

MEDIA, CONFLICT AND FOREIGN POLICY INTERACTION: ANALYSIS OF INDO-PAK MEDIA DURING VIOLENCE IN INDIAN HELD KASHMIR

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Abstract

Western scholarship on media coverage of foreign policy issues illustrates that media follow the government line when there is policy certainty or elite consensus on issue, on other hand, media present a critical view on foreign policy related issue(s) when there is policy uncertainty or exist differences in circle of (political) elite (Bennett, 1990; Robinson, 2000). This study contently analyzes the media coverage of the foreign policy issue at the time of violent conflict in Indian held Kashmir in two major news websites Dawn.com and Indian Express.com, owned by the leading media groups of Pakistan and India. Consistent with the existing literature on media and foreign policy, this study not only evaluates the nature of media coverage on the basis of policy certainty but also explains the significant relationship between violent conflict and media approach in the two south Asian neighboring countries, Pakistan and India.

Keywords

Indo-Pak media; Indo-Pak relation, Kashmir; Burhan Wani killing; condemnation; allegations, protests; curfew.

Introduction

Kashmir is the long a waiting dispute between Pakistan and India, where both the countries have been advocating their stances on the issue since its emergence after the partition in 1947. The then princely state, Kashmir had to decide to become a part of Pakistan or India according to the formula set for the partition of Pakistan and India (Tremblay, 2009). Unlike the formula, the Hindu leader of the state

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Kashmir decided to join India while ignoring the wishes of Kashmiri people.

Pakistan has been demanding that people of Kashmir should be given the right to self-determination in the light of UN resolutions, where it urges that the decision will be taken as per the aspirations of Kashmiri people. On the other hand, India has its own stance in this regard that deployed a huge quantum of its army to keep peace in the restive parts of Indian held Kashmir.

Of course, Kashmir is one of the most disputed issues between the two neighboring countries since the decision of Hindu leader to join India. The first ever reaction against the decision was recorded when Pashtoon tribesmen from Pakistan went to Kashmir to help the local people against the Indian government (Tremblay, 2009). The political situation, soon after the partition, turned into a full-scale war between the two newly established neighboring countries (Ganguly & Kapur, 2010).

Unlike other regional disputes, the conflict of Kashmir drew the attention of international community after the Indian government approached to the United Nations' Security Council against Pakistan, seeking its intervention in the issue of Kashmir in 1948. Hence, this move of India turned the issue of Kashmir into an issue that, suddenly, demanded international attention (Schofield, 2010). The Security Council and the United Nations Commission in India and Pakistan (UNCIP), which was set up by the Security Council, passed three different resolutions in 1948 and 1949. In their resolutions, the international bodies urged Pakistan and India to proceed with consultation of the people of Kashmir so that they could decide their future (Schofield, 2010).

Though the violent scenario turned into normality after the UN resolutions on Kashmir issue but the war like situation has been surfacing, time and again, since the independence of Pakistan in 1947. Both the countries have fought two full-scale wars in 1947 and 1965 on the issue of Kashmir while Kargil war in 1999 led the relationship between the then governments of Nawaz Sharif (Pakistan) and Atal Bihari Vajpayee (India) to hostility. At that time, both governments were taking steps for promotion of peace in the region. Prime Ministers of Pakistan and India signed 'Lahore Declaration' on February 21, 1999 with a firm commitment to resolve all disputes through peaceful means (Maggsi, 2013). Kashmir valley has been, dramatically, turned into a peace phase after controlling violence in 2003, but this move couldn't mean that the India had created an established political order (Staniland, 2013). Though steps have been taken, time and again, to resolve all issues including the core issue of Kashmir, but permanent

solutions could not be found (Iqbal & Hussain, 2018). A shift was reported in Pakistan's stance on Kashmir issue during the regime of military rule, General Pervez Musharraf, who changed the course in favour of a diplomatic settlement. The four-point proposal, which was put forwarded by Musharraf's regime, reflected change in Pakistani viewpoint on Kashmir that seeks a settlement of the issue outside the framework of the UN resolution (S. R. Hussain, 2007) .

In spite of the nature of conflict, the issue of Kashmir remains a debatable issue in media of both the countries, especially when there is crisis in the Indian held Kashmir. It has been witnessed that the Kashmir issue came under limelight in 1998 at global level when Pakistan tested its nuclear bombs after India's nuclear test in May 1998. After the nuclear tests carried out by both the rival neighboring countries Kashmir became the nuclear flashpoint and, thus, this situation compelled the world's powers to intervene and initiate efforts to defuse the situation(Iqbal & Hussain, 2018). After the nuclear tests Pakistan and Indian governments worked for promotion of peace in the region and they have signed Lahore Declaration in February 1999 but this effort, soon, ended without bearing fruits when both countries were engaged in a small-scale war- the Kargil war. However, this tension between the two countries ended without further escalation due to effective diplomacy at global level (Ray, 2004).

