



## Indo-Pak Media Approach towards Peace and War Journalism during the Policy Crisis: Analyzing the Coverage of Pulwama Attack and Balakot Air-Strike in daily Dawn and The Hindu

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### ABSTRACT

*This study contently examines the media coverage of Pulwama attack and Balakot air strike in daily Dawn and The Hindu, wherein the total 162 news stories on both the selected issues were thoroughly analyzed in the broader perspective of peace journalism. Supporting the core theoretical assumptions of indexing theory [media follow the guidelines of elites] and policy-media interaction model [media tow the government's policy line], the Indo-Pak media employ, to some extent, peace journalism, especially at the time of policy crisis. However, the study shows mixed results as the Indian newspaper, owing to prevailing political environment in India, was more inclined towards war journalism 38.8% as compare to the war-oriented 12.2% coverage in daily Dawn. On other hand, the findings indicate high level of tendency in daily Dawn i.e. 53.7% towards peace journalism, comparing with 23.8% peace-oriented coverage in daily The Hindu.*

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### 1. Introduction

The two-nuclear neighbor states- Pakistan and India have been, most of the time in their history, engaged in handling with policy crisis towards each other since their inception in 1947. Among all the outstanding issues, the dispute of Kashmir has always been a center point of policy crisis between the two-rival neighboring countries of South Asia. The state of hostile relations is, obviously, the result of the issue of Kashmir, which could not be resolved according to the partition's formula, wherein the people of Kashmir had to decide to join India or to become a part of Pakistan (Tremblay, 2009). After the promulgation of Indian independence Act 1947 the status of more than 562 princely states, including Kashmir, was nullified and they were given option to join Pakistan

and India or hold an independent position; however, ignoring the expectations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, one of the largest Muslim populated states, the Hindu Maha Raja Hari Singh opted to join India through a signed agreement on October, 25, 1947 (Bose, 2009).

Soon after the partition, leaving the Kashmir issue undecided, the political situation became so worsen that both the newly established countries engaged in a full-scale war (Ganguly & Kapur, 2010). This war [1948's war] changed the nature of Kashmir issue, which became internationalized when the Indian government requested for intervention of United Nations' Security Council in the issue of Kashmir in 1948 (Schofield, 2010). The Security Council and its sub-body, the United Nations Commission in India and Pakistan (UNCIP), passed three different resolutions in 1948 and 1949, wherein the international bodies urged Pakistan and India to take steps for peaceful resolution of the issue by letting the people of Kashmir opportunity to decide their future (Schofield, 2010).

Temporary peace like situation was witnessed after the UN resolutions on Kashmir issue but the war-laden political environment remained a dominant feature in the context of Kashmir issue, which resulted into four wars in 1948, 1965, 1971 and 1999- Kargil war (MZ, Iqbal & S. Hussain, 2018). Before discussion on the Pak-Indian media approach towards Kashmir issue, which became a nuclear flash point after nuclear tests in 1998, the researcher briefly analyzed the available scholarship regarding peace and war journalism.

These are following research question and hypothesis

**RQ.** What is the pattern of frames' distribution regarding peace and war journalism in daily *Dawn* and *The Hindu*?

**Ho.** The distribution of slants [ nature of media coverage] is same in daily *Dawn* and *The Hindu*.

**H1:** There is significant difference in approach of Pak-Indian media towards peace and war journalism.

## **2. Relationship between Media and Conflict: A War Journalism Perspective**

The available scholarship reveals that there are number of factors, which determine the war-media nexus. Some of the factors including the patriotic card that media use willingly, the self-censorship and government censorship, the role of lobbies/ opposition and ruling elites, and the commercial interests of media, have key role in determining the war coverage in media (Robinson, 2000; Entman, 2004). Many of researchers, who view media role in war critically, found that journalists while keeping a side the professional considerations, demonstrated high level of patriotism and nationalism during wars (Knightly, 2004; Allan & Zelizer, 2004; Thussu & Freedman, 2003).

The overview of war journalism or media reports regarding conflict, especially between two countries, revealed that the conflict, as a source of hard news, gets prominence space and time in media. Whereas the media while using the sensational frames and military jargon don't remain as a partial or impartial observer rather they are part of the battle (McLaughlin, 2016). Hence, the media act as instrument to safeguard the interests of governing elites through escalatory or militarized frames as Lynch (2007) argues that government and military put pressure , in many cases, on media to manipulate and construct a social reality that may serve the government's interests.

