

## Reporting of Kashmir Conflict in Elite press of Pakistan. A Descriptive Analysis

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### Abstract

*The study attempts to analyze the coverage of Jammu and Kashmir conflict through peace and war journalism along with understanding how the ideals of peace journalism can be translated into conflict reporting. The descriptive analysis of news stories published from August 5, 2019 to Dec 5, 2019 in the mainstream contemporary English press of Pakistan (Dawn and The Nation) and India (Times of India and The Hindu) is carried out through content analysis. The time period is significant because of the scrapping of Article 370 and its violent effects on the region. The approach of peace and war journalism is explored through in-depth interviews of Pakistani and Kashmiri journalists. The study concluded that both Pakistani and Indian press employed war framing more dominantly than peace framing while reporting Kashmir conflict. A higher instance of peace journalism was recorded in the Pakistani press in comparison to the Indian press. The ideals of peace journalism can be achieved by not justifying human rights violations and by refraining from becoming part of propaganda paradigm.*

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

## INTRODUCTION

Pakistan and India have always considered Jammu and Kashmir particularly the Indian held Kashmir an integral part of their respective national identities. Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) have been projected as a symbol of secularism by India because of its Muslim majority status (Boss, 2003) whereas Pakistan claimed a strong bond of association with J&K because of two-nation theory (Yong & Kudaisya, 2000). Thus, Jammu and Kashmir stood amid conflicting and contradictory state ideologies of South Asia's two most important states of India and Pakistan (Anderson, 1991) that also happen to be nuclear powers. The revocation of the autonomous Status of the Indian Occupied Kashmir after the abrogation of Article 370 of the Indian constitution has especially put the peace and safety of the whole region at a great risk.

Number of scholars (Bar-Tal, 2000; Carruthers, 2000; Manoff, 1998; Moeller, 2004; Wolfsfeld, 2004) suggested that the media coverage of conflict is mostly destructive but still an alternative and unconventional approach by media cannot not be negated altogether. Peace Journalism surfaced as an alternative way of reporting in which the journalists "care as well as know" (Bell, 1998, p.16) and in which the notions of responsibility and accountability goes hand in hand (Howard, 2003). The media coverage of Jammu and Kashmir in the context of conflict resolution and peace and war journalism has been a subject of interest for journalists and scholars alike (Cheema, 2015; Sehgal, 2011; Sonwalker, 2004; Sreedharan, 2009). As a result of major escalation in the Kashmir conflict the study at hand analyzed the coverage of Jammu and Kashmir conflict through the lens of peace and war journalism along with comprehending the extent to which ideals of peace journalism can be translated to conflict reporting.

## BACKGROUND OF J&K CONFLICT

The serene valley of Jammu and Kashmir had witnessed an armed uprising against the Indian administration since 1989 (Bukhari, 2016). The post Kargil situation saw intense violent atmosphere in the Jammu and Kashmir valley. In September 2015 Muslims of Jammu and Kashmir protested against the ban on eating beef. As a symbol of religious respect and harmony, majority of Muslims in Jammu and Kashmir consumed less beef keeping in context the religious feelings of Hindu majority (Ashiq, 2015). The year 2016 witnessed an intense violent wave in the valley. The leader of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) Mehbooba Mufti took oath as the first female Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir in April 2016. The death of Mufti Muhammad Sayeed in January 2016 paved way for the power struggle between Mehbooba Mufti, a law graduate and the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (Bukhari & Masroor, 2016). The Indian government wanted a new industrial policy in Jammu and Kashmir as a result of which non-locals would be allowed to acquire large areas of land in the valley. Therefore the government of Bharatiya Janata Party in India forcefully supported the resettlement of Hindu Pandits in the valley through the establishment of Sainik Colonies in May 2016 (The Indian Express, 2016). The issue of Sainik colony was still developing as a 22-year old separatist fighter from an upper class educated Kashmiri family, Burhan Wani was killed on

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July 8, 2016 (Bukhari, 2016). Wani was killed along with his two companions by the Indian Security forces. He revitalized the orthodox forms of demonstrations and protests by effectively employing social media platforms (Dasgupta, 2016). Burhan Wani's killing was followed by intense anti-Indian demonstrations across Jammu and Kashmir. Curfew was enforced in all districts of Jammu and Kashmir on 15th July 2016 which kept in force for 53 consecutive days and was lifted on 31st August but was again reinforced the next day (Khurshid, 2017).