The Kashmir movement got partial support of the US and its Western allies after the 9/11 incident but this support couldn't continue for a long time. The international community, especially the western media, started to frame Muslims and their struggles for freedom negatively. This shift in the international political scenario negatively affected the Kashmir cause and stance of Pakistan on the issue of Kashmir, despite the fact that the people of Kashmir are struggling for their right to self determination (Iqbal & Hussain, 2018).

Unlike the western media, the Pakistani and Indian media frame the issue of Kashmir in the line with their respective government's stances on the issue, which is the core assumption of the Robinson's Policy-Media Interaction Model (Robinson, 2000).

Media, Foreign Policy and Conflict

Hieber (2001) argues that "media can be a double-edged sword". Media can be used as tool to bring peace in the world while on other hand it (media) can also be used as weapon of violence, especially in conflict, to disseminate news of intolerance that would be aimed at manipulating public sentiments.

The Kashmir issue has been portraying in media of both the countries in way to highlight the governments' stances on issue and

exploit the sentiments of people on both sides of the Line of Control (LoC), thus this issue is considering as a “boiling point” between Pakistan and India, where continues unrest in the India held Kashmir is heating up the situation time and again (I. Hussain, 1998).

Pakistan and India, which have nuclear capability, are usually exposed to warlike situation in the region as the core issue of Kashmir remains one of the most threatening issues for both the neighboring countries that has, most of the time, been causing shadow over the umbrella of foreign policy of both the countries.

Media, most probably, support the government when there is crisis in its relations with other countries of the world. It is argued that media cover the foreign policy crisis, particularly relationship with neighboring countries, in a way to index the issue in the range of elite opinion and priorities (Bennett, 1990, 1993). Public opinion and the mass media played a vital role at time of controversy over foreign policy goals (Ferrira, 2009).

Media has been using as an influential tool to advance foreign policy of a country or its relations with other countries in the arena of world’s politics. Each country’s media, while keeping aside the objectivity, report the crisis in a way that supports the stance of their government. A research study found that the media show the American stance on the resolution to a conflict as the correct one, and therefore any means necessary to achieve these goals are justified (Hallin, 1994).

Many researchers found, while investigating the media coverage during conflict, that media rather to ensure objectivity they covered conflict in a way to promote their nationalist and propagandist image and their coverage was more inflammatory during conflict (Galtung, 2006; Hanitzsch, 2007; S. Hussain, 2017; Lynch, 2013).

During conflict media usually rely on official sources that makes the media narratives in support of national interests (Rosenstiel & Kovach, 2001). Media outlets tow the official line of their respective government when they cover conflict or crisis having impact at international level as many studies reveled that US media had pro-Israel and anti-Arab biases while covering Arab-Israel conflict (Asi, 1981; el-Din; Kressel, 1987).

Pak-India media frame the issue of Kashmir and other conflicts in way to advocate their respective government’s stances at international level, and most of the cases media found tending towards war journalism during conflict (Khan & Shakir, 2011). Like the national media of Pakistan and India war journalism was also found dominating feature in the international media when they cover the issue of Kashmir (Siraj, 2008).

Sentiments on Kashmir dispute are likely similar in media outlets in both countries- Pakistan and India. Thus, in the prevailing political environment on both sides of the Line of Control it is more obvious that media take the position of their respective government, which is the key assumption of the Robinson's Policy-Media Interaction Model (Robinson, 2000).

As people see the picture of conflicts through media's eye, thus government, especially in conflict, leads the media to highlight its objectives in a way to keep inform and educate the audience in its favor (Lee, 2010).

Framing theory

The researcher applied Framing Theory for analyzing the Pakistan and Indian media coverage of Kashmir issue, especially when the issue is passing through a violent phase in the Indian held Kashmir. Framing refers to how the media post and presents information to the public while highlighting certain events and give them contextual meaning to interpret some of the selected aspects of the issue and/or event as perceived reality (Entman, 1993). The concept of framing has also been a debatable area among the media critics, communication scholars and political campaigners. Linguistics scholar Noam Chomsky, who is one of the famous media critics in US, used the term framing in his interview, where he discussed how the Kuwait crisis was framed in New York Times. In his interview Chomsky argued that the Times framed an offer, which was given by Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait, in a way that made the offer less important (Szykowny, 1990).