In the context of South Asia, different scholarship analyzed the Indo-Pak media coverage on bilateral issues and found the escalatory role of media during wars between India and Pakistan

(Seth, 2016). For instance, a study that was designed to evaluate the news coverage of Kashmir issue in elite English and Urdu newspapers of Pakistan, found that elite English press was more inclined to war journalism than the Urdu press (Siraj & Hussain, 2012). In light of the above discussion it can be concluded that media inclination towards war journalism depends on the political environment and all or some of the above-mentioned influencing factors that vary conflict to conflict.

### **3. Relationship between Media and Conflict: A Peace Journalism Perspective**

The relevant scholarship on peace journalism attempts to determine the connection between media and peace process or peace advocacy; wherein it is urged that journalists should focus on causes of conflict instead of, simply, reporting of violent events during conflict (Lynch, 2008). In his seminal work on peace journalism Johan Galtung (2003) argued that peace journalism is an approach of focusing on conflict resolution and suggesting a number of ways [for restoration of peace].

The peace journalism is, mainly, focus on two sides of the conflict/war related media coverage, firstly it provides guidance to scholars who are interested in critical evaluation of war reporting and secondly it helps journalists to [positively] construct their approach towards war reporting by providing them practical plans and options (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2007). Perhaps, the basic objective of peace journalism lays in the selection process of journalists, hence the term peace journalism is related to editors and reporters' choices regarding nonviolent responses to conflict (Lynch, 2015).

In the debate on the role of media in peace process, obviously linked with peace journalism, scholars expressed different views. For instance, Hanitzsch (2004) argued that journalism/journalists contribute their role in peace process but this role is limited. Perhaps, peace journalism as an alternative perspective to traditional war reporting, but it is not yet deeply rooted in practical field of journalism. However, for making peace journalism a practical one and bringing it into mainstream approach to news coverage of war and conflict, it is necessary to bring some structure changes in pattern of war reporting.

The study is designed to evaluate the Indo-Pak media coverage of the Kashmir issue at the time of crisis; wherein the researcher has taken into consideration the three salient indicators from a study i.e. avoidance of demonizing language, a nonpartisan approach and a multiparty orientation (Lee & Maslog, 2005).

### **4. Media and the Issue of Kashmir: A Nuclear Flash Point**

Though Pakistan and India have fought full-scale wars (MZ, Iqbal & S. Hussain, 2018), mainly on the issue of Kashmir, but the long-awaited disputes between the two South Asian countries drew the attention of political players after both the rival countries- Pakistan and India, carried out nuclear tests in May 1998. This development not only brought the issue of Kashmir in limelight internationally, but also turned the issue into the nuclear flashpoint between Pakistan and India, compelling the world's powers to intervene and initiate efforts for defusing the tense political environment (MZ, Iqbal & S. Hussain, 2018).

Subsequently, efforts were initiated by Pakistan and Indian to bring normality in the region, as a result both the countries have signed Lahore Declaration in February 1999 but a sudden shift

was happened when both countries were engaged in the Kargil war in a short span of time after the Lahore Declaration . However, both countries came up with effective diplomacy at global level and successfully overcome the situation before further escalation (Ray, 2004).

Some of the studies on the media role during war found that media outlets, instead of questioning the logic behind Iraqi war, ranked the daily incidents [hard news] on top of their priorities, wherein they [media] were found more focusing on official expressions in their news coverage (Aday et. al., 2005; Lewis et al, 2006). Similarly, keeping in view the prevailing trend in media sector that most of time they focus on official views during conflict , in another study the researcher argued that media of both the countries- Pakistan and India, as “part of the problem” during the Kargil and Mumbai attacks (Bose, 2011). Hence, responsible for accelerating the war-laden environment in the region.

Keeping in view the above scholarly discussion, it is worth to investigate the Indo-Pak media coverage of Kashmir dispute, especially at time when it [the issue of Kashmir] passes through a violent phase. The selected issues relating to policy matter on Kashmir dispute i.e. Pulwama attack and Balakot air strikes are worth for analyzing the media coverage in the context of peace and war journalism. Pakistan, soon after capturing the Indian Airforce Wing Commander, Abhinandan, released him as peace gesture (*Dawn*, 2019) while the Indian government, engaged in elections campaign, used the incidents for its political score “ Even as opposition parties lauded the role of the Indian Air Force in the Balakot strike, its political impact has given them cause for concern” (*The Hindu*, 2019).