In the wake of anti-state riots the heavy use of pellet guns by the Indian Security Forces made the situation more intense and violent. The photographs of severely injured and blinded civilians including women and children by the excessive use of pellet guns stimulated an international reaction. Eye injuries were reportedly sustained by more than 1000 civilians (The Indian Express, 2016). The victimization of children was intensely criticized because "14% of pellet gun victims in Kashmir were below the age of 15" (Ashiq, 2016). On September 18, 2016 near the de facto Pak-India border an Indian army base was attacked at Uri in Kashmir. India openly accused Pakistan of facilitating the attack which was executed by four fully armed militants and resulted in the death of 18 Indian soldiers (Ahmed, Philips, & Berlinger, 2016). The Uri attack initiated a more intensified blame game between India and Pakistan. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his Independence Day Speech on August 15, 2019 declared his government's step to strip Kashmir from the autonomous status as a milestone for bringing development and growth to the region (Malik, 2019). The revocation of the autonomous Status of the Indian Occupied Kashmir has put the peace and safety of the whole region at a great risk. The valley witnessed unprecedented protests in the wake of abrogation of Article 370 as the Indian Security Forces clashed with the civilians and detained a large number of Kashmiris.

The study has focused on analyzing the coverage of major events in the contemporary mainstream English press of Pakistan and India. Dawn and The Nation which are highly circulated English dailies of Pakistan were selected from the Pakistani English Press whereas Times of India and The Hindu which are highly circulated English dailies of India were selected from the Indian mainstream English Press. The nature of the study called for an exploratory approach along with the descriptive analysis of the content produced by the selected press. The exploratory perspectives of the study were entertained through the method of in-depth interviews of Pakistani and Indian journalists.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholars and academicians including Bell (1998); Galtung (2000, 1998, 1986, 1985); Lynch & McGoldrick (2005); Tehranian (2002) had sought alternate ways of reporting and humanizing conflicts. Peace Journalism draws its support from peace in comparison to violence; truth in comparison to propaganda; independent humans and individuals in comparison to the elite; and solution in comparison to victory or defeat. Peace journalism is referred to as a set of tools aimed at equipping journalists in terms of offering a better public service (Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005) Peace journalism is a form of reporting which has a more serious and professional

approach in terms of reporting conflicts (Lynch & Galtung, 2010).

Dependence on subjective insights of reporters is supported by peace journalism as journalists are not expected to stick to ideas of objectivity (Wolfe & Johnson, 1990). Peace Journalism can be understood as a special form of responsible journalism because it has the potential to contribute a substantive part in peace process (Hanitzsch 2004, p. 484).

Galtung's classification of peace and war journalism also took language in to context as the use of negative words in terms of victimization and persecution are not encouraged in peace journalism. Peace journalism promotes a resolution based advocacy method in conflict reporting not only through the formation of news stories but also through the choices which reporters and journalists practice which helps in developing non-violent diagnoses for society. A vocative approach also concentrated on emphasizing less visible aspects of violence along with searching for common grounds (Maslogetal, 2006, p.23). Lynch & McGoldrick presented peace journalism as a more logical, accurate and broader method of covering conflicts (Maslog, Lee & Kim, 2006). Lynch & McGoldrick (2005, p.5) interpreted peace journalism as a set of conceptual and practical apparatuses aimed at preparing journalists to offer a better public service.

Galtung's (1998) views were further expanded by McGoldrick and Lynch (2000) into 17 good practices of peace journalism. The practices comprised of offering solutions, reporting about long-term effects, humanizing the conflict, probing for common grounds, reporting versions of all involved stakeholders, and using accurate language. Robert Karl Manoff (2000, 1998) focused on 12 productive roles of the media which can be employed while reporting violent conflicts. The roles were in compliance with the classification laid out by Lynch & McGoldrick. The major roles included communicator among opposing parties; educating on various aspects of conflict; building relationships; neutralizing misperceptions; classifying the hidden interests; promoting balance of power; and seeking solutions.