Like the Western world, many studies have been conducted within the theoretical framework of Framing Theory in South Asia and other developing countries. This article is written as addition to the available scholarship on the topic. A research study found that the New York Times, Los Angeles Times and Washington Post covered the Kashmir conflict in line with the US perspective (Ray, 2004). The researcher argued that the issue of Kashmir was framed as a separatist movement initially, but when the political scenario changed after the 9/11 incident the US media started to label the struggle of Kashmiri people with Islamic militancy and terrorism. This shift in the US media approach supports the notion of Pier Robinson that media will support the government policy line when there is policy certainty (Robinson, 2000).

Media, usually, frame the issue(s) having impact on international politics and policies in way that best support their government's stance at international level. The US press gives preference to its government's policy interest when it covers the issues

relating to the South Asian region (Siraj, 2008). After studying the coverage of Indo-Pak conflict in two leading newspapers of US i.e. Washington Post and New York Times he found that the US press mainly inclined towards Indian stance on the issue of Kashmir and both newspapers' frames were found more escalatory (Siraj, 2008).

Hypotheses

- H.1:** Indian website, Indian Express.com framed the Issue of Kashmir more escalatory than Pakistani website, Dawn.com after the killing of Burhan Wani.
- H.2:** Indian Express.com gives more coverage to the Issue of Kashmir at time of crisis than Dawn.com.
- H.3:** There is significant interaction between violent conflict and Indo-Pak media's approach towards the Issue of Kashmir.

Methodology of Research

To evaluate the coverage of the selected news websites, Dawn (Pakistan) and Indian Express (India), the researchers used content analysis method of research. The selected media outlets are part of elite media in their respective countries, and they have, to a large extent, influence over policy matters. The issue of Kashmir has not only impact on Pakistan foreign policy towards India and vice versa, but it also leads the media on both sides to the nationalist discourse, especially at time when there is violent and/or armed conflict in Indian held Kashmir. The killing of Hizbul Mujahideen Commander Burhan Wani, 22-year young Kashmiri leader, in Indian held Kashmir sparked violent protests in the valley during the month of July in 2016.

This study evaluates the media coverage on Kashmir issue with special emphasis on how media framed this issue when it passes through conflict phase. It is argued that media cover the foreign policy crisis, particularly relationship with neighboring countries, in a way to index the issue in the range of elite opinion and priorities (Bennett, 1990, 1993).

The issue of Kashmir is a political issue in its nature, which is the major determinant of Indo-Pak foreign policy. As both the countries have their clear positions on the issue and there exist certainty in their policy towards each other. Thus, the media are taking the policy line of their governments when they cover the issue of Kashmir. This trend of media supports the core assumption of Pier Robinson's Policy-Media Interaction Model; however this study examines media framing of the Kashmir issue during violent conflict in Indian held Kashmir. As media can play a vital role in restoration of peace and strengthening of foreign relations with neighbor and/or allied countries, but at the same time

when there is viable confrontation on issue between neighboring and/or allied countries the media take side of their own country. This effect the media ethics of objectivity and the media seem to be more nationalistic when the foreign policy of the country passes through a phase of conflict.

This article evaluates the nature of coverage on the basis of three different frames i.e. escalatory frame, de-escalatory frame and neutral frame. Operational definitions of these frames are given below.

1. **Escalatory Frame:** It explains the nature of media coverage on Kashmir issue as source of escalation when stories are framed to further incite conflict.
2. **De-escalatory Frame:** This frame carries information, which is aimed at minimizing the conflict. Thus, news stories are framed in a way to contribute in normalizing the issue of Kashmir.
3. **Neutral Frame:** This frame explains the media coverage on Kashmir issue in a way to ensure objectivity in reporting by given balance treatment to the issue. In this frame, the selected news websites tended to give due space to all elements involved in the issue of Kashmir.

Coding Scheme

Paragraph wise coverage of the selected news websites on the issue of Kashmir has been evaluated by researchers to examine the nature of media coverage i.e. escalatory, de-escalatory or neutral.

A news story was considered as unit of analysis; whereas a paragraph was taken as the recorded unit. When majority of paragraphs of a news story have escalatory nature of frames that particular story was coded under the category of escalatory frame.

Unlike, if a story's majority paragraphs have de-escalatory nature of frames that story was coded under category of de-escalatory frame, and that particular news story was aimed at minimizing the conflict. When a story was framed in a way to ensure due space of each element involved in the issue of Kashmir was coded under neutral frame category.