### **5. Media, the Issue of Kashmir and Policy Interaction: Theoretical Perspective**

The relationship between media and government, most obviously, become friendly at the time of policy crisis and conflict, whereas the media is usually taking side in conflict or elite debate on policy matter (Robinson, 2001). Some of the researchers including Entman, 2003; Lawrence, 2000; Livingston S & Bennett WL, 2003 and Wolfsfeld, 2018, studied the media-government relationship in the context of policy. Their studies, mainly, evaluate the state of relationship between government and media during humanitarian crisis and conflicts in light of different theoretical perspectives.

This study is conducted in perspective of indexing theory (Bennett,1990) and policy-media interaction model (Robinson, 2001) to, rigorously, analyze the Indo-Pak media approach towards peace and war journalism. The synergy of the selected theoretical perspectives is done with the basic aim to connect the key arguments of the indexing theory i.e. media index the elite debate and policy-media interaction model i.e. media tow the government policy line when there is policy certainty, so that to build a, more, comprehensive narrative on the role of media during conflict or at the time of policy crisis. Certainly, this study contributes in scholarship on peace journalism, which is focusing on conflict resolution (Galtung, 2003).

### **6. Methodology**

The researcher applied the content analysis method to determine the Pakistan and Indian media approach towards peace and war journalism in the context of Kashmir issue, which is not only, most of the time, passes through violent phase but also one of the major deterrents of the Indo-Pak policy in the region. The content analysis method is used to interpret meaning from the [published news] or the content of text data (Hsieh,H & Shannon, 2005). To do content analysis of

the news stories relating to the selected issues i.e. Pulwama attack and Balakot air strike, the below given frames were identified to examine that either the selected newspapers are more inclined to peace journalism[reporting the nonviolent aspects of issues] or there is higher tendency towards war journalism. These frames, which consist of three categories, have “specific properties” to build narrative that help in developing particular understandings of the issues (Entman, 1991).

**Table 1: Evaluating the media’s inclination on the basis of frames**

Peace oriented reporting	Independent/ balance reporting	War oriented reporting
<i>Likely subjects:</i> Peace talks, Condemnation, Political response, Role of International community, Cooperation in investigation,	<i>Likely subjects:</i> Mix of peace and war related frames	<i>Likely subjects:</i> Allegations/blame game, Violence/attacks, Tension, LoC firing,

**7. Findings**

**7.1 R.Q: What is the pattern of frames’ distribution regarding peace and war journalism in daily Dawn and The Hindu?**

Below tables 1 & 2 show the pattern of frames’ distribution in selected newspapers i.e. *daily Dawn* and *The Hindu* regarding peace and war journalism. These frames were reported at the time when Pakistan and India were passing through policy crisis over two back to back issues i.e. Pulwama attack and Balakot air strike.

**Table 2. Frames relating to Peace Journalism in daily Dawn and The Hindu**

	Frames (Peace Journalism)					Total
	<i>Peace/talks</i>	<i>Condemnation</i>	<i>Political response</i>	<i>Role of international community</i>	<i>Cooperation in investigation</i>	
<b>Dawn</b>	23/31.1%	11/14.9%	14/18.9%	21/28.4%	5/6.8%	74/100%
<b>The Hindu</b>	5/12.2%	13/31.7%	6/14.6%	17/41.5%	0/0.0%	41/100%
<b>Total</b>	28/24.3%	24/20.9%	20/17.4%	38/33.0%	5/4.4%	115/100%

$X^2 (4, N=115) = 25.391, p < 0.005$

**Table 3. Frames relating to War Journalism in daily Dawn and The Hindu**

	Frames (War Journalism)				Total
	<i>Allegations/blame game</i>	<i>Attack/violence</i>	<i>Tension</i>	<i>LoC firing</i>	
<i>Dawn</i>	13/26%	19/38%	10/20%	8/16%	50/100%
<i>The Hindu</i>	15/25%	30/50%	15/25%	0/0.0%	60/100%
<b>Total</b>	28/25.5%	49/44.5%	25/22.7%	8/7.3%	110/100%

