

## A Comparative Study of the Kashmir Conflict Coverage in Pakistani and Indian Press

**Ayesha Saddiqa**

PhD. Scholar, Centre for Media and Communication Studies,  
University of Gujrat, Punjab, Pakistan.  
Email: [ayeshasiddiqua05@gmail.com](mailto:ayeshasiddiqua05@gmail.com)

**Farish Ullah  
Yousafzai**

Dean, Faculty of Arts, University of Gujrat, Punjab, Pakistan.

### Abstract

*The paper compares the coverage of J&K conflict in the Pakistani and Indian English press. The objective of the study is to figure out the differences in the coverage of Kashmir conflict by the Indian and Pakistani press along with determining the prominence of war or peace frames in the coverage. Content Analysis was carried out of the news stories published on the international and national pages of English daily The Nation and Dawn from Pakistani press and English daily The Hindu and Times of India from the Indian press. The results revealed that war framing was recorded as the most dominant coverage pattern with respect to Kashmir conflict. War frames were more dominant in the Indian press coverage as compared to the Pakistani press and the differences in the coverage of the press of the two countries are significant.*

### Key Words

War Journalism; Peace Journalism; Jammu & Kashmir

### Introduction

Geographically the complete or partial ownership of different parts of Kashmir has been asserted time and again by India, Pakistan and China. The Indian held Kashmir which is also referred to as Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) has endured intensive atrocities because of the poorly devised and implemented policies of the Indian state. The promise of self-determination through a free and fair plebiscite that was extended to the Kashmiri population at the time of partition by the Indian government yet remains to be fulfilled. India has always regarded Jammu & Kashmir as a constitutional part of its territory (Bose, 2003) while Pakistan has always claimed a strong bond with J&K on the basis of partition and Muslim majority population of the valley (Tan, 2000).

The recent acceleration in the Kashmir conflict can be more effectively comprehended in the post-2010 situation. In May 2010 a unit of the Indian army killed three Kashmiri youth in a fake encounter in the Machil sector and afterward declared them Pakistan sponsored terrorists (Geelani, 2014). The Machil sector extrajudicial killings ignited widespread demonstrations which resulted in the loss of more than 110 lives (Mishra, 2010). In August 2011 a general amnesty scheme was announced by the then Chief Minister of J&K Omer Abdullah for the Kashmiri youth who took part in the 2010 protests (Rediff News, 2011). The hanging of Afzal Guru in connection with the attack on the Indian parliament once again sparked protests in the valley of J&K in February 2013 (AP, 2013). The diplomatic measures were initiated as a result of the meeting between Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at the sidelines of UN General Assembly session in September 2013. The ties were halted as a result of Line of Control (LoC) violations in October 2014 (“Kashmir: Nine civilians killed in India-Pakistan border firing”, 2014). A ban was imposed on eating beef in J&K in 2015 against which the Muslims of the valley went on strike (Ashiq, 2015). The death of Mufti Muhammad Sayeed in January 2016 initiated a power tussle between his daughter Mehbooba Mufti and the ruling party of India, BJP. Mehbooba Mufti was sworn as the Chief Minister of J&K in April 2016 (Bukhari & Masroor, 2016). Meanwhile, the Indian government forcefully supported the resettlement of Hindu Pandits in J&K (“BJP bats for the establishment of Sainik Colony in Kashmir”, 2016). The issue of Sainik colonies was already creating a rift in the valley when Burhan Wani, a young Commander of Hizbul Mujahideen was killed by the Indian Security Forces along with his two companions in July 2016 (Pandit & Singh, 2016). Wani attracted a lot of attention because of employing social and digital media platforms for activating all segments of Kashmiri population including teenagers and women against Indian atrocities (Dasgupta, 2016). The death of Burhan Wani sparked widespread protests in the valley which resulted in the longest imposed curfew. The death toll rose to more than 150

due to the clashes between the protestors and Indian Occupational Forces (Khurshid, 2017). The deteriorating human rights conditions in the valley because of excessive and brutal use of pellet guns by the Indian forces sparked international reaction as about 14% of the victims who sustained pellet gun injuries were below the age of 15 years (Ashiq, 2016). Along with the intensification of conflict in the valley, the violations across Line of Control also increased from both sides of the border. The diplomatic relations between India and Pakistan worsened in the wake of the attack at an Indian army base at Uri in September 2016. India blamed Pakistan for sponsoring and facilitating the attack which resulted in the death of 18 Indian soldiers (Ahmed, Philips, & Berlinger, 2016).