The manner in which conflicts are reported by the media and the way it defined and redefined public sphere has been a matter of special interest for academicians and journalists alike. According to McCombs and Shaw (1972) mass communication has the power to affect and change perceptions and knowledge of public which is done through the process of framing. The notions of agenda setting and framing had not only effects on the process of public opinion formation but were also a representation of journalists' prejudices and perceptions in terms of interpreting the conflict scenarios (Aslam, 2014). Media not only made the audience aware about the public issues but also dictated how much importance should be given to an issue or matter (Brosius & Weimann, 1996). Media therefore played an important role in conflict situations. The framing of the Pakistan-India conflict with reference to Jammu & Kashmir had been extensively covered by researchers and academicians (Cheema, 2015; Sehgal, 2011; Sreedharan, 2009; Zaheer, 2017; Zahid, Yousafzai & Ali, 2013). Thus the role of press and media both in terms of escalation or de-escalation of conflict is largely dependent on the framing along with the peace and war approach used by the journalists.

## METHODOLOGY

The study was aimed at investigating the coverage of Kashmir conflict in the contemporary mainstream English press of Pakistan and India in the context of peace and war journalism. The method of content analysis was employed to analyze the press coverage of Kashmir conflict. The news stories published on the national and international pages of Daily Dawn and Daily the Nation from Pakistani press; Daily Times of India and Daily the Hindu from Indian press were selected for the purpose of content analysis. News stories published about the major events which evolved during the time period of August 5, 2019 to Dec 5, 2019 were selected for the purpose of the study. The time period was significant because of the scrapping of Article 370 and its following consequences on the stability of the region.

Figure-01 Operationalization of Frames

Peace frames	War frames
<b>Peace oriented:</b> facts and aspects supporting conflict resolution are highlighted in the story in comparison to facts and aspects related to violence and aggression	<b>Violence oriented:</b> facts and aspects related to violent events of conflict are highlighted in the story in comparison to less violent responses to conflict
<b>Truth Oriented:</b> points of view of more than one or all stake holders with competing interests are included in the story	<b>Propaganda Oriented:</b> points of view of one stake holder are propagated as the only available and justified point of view
<b>Multiple Source Oriented:</b> Information derived from independent sources and first hand versions of witnesses are also incorporated in the story	<b>Elite Source Oriented:</b> Information and versions of only elite sources like military and bureaucracy are incorporated in the story
<b>Solution Oriented:</b> Points of view of all stakeholders especially with reference to less or non-violent responses to conflict are covered and highlighted	<b>Zero-sum oriented:</b> Point of view of one of the stakeholders is covered and highlighted to present that particular stakeholder at the winning end of the conflict
<b>Neutral Frames:</b> Frames which were neither coded as peace nor as war frames were coded as neutral frames	

The unit of analysis for content analysis was every individual story. A coding sheet was developed for coding the content which is attached in the Appendix. Pilot study was conducted for checking the inter coder reliability which yielded satisfactory results. The study also attempted to explore the extent to which the ideals of peace journalism can be translated in to practices of conflict reporting by the journalists and reporters. For this exploratory angle the method of qualitative in-depth interviews was employed. A total of 12 journalists from Pakistan and Kashmir were purposively selected for the content analysis. A detailed questionnaire was developed for the purpose of in depth interviews.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1- To what extent the coverage of Kashmir conflict is dominated by peace, war or neutral framing in Indian and Pakistani press?

2- To what extent it is possible to translate the ideals of peace journalism in to practices of conflict reporting?

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table-01 Frequency of Retrieved News stories

Newspaper	Frequency of stories
Dawn	38 (22.75%)
The Nation	52 (31.17%)
Times of India	39 (23.35%)
The Hindu	38 (22.75%)
Total	167 (100%)

Table-01 shows the frequency of news stories which appeared in the selected newspapers. A total of 38 stories were appeared in the Daily Dawn who comprised of 22.75% of the total number of stories. 52 stories were appeared in the Daily Nation which made 31.17% of the total data. A total of 39 stories were appeared in the Daily Times of India which comprised of 23.35% of the total data. A total of 38 stories were appeared in the Daily Hindu which made 22.75% of the total data.