Findings of Research

Total 134 news stories were contently analyzed during the timeframe that consist of two months (July & August, 2016), a timeframe was selected with the basic aim to evaluate the media frames on Kashmir issue, when it passes through a violent phase. Searching results of both the selected news websites show that out of the total published stories, the website of Indian Express published 106 news

stories while the website of Dawn published 28 news stories during the uprising in Indian held Kashmir after the killing of Hizbul Mujahideen commander, Burhan Wani on July 08, 2016.

H.1: Indian website, Indian Express.com framed the Issue of Kashmir more escalatory than Pakistani website, Dawn.com after the killing of Burhan Wani.

Table 1: Nature of Media Coverage after Wani Killing in Indian held Kashmir

		News Frame			Total
		Escalatory	De-escalatory	Neutral	
News	<i>Dawn.com</i>	6	13	9	28
Websites	<i>Indian Express.com</i>	39	29	38	106
Total		45	42	47	134

To evaluate the news framing of media of both the countries the researchers analyzed total 134 news stories, which were published in Dawn.com and Indian Express's website on the issue of Kashmir after the killing of Muzaffar Wani. These stories suggest that Indian Express covered a total of 106 news stories having 39 stories (36.8 %) of its coverage were escalatory in their nature, 29 stories (27.35%) reflected de-escalatory frame while 38 (35.8%) stories carried neutral frame.

Unlike the India Express, the Pakistani news website i.e. Dawn.com was found more inclined to de-escalatory framing of the Issue of Kashmir as it published total 28 news on Kashmir crisis after Wani killing; wherein its de-escalatory frame consist of 46.42% of its total coverage. The researchers found six (06) news, carried escalatory frame on the Issue of Kashmir, and this formed 21.42% coverage of the Dawn.com' total coverage during the two months timeframe of this study. Besides, Dawn.com framed Kashmir conflict 32.14% by publishing 9 stories neutrally.

These findings are not only supporting the first hypothesis of this study, but the research findings are also consistent with the existence literature that media support their respective government and take her policy line during conflict (Bennett, 1993; Carpenter, 1995; Friel, Falk, Falk, & Falk, 2004; Reese & Lewis, 2009; Robinson, 2000). The Indian government's stance on the Issue of Kashmir was

more critical than Pakistan after the Wani killing, and hence this was reflected in its media's coverage.

H.2: Indian Express.com gives more coverage to the Issue of Kashmir at time of crisis than Dawn.com.

Tab 2. Distribution of Media Coverage on the Issue of Kashmir (July-August, 2016)					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	<i>Dawn.com</i>	28	20.9	20.9	20.9
	<i>Indian Express.com</i>	106	79.1	79.1	100.0
	Total	134	100.0	100.0	

As shown in Tab 2, the researchers found that Indian media was more focused on Kashmir issue at time of crisis as massive scale protests were started after the killing of Burhan Wani. On other hand, Pakistani media gave, comparatively, less coverage to the issue than Indian media. The research findings shown, that Dawn.com gave 20.9% coverage to the issue of Kashmir as it published only 28 news stories after the Indian forces killed a young Kashmiri leader- Burhan Wani.

Unlike the Dawn.com, the Indian website, Indian Express.com coverage was quite more than Pakistani website as it published 106 news stories having 79.1% of total coverage being given by the selected news websites. It shows that Indian media was more focused to highlight every aspect of the Kashmir crisis with the basic objective to promote Indian stance on the Kashmir dispute.

As Indian government was facing a massive protests in Indian held Kashmir and its forces were engaged to control the situation that resulted in political and administrative crisis, which was framed by Indian Express.com along with other media outlets in a way to promote the Indian government's stance in the arena of world's politics. Since the findings are not only supporting the second hypothesis of this study, but they also support the available literature that media cover conflict in a way to promote their nationalist and propagandist image and their coverage is more inflammatory during conflict (Galtung, 2006; Hanitzsch, 2007; S. Hussain, 2017; Lynch, 2013).

H.3: There is significant interaction between violent conflict and Indo-Pak media's approach towards the Issue of Kashmir.

Tab 3. Month Wise Coverage of the Issue of Kashmir

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	July	61	45.5	45.5	45.5
	August	73	54.5	54.5	100.0
	Total	134	100.0	100.0	

The findings, which show in Tab 3, suggest that both news websites published total 61 news stories on Kashmir crisis after the killing of Wani in the month of July 2016, having 45.5% of the total news stories published during the timeframe of this study (July & August, 2106). In the second month, the news coverage was seemed high as there were a lot of protests over the killing of Kashmiri leader-Burhan Wani. The findings show that 73 stories having 54.5% of the total stories were published during the month of August. It shows that the series of protests, launched by Kashmiri, against the Indian forces drew the attention of media on both sides of the Line of Control (LoC). This indicates that media is tended to focus violent conflict more in their news contents, and hence there is significant interaction between violent conflict and media approach. This trend has been witnessed in the selected news websites i.e. Dawn.com and Indian Express.com as they were more focused on the issue of Kashmir when it became more violent in the month of August, 2016.

