<sup>th</sup> summit of the SAARC held in Nepal’s capital, Kathmandu during last week of November 2014. Since Kashmir remains the bone of contention between the two neighbouring countries (India and Pakistan) any military engagement between them is generally associated with this issue and so is the case with media houses, which also look relations of both the countries through this lens.

**Results**

First hypothesis (H1) of the study stated that instead of peace journalism Indian and Pakistani newspapers will frame the conflict of Kashmir more in war journalism.

**Table 1:**

*Distribution of news by war/ peace journalism frames*

Type of Stories	Number of Stories	Percentage
War Stories	180	68%
Peace Stories	63	24%
Neutral	20	8%
Total	263	100%

Table 1 shows more war journalism news than peace. Out of 263 stories, 180 (68%) were covered in war frame and 63 (24 %) in peace frame, while just 20 stories (08%) were neutral. It shows that the dominant frame was war journalism. Since the study coincided with the change in political leadership in India and intensification in skirmishes between the armies of two countries across LoC, so these factors might have influenced the overall media coverage (more war oriented).

The study also hypothesized (H2) that as compared to Pakistani media Indian media are more war-oriented than peace.

**Table 2:**

*Newspaper-Wise frequency distribution of War and Peace News*

Newspaper	War Frame	Peace Frame	Neutral	Total
Times of India	102(76%)	23(17%)	9(7%)	134(100%)
The News	78(60%)	40(31%)	11(9%)	129(100%)
Total	180(68%)	63(32%)	20(8%)	263(100%)

Chi-Square=8.840 P= .040

As per the above table Table2, out of total 134 news stories covered by The Times of India, 102 (76%) were covered in war oriented and 23(17%) were peace oriented, while nine stories (7%) were neutral. In comparison to the Indian newspaper, out of 129 total news stories of the Pakistani newspaper (The News International) 78 stories (60 %) were war frame oriented, 40 stories (31% were covered in the peace frame and 11 stories (9%) were neutral. The analysis indicates that Pakistani newspaper was more peace oriented (31 %) in its coverage than the Indian newspaper (23 %). Moreover, The Times of India had more war frames (76%) than The News International (60%). Focusing more on war journalism (68%) than the peace journalism (32%) media of both the countries did not contextualize the conflict of Kashmir. Rather their reporting was more regarding the present events, generally regarding cross border firing, cease fire violations, casualties, etc.

The result is significant ( $\chi^2 = 8.840, p = .040$ ) and is in the hypothesized direction.

**Table 3:**  
**Frequency Distribution of War and Peace News by source of news**

Source	Peace	War	Neutral	Total
<b>Government</b>	47 (25%)	132 (71%)	7(4%)	186 (100%)
<b>Private</b>	28 (36%)	36 (47%)	13(17%)	77 (100%)
<b>Total News</b>	75(28%)	168(64%)	20(8%)	263 (100%)

Chi square = 14.434 p=0.010

The third hypothesis conjectured that media of both Pakistan and India would follow national policies while covering the Kashmir conflict. As indicated in the above table, 186 (71%) news items out of 263 were reported by official sources of both the countries (PIB, PID, DPR, ISPR, APP, AIR, PCB, PTV, Door Darshan) and 77 (29%) items by private sources. Normally source is counted as one of the important indicators which intend to influence audience perception and meaning making processes. Since the majority of the news stories were taken from official sources, so it can be deduced that official point-of-views had given weightage, showing inclinations of media towards promoting and highlighting the national policies of the respective government. Since, there is a significant difference in percentage of sources quoted in the all news items; hence the dominance of government view in media coverage on Kashmir conflict becomes evident. Analysis of the data also shows that the news reported from the official source promoted more war journalism (64%) compared to peace journalism (28%). The result is significant ( $\chi^2 = 14.434$ ,  $p = .010$ ).

The study assumed (H4) that Kashmiri people would not be given proper and fair representation by media of both the countries. Rather the coverage will be focusing more on India and Pakistan and ignoring Kashmiris i.e, uni-perspective and not multi-perspective (not limited to India and Pakistan only).

**Table 4:**  
**Frequency distribution of the coverage of Kashmir based on perspective**

Orientation	The News	Times of India	Total
Multi-Perspective	44	47	91
Uni-perspective	85	87	172
Total	129	134	263

Chi Square = 0.027 P=0.900

As per the data analysis given in table4, out of 263 stories 172 (65%) stories regarding the Kashmir conflict were uni-perspective, focusing either Pakistan or India while 91 (35%) were multi-perspectives i.e., they were covering Kashmiri people along both sides of LoC too. The results show that both the newspapers almost reported the conflict in uni-perspective and gave less coverage to other stakeholders including Kashmiri people, who are also the main stakeholders in this conflict. However, as evident from the table newspaper-wise there was no significant difference between The News International and Times of India ( $\chi^2 = .027$ ,  $p = .90$ ).

Devi Leena Bose (2010) observed the same phenomenon in coverage of Kargil war of 1999, and Mumbai attacks of 2008. Hence it can be deduced from results of the present study that focus of both the newspapers were on their respective governments instead of accommodating the views and perspectives of others. Tejas Patel (2004) in his study also observed support of official stand of their leadership, and political or military.

It was also presumed that as compared to views, news content regarding Kashmir will be more war oriented.

**Table 5:**  
**Frequency Distribution of war- peace coverage by type of stories**

Type	Peace	War	Neutral	Total
<b>News</b>	62 (26%)	159 (68%)	13 (6%)	234 (100%)
<b>Views</b>	12 (41%)	10 (35%)	7 (24%)	29 (100%)
<b>Total News</b>	74 (28%)	169 (64%)	20 (8%)	263 (100%)

Chi square = 8.414; p=0.010

As per the above table, the overall hard news and soft news coverage of media was founded promoting war journalism. However, out of total 234 news, 159 (68 percent) was war journalism oriented and 62 (26 percent) was peace journalism oriented, while in views 12 out of 29 stories or 41 percent was for peace journalism and 10 (35 percent) was for war journalism. The result was significant (chi square value was 8.414 and p value .01). In terms of percentage, the coverage of news is more tilted towards war than peace journalism, so the hypothesis of the study which assumed that as compared to “view”, “news stories” will frame the conflict more in war journalism was supported.

### Conclusion

Based on the above-given results the researchers conclude that media discourse on the issue of Kashmir in both Indian and Pakistani media is tilted more to war journalism. The results substantiate other studies using similar theoretical model (Lee & Maslog 2005; Shinar, 2004). However, keeping in view analyses of the data we can also conclude that as compared to Pakistani media, the Indian media are more war-oriented and jingoistic. Such findings are in line with those of Wolfsfeld (2004) and Fawcett (2002).

Media coverage of both the countries was more uni-perspectives in their news stories than multi-perspective. Such coverage just ignores the other party of the conflict (Kashmiris) who are also one of the major stakeholders to the conflict and who suffer more than any other party to the conflict. It can be deduced from this analysis that Kashmiris have lesser chances to raise their concerns in this uni-perspective coverage of the mass media. This result supports the previous studies wherein it has been observed that Kashmiri people find less space in media. For example, Danish Nabi Gadda (2014) found that Indian national press has ignored the voice of dissent from Kashmiris as it downplay protests news stories in Kashmir either by not reporting them or by describing these as sponsored by separatist leaders. We can also conclude on the basis of results of the present study that news stories originated from and disseminated by official sources are toeing the official policy and hence lack peace journalism. Such findings are also in line with previous studies (Patel, 2004; Bose, 2010).

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