The problem statement for the study at hand deals with analyzing the differences in war, peace and neutral framing of Jammu and Kashmir conflict in the Indian and Pakistani press. Highly circulated English dailies Dawn and The Nation were selected from the Pakistani press while highly circulated English dailies Times of India and The Hindu were selected from the Indian press for the content analysis. The time period selected for the study has encompassed major events which evolved between 2010 and 2016 with respect to the development of Kashmir conflict.

The paper will help in making the journalists more reflective in terms of their editorial policies and choices which in turn can help the stakeholders find non-violent responses to the conflict. The significance of the paper also lies in its academic support in expanding the literature on intricacies involved in the development of Kashmir conflict with respect to war and peace journalism.

## **Literature Review**

Bar-Tal (2000) and Carruthers (2000) supported the notion that the way media cover conflicts is mostly damaging but still an alternative approach cannot be refuted altogether. Peace journalism has evolved over a period of time as the most accepted way of covering conflicts in comparison to conventional war journalism. War journalism has been marked by four major characteristics which included heavy dependence on visible aspects of conflict; promoting propaganda; promoting ethnocentrism by focusing on others' deceits while hiding ours' lies; projecting the opinions of elite and portraying victory over enemy as the ultimate outcome of the conflict (Galtung 2002, 1998). Peace Journalism, on the contrary, focused on preventing conflict; promotes reliance on truth for all competing groups; focuses on invisible aspects of conflict and promotes solution-centric approach (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005). The classification of peace and war journalism was further elaborated by McGoldrick and Lynch (2000) into 17 different practices and approaches to peace journalism. The major practices included focusing on long term effects of reporting, seeking solutions, interpreting conflicts from people's points of view, finding common grounds, employing non-inflammatory and precise language, covering the conflict from all angles and perspectives.

Peace Journalism is practiced best when the reporters and editors are sensitized enough to comprehend the impact of their reporting and editorial decisions. Peace Journalism is further defined as a form of both practical and conceptual framework which prepares and empowers journalists in terms of offering a better service to the public (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005). Peace journalism attempts at resolving the conflict by exposing truths of all involved stakeholders and it also tries to reduce conflict by minimizing the rift between the opposing parties (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005). Hanitzsch (2004) believed that it is through peace journalism that voice of all adversaries can be heard as a result of which peace initiatives can be highlighted especially in the context of post-conflict developments. Peace journalism focused more on ceasefire and resolution (Maslog, Lee & Kim, 2006). Peace Journalism has also been criticized for distorting reality by allowing journalists to incorporate their subjective opinions in the news stories (Rolston & MacLaughlin, 2004). A more rational and objective approach was proposed by Hume (1997) in the form of neutral framing of conflicts in which he has advocated the difference between partiality and taking liberties with facts.

A conflict generally attracts the attention of the media only when violence is expected to manifest in an apparent form (Jakobsen, 2000). The criterion on which news is selected involves standards which revolve around negativity, personalized and proximity preferences in connection to elite people and elite countries (Galtung & Vincent, 1992). Shinar (2004) argued that war frames were more preferably and extensively used by media even in instances where peace negotiations were involved. War Journalism carries a hidden but strong bias in the favor of violence (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005).

As part of the theoretical framework, the study also employed the theory of framing. Norris (1995) considered news framing as part of cognitive schematics which journalists use to systemize and structure the events in a journalistic narrative. Entman (1991) further clarified that news frames are comprehended through metaphors, selection of words, symbols, images and concepts employed in a news story. Conflicts are also analyzed through the ethnocentric lens in terms of 'Us' and 'Them' especially with reference to war journalism (Axelrod & Hammond, 2003; Bar-Tal,

1998; Carruthers, 2000). Sumner (2007) defined it as the notion of centralizing and prioritizing one's own group while the others are always assessed in comparison to one's own centrally superior group.

The framing of the Indo-Pak conflict had been extensively studied by researchers and academicians in relation to Jammu and Kashmir conflict (Cheema, 2015; Sehgal, 2011; Siraj, 2008; Sreedharan, 2009; Zaheer, 2017; Zaid, Yousafzai & Ali, 2013). Zia & Syedah's (2015) study also asserted that the coverage of J&K conflict focused more on violent aspects and remained unsuccessful in emphasizing peaceful alternatives. Sreedharan (2009) concluded that the coverage of Kashmir conflict in the Indian press was government-led and negative.