Discussion and Conclusion

The research study investigated the media trend in Indo-Pak media in the context of long a waiting dispute- Kashmir issue- between the two neighboring countries. Previous studies on the topic mostly focused on media frames on the issue of Kashmir while in this study; the researchers analyzed the media frames in addition with foreign policy impact on media coverage at the time of violent conflict.

The researchers investigated that both the selected news websites towed the policy line of their respective governments on the issue of Kashmir, and thus they framed it in a way to support their

government's stance in world's politics. The then Pakistan Foreign Office Spokesperson termed the incident as extra-judicial killing of Kashmiri leader Burhan Wani and scores of other innocent Kashmiri, adding that such acts were a violation of the fundamental human rights of Kashmiri and cannot deter the people of Jammu and Kashmir from their demand of the right to self-determination (Haider, 2016)

Like other incidents occurred in the Indian held Kashmir, Pakistan had a certain stance on the killing of Burhan Wani as there has always been certainty in Pakistan foreign policy towards India, especially when there is violent situation in the Valley of Kashmir. In this study, the researchers found the trend in Pakistani media as well as in Indian media that they extended their support to their governments on the issue of Kashmir when the issue was violent in its nature, and this approach of media not only reflected the nationalistic image of media but it also consistent with available scholarship on media and foreign policy, which suggest that media will cover the issues relating to foreign policy in line with policy guidelines of the government, especially when the government's policy line is certain on an issue (Bennett, 1990, 1993; Robinson, 2000).

The findings of this study indicate that Indian Express.com was more inclined to escalation as its escalatory frames were in line with the Indian government's stance on the issue, which seemed to resolve the issue through use of force. For instance, one of its news stories published on July 10, 2016 the Indian Express.com while quoting the Union I&B Minister Venkaiah Naidu reported that "Kashmir is an integral part of India and there is no question of any negotiation or any discussion on that". This approach of the Indian website is consistent with some of the studies conducted on media role during conflict as they stated that media face pressure of public opinion and state institutions during conflict and they (media organizations) do not remain objective and impartial when they are covering conflicts and wars(Lynch, 2013; Payne, 2005).

While comparing the Indian news website coverage with Dawn.com the researchers found that Pakistani news website framed the issue in a way to contribute in minimizing the intensity of the violent scenario and sought the political solution of the Kashmir issue. This approach of Dawn.com was consistent with Pakistan's foreign policy on Kashmir issue as it has been stressing on peaceful and political solution of the issue in the light of UN resolutions. "The foreign secretary urged the international community and particularly the permanent members of the Security Council to take notice of the gravity of the situation in Indian occupied Kashmir (IOK), call on India to respect human rights of the people of IOK and implement UN

Security Council resolutions on Jammu and Kashmir,” Dawn.com reported on July 13, 2016.

The findings of this study can be concluded that media in both the neighboring countries framed the issue of Kashmir in line with their governments’ stances that is aimed at highlighting and supporting their policy line on the issue at international level as Pakistan foreign policy regarding Kashmir is based on the major objective to resolve the issue in the light of UN resolutions (Siraj, 2008). Thus the Dawn.com reported the issue that was aimed at supporting Pakistani government’s policy line on the issue of Kashmir, wherein it stressed on peaceful resolution in the light of UN resolutions.

On other hand, the Indian government was using its forces to handle the law and order situation in Kashmir after the Wani killing. In a result, this move of India made the atmosphere more violent, and hence this emerged scenario led the Indian media to give prominence coverage to escalatory frames of the issue. The coverage of Indian Express.com on the issue mostly reflected the escalatory nature of frames that indicates strong relationship among government’s stance, media coverage and foreign policy guidelines. This approach of Indian media towards conflict is also consistent with many of other research studies, which found that after the 9/11 incident, when national security was prime concern for both government and media, the later framed news in favor of attack on Afghanistan to take revenge of the twin tower attack (Bennett, 2004; Herman & Chomsky, 2010; Schudson, 2003). The researchers look at these findings of the study in the context of political communication and believe that media can contribute its due input to minimize conflict through its balance reporting on the issue of Kashmir; especially they can put forward the negotiation process through its neutral coverage of the issue.

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