$$X^2 (3, N=110) = 30.873, p < 0.005$$

The table 1 shows the frames relating to peace journalism, where both Indo-Pak media covered the issue of Pulwama attack and Balakot air strike in a way to contribute in peace process positively, this approach of both the selected newspapers is in line with the scholarship on peace journalism, which is focusing on conflict resolution (Galtung, 2003). However, comparing the different frames relating to peace-oriented journalism, there is seen a visible difference in approach of *daily Dawn* and *The Hindu* towards peace journalism in the context of Kashmir issue. The *daily Dawn* gave more focus to peaceful resolution of the standoff between the two neighboring countries as the peace/talk frame in *daily Dawn* is reported 31.1% in its coverage, contrary, the same frame is documented 12.2% in *daily The Hindu*. Condemnation is another frame, which is one of the attributions of peace journalism in this study. The Indian newspaper is found more inclined to condemning the selected issues, especially the Pulwama attack, wherein the researcher found this frame higher in *The Hindu* than *daily Dawn* as 31.7% and 14.9% frames relating condemnation were found in *The Hindu* and *daily Dawn* respectively. Apart from political response to the issues, both newspapers gave total 33% frames regarding the role of international community, wherein the selected newspapers, while advancing the stances of their respective governments on the issue of Kashmir, urged the international communities to play their role for peace in the region. Soon after the Pulwama attack Pakistan offered to help in investigation, thus the *daily Dawn* highlighted this government's stance by publishing 6.8% frames in this regard. On other hand, the Indian newspaper did not report even a single frame on Pakistan's offer to cooperate in investigation.

The statistical test reported significant differences among the above mentioned five framing categories of peace journalism i.e.  $X^2 (4, N=115) = 25.391, p < 0.005$ . The findings indicate that *daily Dawn* was more inclined to peace/talks while *The Hindu* towards condemnation frame.

The table 2 shows frames relevant to war journalism in the context of Kashmir issue. Analyzing the overall frames, it is shown that 45.5% war related frames were reported in *daily Dawn* and 54.55% in *The Hindu*. Comparing the different frames relating to war-oriented journalism, both newspapers have, almost, equally reported the frames regarding allegations/blame game and tension after the two incidents of Pulwama attack and Balakot air strike [see table. 2]. However, the rest of two frames got different space as *daily Dawn* reported 38% frame of attack/violence while the same frame is found, comparatively high, in *The Hindu* i.e. 50%. Similarly, the frame of LoC firing is found missing in Indian newspaper while *daily Dawn* gave 16% space to the same frame, highlighting the civilian casualty caused by firing of Indian forces during the policy deadlock between Pakistan and India after Pulwama attack.

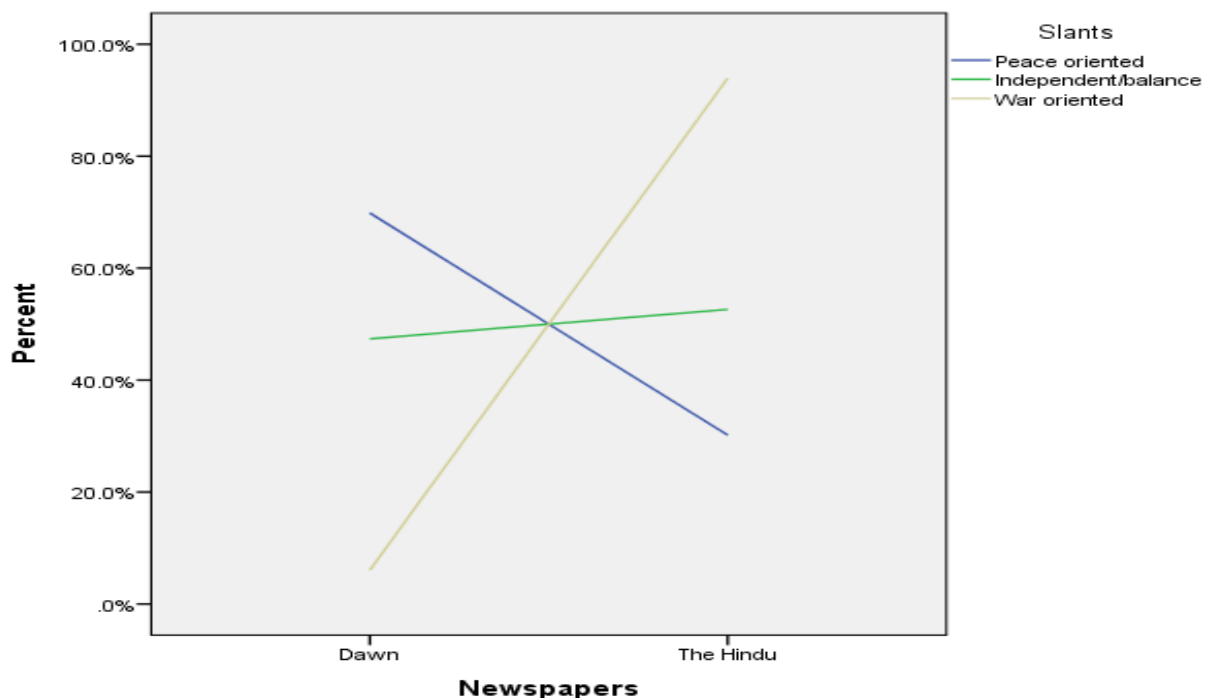
The statistical test reported significant differences among the above mentioned four framing categories of war journalism i.e.  $X^2 (3, N=110) = 30.873, p < 0.005$ . The findings show that *daily Dawn* was more inclined to peace/talks while *The Hindu* towards condemnation frame.