## Methodology

This study has endeavored to explore the differences in the coverage of Kashmir conflict by the Pakistani and Indian press. News stories on Kashmir conflict published in the national and international pages of Dawn, The Nation, The Hindu and Times of India were selected for the content analysis. Stories published against the selected events between 2010 and 2016 were retrieved from the online versions of the selected newspapers and compared for the purpose of content analysis. The study has focused majorly on the incidents which evolved between May 2010 and September 2016. These incidents as discussed in the literature review not only had a significant influence on the regions' peace scenario but were also considered recent and more powerful in terms of their impact on the evolution of Kashmir conflict. Although all significant events of Kashmir history were marked by protests but it was during and after 2010 that Kashmiri youth and all segments of Kashmiri population in retaliation to the Indian State policies and atrocities came to the forefront with full thrust and deployed all mediums to raise their voice.

The Unit of analysis for the current study was every individual news story. Categorization of recurrent themes of the selected stories was done for the purpose of content analysis. News stories were categorized into war, peace and neutral frames in light of the operational definitions which in turn drew their theoretical support from the relevant literature.

A total of 281 stories were retrieved against the selected events. Total number of stories retrieved from Dawn was 73 which comprised of 25.98% of the total data; 56 news stories were retrieved from Times of India which comprised of almost 19.93% of the total data; 59 news stories were retrieved from The Hindu which comprised of 20.99% of the whole data; and 93 stories were retrieved from The Nation which comprised of almost 33.10% of the total data. The stories were analyzed according to the coding sheet attached in the Appendix.

## Research Questions

1. How the Kashmir conflict is covered in the Indian and Pakistani press with respect to war framing?
2. How the Kashmir conflict is covered in the Indian and Pakistani press with respect to peace framing?
3. How the coverage of Jammu and Kashmir conflict is different in the English press of India and Pakistan?

Peace Frames	War Frames
<b>Peace oriented:</b> violent features of the story are not highlighted as the only facts; discouraging aggression and violence	<b>Violence oriented:</b> violent features of the story are overemphasized in comparison to less violent features of the news story; did not condemn acts of violence
<b>Non-victimization oriented:</b> the story constrained the usage of victimizing words like brutal, aggressor, agitator, savage, disastrous	<b>Victimization oriented:</b> the story used victimizing expressions and words like a massacre, terrorism, genocide, mobster
<b>Reconciliatory Language-oriented:</b> the story is not used to intensify and escalate the conflict	<b>Inflammatory Language-oriented:</b> the story is used to intensify and escalate the conflict
<b>Solution-oriented:</b> the story focused on peaceful and non-violent options while covering the conflict	<b>Zero-sum oriented:</b> the story presented only one stakeholder at the extreme winning or losing end
<b>Other oriented:</b> the version of all relevant stakeholders is incorporated in the story	<b>Us Oriented:</b> the story covered the opinion of only one stakeholder as the most justified opinion
<b>Invisible Effects Oriented:</b> the story highlighted less visible effects of conflict like emotional and psychological suffering	<b>Visible Effects Oriented:</b> the story highlighted only visible effects of conflict like killings and infrastructural losses
<b>Dialogue Oriented:</b> the story highlighted the need for dialogue and negotiation	<b>Confrontation Oriented:</b> the story undermined the significance of dialogue and encouraged confrontation
<b>Context oriented:</b> the story included background information	<b>Now Oriented:</b> the story omitted background information

<b>Multiple-source Oriented:</b> the information was obtained from independent sources	<b>Elite-source oriented:</b> the story depended only on elite sources of information including military, state, and bureaucracy
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**Figure 1.** Operationalization of Frames

**Findings**

1. How the Kashmir conflict is covered in the Indian and Pakistani press with respect to war framing?

**Table 1.** Frequency of News Stories

Newspaper	Frequency	Percentage
Dawn	73	25.98
The Nation	59	20.99
The Hindu	93	33.10
Times of India	56	19.93
Total	281	100

Table 1 illustrates the frequency and percentages of news stories retrieved from Dawn and The Nation (Pakistani Newspapers) and The Hindu and Times of India (Indian Newspapers). 25.98% of the data was retrieved from Dawn, 20.99% data was retrieved from The Nation, 33.10% data was retrieved from The Hindu and 19.93% of the total data was retrieved from Times of India.