Table-02 Cross Tabulation of War Journalism and Newspapers

War Journalism	Dawn	The Nation	Times of India	The Hindu
Violence Oriented	20 (52.63%)	35(66.30%)	36 (92.30%)	30 (78.95%)
Propaganda Oriented	23 (60.52%)	35(66.30%)	36 (92.30%)	30 (78.95%)

Elite source Oriented	19 (50%)	35(66.30%)	34 (87.17%)	30 (78.95%)
Zero-Sum Oriented	16 (42.10%)	34(65.38%)	33 (84.61%)	29 (76.31%)

Chi-Square: $\chi^2$  (12, N = 167) = 40.430,  $p < .05$

Table-02 illustrates the highest percentage of violence oriented stories were reported in the Times of India followed by The Nation, The Hindu and Dawn correspondingly. Similarly the highest percentage of propaganda oriented stories was also reported in Times of India followed by The Nation, The Hindu and Dawn correspondingly. The highest percentage of Elite source oriented sources was recorded in The Nation followed by Times of India, The Hindu and Dawn correspondingly. Similar statistical trends were witnessed in Zero-Sum oriented stories with Nation taking a lead followed by Times of India, The Hindu and Dawn. The Chi-Square value of 40.430 with the significance level below .05 represents that the difference in war coverage of Kashmir Conflict in the selected four dailies was significant.

**Table-03 Cross Tabulation of Peace Journalism with Newspapers**

Peace Journalism	Dawn	The Nation	Times of India	The Hindu
Peace Oriented	14 (36.84%)	13 (25.0%)	3 (7.69%)	4 (10.52%)
Truth Oriented	11 (28.94%)	13 (25.0%)	3 (7.69%)	4 (10.52%)
Multiple source oriented	15 (39.47%)	13 (25.0%)	5 (12.82%)	4 (10.52%)
Solution Oriented	18 (47.36%)	14 (26.92%)	6 (15.38%)	5 (13.15%)

$\chi^2$  (12, N = 167) = 32.327,  $p < .05$

Table-03 shows that a highest percentage of peace oriented stories were recorded in Dawn, followed by The Nation, The Hindu and Times of India respectively. Highest percentage of Truth Oriented stories was published in The Nation followed by Dawn, The Hindu and Times of India. The highest percentage of Multiple Source Oriented and Solution Oriented stories were published in Dawn followed by The Nation, Times of India and The Hindu. The chi-square result of 32.327 with significance level of less than .05 reflects that the differences in peace reporting by the selected four daily newspapers were significant.

**Table-04 Cross tabulation of Neutral Frames with Newspapers**

Neutral Frames	Dawn	The Nation	Times of India	The Hindu	Total
	4 (10.52%)	4 (7.69%)	0	4 (10.52%)	12 (7.18%)

Chi-Square: $\chi^2$  (3, N = 167) = 4.395,  $p > .05$

Table-04 represents that the Dawn, The Hindu and The Nation recorded the same percentage of Neutral Stories while no neutral story was recorded in the Times of India. The Chi-Square results showed that no statistically significant differences were found in the four selected newspapers with reference to neutral coverage of Jammu and Kashmir issue.

To what extent the coverage of Kashmir conflict is dominated by peace, war or neutral framing in Indian and Pakistani press?

McCombs and Shaw (1972) asserted that mass communication has the power to affect and change perceptions and knowledge of public which is done through the process of framing. The notions of agenda setting and framing had not only effects on the process of public opinion formation but also represented journalists' prejudices and perceptions in terms of interpreting the conflict scenarios (Aslam, 2014). The study analyzed the coverage of Kashmir conflict through the operationalization of peace, war and neutral frames. The frequency distribution showed that the most extensive amount of coverage to Kashmir conflict was given by The Nation, followed by Times of India whereas Dawn and The Hindu reported the same amount of coverage (Table-01)

The descriptive results indicated that the highest percentage of pro-violence and propaganda centric stories were recorded in the Times of India from Indian Press. The highest percentage of Elite-Source centric and Zero-Sum centric stories was recorded in The Nation from Pakistani press. The statistics revealed that both Indian and Pakistani press employed war framing more dominantly in comparison to peace framing while reporting Kashmir conflict (Table-02). The results thus validated Galtung's (2000,1986) views on war journalism as it draws its support from violence, propaganda, elite sources and zero-sum approach.

In terms of peace journalism the highest percentage of pro-peace, independent source centric and solution centric stories were recorded in Dawn from Pakistani press, whereas the highest percentage of truth centric stories were published in The Nation from Pakistani press. The descriptive results revealed that a higher instance of peace journalism is recorded in the Pakistani press in comparison to Indian press (Table-03). Thus peace journalism can be referred to as a set of tools aimed at equipping journalists in terms of offering a better public service (Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005) because peace journalism draws its support from peace in comparison to violence; truth in comparison to propaganda; independent humans in comparison to the elite; and solution in comparison to victory or defeat.