**Table 3. Coverage of Selected Issues in Perspective of Peace and War Journalism in daily Dawn and The Hindu**

	Slants			Total
	Peace oriented	Independent/balance	War oriented	
<b>Dawn</b>	44/53.7%	28/34.1%	10/12.2%	82/100%
<b>The Hindu</b>	19/23.8%	30/37.5%	31/38.8%	80/100%
<b>Total</b>	63/38.9%	58/35.8%	41/25.3%	162/100%

$X^2 (2, N=162) = 20.724, p = .000$  or  $p < 0.005$

**Figure 3. Coverage of Selected Issues in Perspective of Peace and War Journalism in daily Dawn and The Hindu**



**7.2 Testing hypothesis**

The above table 3 shows that both the selected newspapers- *daily Dawn* and *The Hindu* covered the Pulwama attack and Balakot air strike in the line with the policy statement/ stances of their respective governments, which supports the core assumption of the indexing theory (Bennett, 1990). Similarly, there has always been policy certainty on politically controlled issue of Kashmir,

hence media, most obviously, tow the government's policy line, backing the key assumption of policy-media interaction model (Robinson, 2001).

Comparing the three categories of news coverage including peace-oriented, balance/independent and war-oriented coverage, the findings show that the peace-oriented category or slant get the highest amount of coverage in *daily Dawn* i.e. 53.7%, following the category of independent/balance 34.1% and war-oriented 12.2% of the total coverage, which *daily Dawn* has given to both the issues. Unlike *daily Dawn*, the Indian newspaper was more inclined to war journalism as 38.8% of its coverage falls in the war-oriented category, following 37.4% independent/balance and 23.8% peace-oriented coverage in daily *The Hindu*.

The overall findings, which are given in the table 3 and the graphical pattern of news coverage in *daily Dawn* and *The Hindu*, shown in the above figure 3, indicate that there is significant difference in approach of Indo-Pak media towards peace and war journalism. This difference is also confirmed statistically [ $\chi^2(2, N=162) = 20.724, p = .000$  or  $p < 0.005$ ], where the p-value is recorded less than 0.005, which rejects the null hypothesis and hence, approves the alternative hypothesis of this study ***“There is significant differences in approach of Pak-India media towards peace and war journalism”***.

## **8. Discussion and Conclusion**

The researcher while examining the Indian and Pakistani media converge of the issue of Kashmir, when it passes through a violent phase and there prevails policy crisis between the two neighboring countries, studied the media approach towards peace and war journalism. The basic objective of the study was to examine the evidence of peace journalism in the context of Kashmir issue, which supplement the perspective of Galtung (2003) regarding peace journalism. The findings suggest that there is enough evidence (38.9%) in favor of the practice of peace journalism in *daily Dawn* and *The Hindu*, however this depends on the political environment [elite debate on issue as suggested by Bennett, 1990] and the government's position on issue [policy certainty as suggested by Pier Robinson, 2001].

As policy certainty exists on the issue of Kashmir, and there is, soon after any development, triggered elite debate on the relations with India, generally and on the issue of Kashmir, particularly. The media take this debate in their contents and, mostly, advance the government point of view. After the Pulwama attack, the government of Pakistan not only condemned the incident but also urged for peaceful resolution, contrary to Pakistani stance the Indian government, which was engaged in elections process, leveled allegations on Pakistan.

The different stances of Pakistan and Indian governments regarding Pulwama and Balakot incidents influenced the coverage in media, carrying the government's stance of peace *daily Dawn* was found more inclined to peace journalism while daily *The Hindu*, highlighting the violence frame higher than the rest of war related frames, inclined, comparatively, more towards war journalism.

This study has certain limitations as the researcher studied the news contents of only two newspapers, one each from Pakistan and India. Other researchers may carry out a more comprehensive research in this area by taking several newspapers, especially the electronic media and independent media of country other than Pakistan and India. Besides, national and regional Urdu newspapers are also worth to be studied.



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