**Table 2.** Cross Tabulation of War Frames and Newspaper Stories

War Frames	Dawn	The Nation	The Hindu	Times of India	Total (% of Total)
Violence Oriented	38 (13.52%)	61 (21.71%)	48 (17.08%)	49 (17.43%)	196 (69.75%)
Inflammatory Language Oriented	37 (13.17%)	61 (21.71%)	48 (17.08%)	46 (16.37%)	192 (68.33%)
Victimization Oriented	41 (14.59%)	61 (21.71%)	48 (17.08%)	50 (17.79%)	200 (71.17%)
Zero Sum Oriented	33 (11.74%)	56 (19.93%)	46 (16.37%)	47 (16.73%)	182 (64.79%)
Confrontation Oriented	37 (13.16%)	56 (19.95%)	42 (14.95%)	48 (17.08%)	183 (65.12%)
Visible Effects Oriented	39 (13.88%)	57 (20.28%)	41 (14.59%)	48 (17.08%)	185 (65.84%)
Now Oriented	28 (9.97%)	60 (21.35%)	40 (14.23%)	48 (17.08%)	176 (62.63%)
Elite Source Oriented	37 (13.17%)	61 (21.71%)	48 (17.08%)	48 (17.08%)	194 (69.04%)
Us Oriented	41 (14.59%)	61 (21.71%)	46 (16.37%)	50 (17.79%)	198 (70.46%)

**Chi-Square:**  $\chi^2 (27, N = 281) = 71.476, p < .05$

Table 2 describes the differences in war framing of the selected four newspapers. The Chi-Square test yielded a result of 71.476, df =27, p<.05 which shows that the difference between the war reporting of the four newspapers is significant.

2. How the Kashmir is covered in the Indian and Pakistani press with respect to peace framing?

**Table 3.** Cross Tabulation of Peace Frames and Newspaper Stories

Peace Frames	Dawn	The Nation	The Hindu	Times of India	Total
Peace oriented	28 (9.96%)	25 (8.89%)	4 (1.42%)	5 (1.78%)	62 (22.06%)
Reconciliatory Language oriented	29 (10.32%)	25 (8.89%)	4 (1.42%)	8 (2.85%)	66 (23.49%)

Non-victimization oriented	25 (8.89%)	25 (8.89%)	4 (1.42%)	4 (1.42%)	58 (20.64%)
Solution oriented	33 (11.74%)	30 (10.68%)	6 (2.13%)	7 (2.49%)	76 (27.04%)
Dialogue oriented	29 (10.32%)	30 (10.68%)	10 (3.56%)	5 (1.78%)	74 (26.33%)
Invisible Effects oriented	27 (9.61%)	29 (10.32%)	11 (3.92%)	6 (2.14%)	73 (25.98%)
Context oriented	38 (13.52%)	26 (9.25%)	12 (4.27%)	6 (2.13%)	82 (29.18%)
Multiple Source oriented	29 (10.32%)	25 (8.89 %)	4 (1.42%)	6 (2.13%)	64 (22.78%)
Others oriented	25 (8.89%)	25 (8.89 %)	6 (2.13 %)	4 (1.42 %)	60 (21.35%)

**Chi-Square:**  $\chi^2 (27, N = 281) = 67.580, p < .05$

Table 3 shows the differences in peace framing of the Kashmir conflict in the selected four dailies. The Chi Square results  $\chi^2 (27, N = 281) = 67.580, p < .05$  reflect that the differences in the peace framing is significant.

**Table 3.** Cross Tabulation of Neutral Coverage with Indian and Pakistani Press

Newspaper	Neutral Coverage
Pakistani Newspapers	14 (8.4%)
Indian Newspapers	9 (7.8%)
Chi-Square df=1, p<.05	0.033

Table 3 reflects that the difference in neutral reporting of the selected newspapers is not significant.

- How the coverage of Jammu and Kashmir conflict is different in the English press of India and Pakistan?

**Table 4.** Cross Tabulation of Indian and Pakistani Newspapers With War Frames

Newspaper	War Frames	Total frames	Total Stories
Indian Newspapers	841 (81.256%)	1035	115
Pakistani Newspapers	865 (57.898%)	1494	166
Chi-Square: $\chi^2 (9, N = 281) = 24.825, p < .05$			

Table 4 reflects that war framing of Kashmir Conflict is significantly different in Indian and Pakistani newspapers. The Indian newspapers took the lead in war framing in comparison to Pakistani newspapers.