To what extent it is possible to translate the ideals of peace journalism in to practices of conflict reporting?

Number of scholars like Carruthers (2000), Moeller (2004), Manoff (1997, 1998), Bar-Tal (2000) and Wolfsfeld (2004) suggested that the media coverage of conflict is mostly destructive but still an unconventional and alternative approach by media cannot be negated altogether. Peace Journalism surfaced as a way of reporting for reporters in which they care as well as know (Bell, 1998, p.16) and which carries the notions of responsibility and accountability together (Howard, 2003).

Respondents agreed that mostly the contention in war journalism is the narrative of victimhood in comparison to peace journalism which is a more logical and accurate way of reporting conflicts. In Indian press the Indian forces are portrayed as the victims and the Kashmiris as aggressors whereas in Pakistani perspective the narrative is vice versa. Gohar Gellani a Srinagar based journalist said that ideals of peace journalism can be achieved by not justifying human rights violations and also by not rationalizing the criminalization of “Kashmiris legitimate political opinion”. Shumaila Jaffery, an Islamabad based journalist said that the resolution approach in terms of “peace journalism can be translated by focusing on more in depth, humanized and consistent coverage of Kashmir issue”.

Galtung’s classification of peace and war journalism also took language in to context as the use of negative words in terms of victimization and persecution are not encouraged in peace journalism. Peace journalism promoted a resolution based advocacy method in conflict reporting through the choices of reporters and journalists which helps in developing non-violent diagnoses for society. A vocative approach also concentrated on emphasizing less visible aspects of violence along with searching for common grounds (Maslo et al, 2006). Sammar Abbas an Islamabad based journalist asserted that opinion writings and post-facto writings can add to the public sphere perspective but it is through actual reporting choices that journalists can fully take advantage of the notions of peace journalism including a search for common grounds and covering the less obvious and less talked about aspects of violent conflicts. Amber Shamsi an Islamabad based international journalist said that the “focus of the media is less on the colossal human tragedy and political disaster that Kashmir is facing, and more on the States’ nationalistic interests”. Gohar Gillani recalled that even when Indian Army’s Major Leetul Gogoi tied a Kashmiri civilian Farooq Dar to the bonnet of jeep and paraded him through several villages of central Kashmir’s Budgam district for hours the focus in the Indian English mainstream press was to give a clean chit to Gogoi. “His potential war crime was defended as an act performed in self-defense”.

Shumaila Jaffery, an Islamabad based international journalist also asserted that peace journalism can be utilized at best by ensuring that the journalists should refrain from becoming part of propaganda paradigm. Respondents agreed that in order to fully translate the ideals of peace journalism to practice the media need to step out of the nationalistic boundaries. It also needs to be assured at the state level that freedom of the press is not curtailed or muzzled. Respondents also agreed that prohibiting the dissemination of certain credible information as a result of declared

or undeclared censorship policies on the part of the governments also results in hindering the practices of peace journalism.

## CONCLUSION

The study of the content analysis revealed that both Pakistani and Indian press employed war framing more dominantly in comparison to peace framing while reporting Kashmir conflict but a higher instance of peace journalism was recorded in the Pakistani press in comparison to Indian press. Respondents agreed that the ideals of peace journalism can be translated in to conflict reporting by not justifying human rights violations and by focusing on more in depth coverage of less visible effects of Jammu and Kashmir conflict. A search for common grounds among key stake holders and refraining from becoming part of propaganda were among other key factors which can play a vital role in practicing peace journalism. Thus Peace Journalism can be understood as a special form of responsible journalism as it has the potential to contribute a fundamental part in the peace process.

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## APPENDIX Coding Sheet

### V1-Newspaper

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

### V2-Placement

1=National page      2= International Page

### V3- War frames

War A1=violence oriented (1=Yes, 2=No)

War A2=propaganda oriented (1=Yes, 2=No)

War A3= Elite Source Oriented (1=Yes, 2=No)

War A4=Zero sum Oriented(1=Yes, 2=No)

### V4-Peace Frames

Peace A1= Peace Oriented (1=Yes, 2=No)

Peace A2= Truth Oriented (1=Yes, 2=No)

Peace A3=Multiple Source Oriented (1=Yes, 2=No)

Peace A4= Solution Oriented (1=Yes, 2=No)

V5-Neutral Frame(1=Yes, 2=No)