## Discussion & Conclusion

The study attempted to compare the coverage of Kashmir conflict in the mainstream English press of Pakistan and India in the context of peace and war framing. The Findings of content analysis supported the literature that the coverage of Kashmir conflict is dominated by war framing. The results of the content analysis clearly showed that war framing was recorded as the most dominant coverage pattern. Indian Newspapers took the lead in war framing of Kashmir conflict which validated Sreedharan's (2009) findings as he also asserted that coverage of Kashmir conflict in the Indian press was more dominated by war frames along with being government-led and negative. Shinar also (2004) argued that war frames were more preferably and extensively used by media. Despite the major differences in war and peace framing of Kashmir Conflict the findings of the content analysis indicated no significant differences in the neutral coverage of Kashmir conflict by the Indian and Pakistani press.

The findings supported that war journalism relied on apparent effects of conflict, it encouraged propaganda in terms of exposing others' lies and hiding own truths, it promoted opinion of elite and presents victory over the enemy as the final result of the conflict (Galtung 2000, 1998). The findings also supported Zia & Syedah's (2015) study which showed that the coverage of J&K conflict mostly thrived on violent features of the conflict while failed in highlighting peaceful alternatives. Results supported Galtung's (1998) views on the use of negative language for increasing the influence of war journalism. Peace journalism, on the other hand, focused more on ceasefire and resolution (Maslog, Lee & Kim, 2006).

The Kashmir conflict was covered more dominantly through peace framing in Dawn as compared to The Nation, The Hindu and Times of India. Peace journalism attempted at resolving the conflict by exposing truths of all involved stakeholders and it also tried to reduce conflict by minimizing the rift between the opposing parties (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2007). Hanitzsch (2004) believed that it is through peace journalism that voice of all adversaries can be heard as a result of which peace initiatives can be highlighted especially in the context of post-conflict developments.

The study also strengthened the notion that conflicts can be analyzed through the ethnocentric lens in terms of 'Us' and 'Them' (Axelrod & Hammond, 2003; Bar-Tal, 1998; Carruthers, 2000). One's own group is centralized while the others are always assessed in comparison to own centrally superior group (Sumner 2007, p.13). India has always approached conflict in terms of blaming Pakistan for sponsoring insurgency and terrorism in the valley while Pakistan has blamed India for depriving Kashmiris of their right of self-determination and committing atrocities in the valley through Indian Occupational Forces.

The results of the content analysis clearly showed that war framing was recorded as the most dominant coverage pattern with respect to Kashmir conflict. The differences in war and peace framing of Kashmir Conflict by the Indian and Pakistani newspapers were significant. Indian Newspapers took the lead in war framing of Kashmir conflict. Kashmir conflict was covered more dominantly through peace framing in Dawn as compared to The Nation, The Hindu and Times of India.

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**Coding Sheet**

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**V1-Newspaper**

1=Dawn 2=The Nation 3=Times of India 4=The Hindu

**V2-Event**

1= Machil sector  
2= General amnesty scheme  
3= Unmarked graves  
4= Afzal Guru  
5= LoC  
6= Mufti M. Sayeed as CM  
7= ban on beef  
8= Mehbooba Mufti  
9= Sainik Colonies  
10= Burhan Wani  
11= Longest Curfew  
12= Uri Attack

**V3-Placement**

1=National page 2= International Page

**V4- War frames**

War A1=violence (1=Yes, 2=No)  
War A2=Inflammatory language (1=Yes, 2=No)  
War A3=Victimization (1=Yes, 2=No)  
War A4=Zero sum (1=Yes, 2=No)  
War A5=Confrontation (1=Yes, 2=No)  
War A6- Visible effects (1=Yes, 2=No)  
War A7=Now (1=Yes, 2=No)  
War A8=Elite-source (1=Yes, 2=No)  
War A9=Us Oriented(1=Yes, 2=No)

**V5-Peace Frames**

Peace A1=peace (1=Yes, 2=No)  
Peace A2=Reconciliatory language (1=Yes, 2=No)  
Peace A3=Non-victimization (1=Yes, 2=No)  
Peace A4=Solution (1=Yes, 2=No)  
Peace A5=Dialogue (1=Yes, 2=No)  
Peace A6= invisible effects (1=Yes, 2=No)  
Peace A7=Context (1=Yes, 2=No)  
Peace A8-Multiple-source (1=Yes, 2=No)  
Peace A9=Other-oriented (1=Yes, 2=No)

**V6-Neutral Frame (1=Yes, 2=No)**