

# Indo-Pak Newspapers Coverage of the Pulwama Incident

Asfandiyar\*

Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Abdul Wali Khan University, Mardan, Pakistan

## Abstract

In the political and military tensions between India and Pakistan, print media play an important role in stabilizing the issues or portraying the narrative of the state to the world. Both the countries spend more on defense in comparison to other sectors. The main reason for spending billions of USD on the military is the Kashmir issue. Though both countries have a long lasted history of rivalry when it comes to the Kashmir issue after the Pulwama attack, the tensions between the two neighboring countries were the worst in the last thirty years. In such a horrible situation, media from both sides were busy defending their stances. This study aims to the comparison of Pulwama attack coverage in English newspapers from both sides (Daily dawn from Pakistan and the Hindu from India) that how these most circulated newspapers covered the whole conflict, what were their contributions to peace, and how they portrayed the stance of their governments. As the incident started on 14 February 2019 after the bomb blast, therefore we have covered editorials of both newspapers from 14 February to 5 March 2019. Both sides exaggerated the whole issue however; we noticed that Indian media and political leadership used harsh words and false statements.

**Keywords:** Pulwama incident • India • Pakistan • Kashmir issue • Balakot strike

## Introduction

Media acts as a backbone in all the matters of the state because it informs people about different issues happening on global level. In twenty-first century now media has brought many changes such as social media sites which influenced almost every aspect of our life. Earlier the traditional media was used only for information and entertainment purpose but now it acts as a “watchdog” as they have eyes on what politicians are doing or what is going on in society [1]. The importance of media coverage to India and Pakistan ties is very crucial because both of these countries are always trying to give tough to each other on different forums so in such case reporting from media of both sides acts as a brainstorm for public and it is categorized as war or peace journalism reporting because it's quite clear that the peace and stability of South Asia is important for maintenance of global peace. Indo-Pak in majority of cases has tried to escalate the situation and tensions between these two neighbor states rather than resolving it. Whenever an incident happens media from both sides start blaming each other without proper evidence and attribution. Just because of this irresponsible behavior, a Pakistani journalist Mr. Najam Sethi once said: “I regret to say that the media in both countries entrapped in narrow nationalism and remained part of the problem rather than solution [2].

## Literature Review

### Pulwama attack

On 14 February 2019, a young Kashmiri militant blown away himself on the convoy of buses of Indian Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) about 40 soldiers lost their lives in this deadly attack while more than a dozen became injured. In past 30 years, this attack was considered as the worst one on Indian forces in the occupied territory. Indian government and media, without any relevant evidences immediately accused Pakistan for the incident. However, a militant group Jaish-e-Muhammad accepted the responsibility of the attack, thus India once again propagated negatively about Pakistan that they are in support of terrorist organizations in Kashmir. The Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi started hatred speech against Pakistan and threatened Pakistan for launching surgical strikes while the Prime Minister Imran Khan offered help in fair investigation to India, but the Indian authorities neglected this offer [3].

On 19<sup>th</sup> of February 2019 Prime Minister of Pakistan addressed International community and Pakistani Nation about False flag operation of India in Pakistani administrated Kashmir and at the same time he warned India that what kind of consequences India would face if they attacked on Pakistan. However, despite of all these warning Indian fighter jets on 26<sup>th</sup> of February entered into Pakistani territory but due to quick response of PAF Indian, plans dropped their payloads in an opening in Balakot. The Indians claimed of targeting a camp of Jaesh-e-

\*Address for Correspondence: Asfandiyar, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, Pakistan; E-mail: asfandozaan@gmail.com

**Copyright:** © 2023 Asfandiyar. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the creative commons attribution license which permits unrestricted use, distribution reproduction in any medium, provided the original author source are credited.

**Received:** 08 June, 2023, Manuscript No. JMCJ-23-101839; **Editor assigned:** 13 June, 2023, Pre QC No. P-101839; **Reviewed:** 27 June 2023, QC No. Q-101839; **Revised:** 19 July, 2023, Manuscript No. R-101839; **Published:** 16 August, 2023, DOI: 10.37421/2165-7912.2023.13.528

Muhammad and their media started reporting that 250-300 Pakistani militants have been killed in this strike (known as surgical strike in India). Later on, the local and International journalists visited that area which negated Indian claim. On 27 February 2019, Pakistani authorities said that their air has carried out air strikes inside India. Pakistan also said they have shot down two Indian jets who violated LOC (Line of Control) and captured one of their pilot; later on, the pilot was released by Pakistan as a peace gesture [4].

Despite of supporting Pakistan's step, the Indian media was completely supporting war slogan of their government. However, there was contradiction in their reporting and the sources, which they used were weak, because they do not try to carry out independent investigation on Pulwama issue. Suchitra Vijayan and Vasundhara Sirnate Drennan published an article in Washington post in which they stated that: After investigating on Indian media reporting on Pulwama we came to know that all the sources provided by them were biased and there was huge contradiction in them because they attributed they sources as anonymous government officials or intelligence officers [5].

## Discussion

### Causes of Pulwama attack

**Kashmir issue:** The Kashmir issue appeared for the first time on global level in 1947 with independence of two newly born states of the world, India and Pakistan. Until August 1947, the Maharaja of Kashmir was sovereign whether to join India or Pakistan so, he opted India. Pakistan simply challenged this decision because it was quite clear according to British plan that it is up to the people of the princely states that to whom they are giving preference for their future, also the population of Kashmir was Muslim [6]. Both the countries allowed United Nations as a third party after war broke out for the first time in 1948 between both sides. The Muslim majority status of Kashmir was significant for India due to its importance in the context of Indian secularism. By 1950, the Pakistan administrated Kashmir, which is almost one-third of the whole Kashmir, was divided into two major parts. (Northern areas like those whose are closed to Chinese and USSR borders and the remaining territory is known as Azad Kashmir. Kashmir was also known for its special status on Indian side as per article 370 but last year BJP government revoked this status of the state which results in escalation of the conflict between both these neighboring countries [7].

### Objectives of the study

- Which side covered the This study aimed to find out answers of the following questions: incident with strong attributions and sources?
- Which media neglected the aspect of peace in reporting?
- According to international media either Indian or Pakistani media played vital role in normalization of the conflict?

Bar-Tal and Carruthers, argued and explained the statement that the way media cover conflicts mostly escalates the situation. The Indo-Pak media performed very poorly in presentation and portraying of Pulwama issue to the public. In February 2019, it was for the first

time that both states violated LOC and carried out air strikes. In such a tensed scenario, still the media of both sides were reporting in context of war. However, the release of Indian pilot from Pakistan was a step towards peace but still Indian media was busy in their notorious war journalism. (Suchitra Vijayan and Vasundhara Sirnate Drennan) [8]. The most common failure of Indian media was their weak sources as almost all the well-known media houses of India attributed their coverage to unknown, anonyms, intelligence or secret police sources and at the same time there were a lot of contradiction in their statements (Like initially they claimed of hitting a Jaish-e-Muhammad camp in Balakot strike and death of about 250-300 militants but later on Shusma Suraj denied this). Soon after the news of Pulwama became viral, Indian media started sensationalizing and exaggerating the whole context. They quoted political figures of India like Prime Minister, Finance Minister and Defense Minister to use harsh words and statements against Pakistan without proper evidence. For instance, The Indian express quoted Naredra Modi who targeted Pakistan that Pulwama attack was their well-planned strategy.

In this very crucial situation instead of on airing positive facts, the Indian media presented themselves as a propaganda machine for the state, which resulted in escalation of issue and harsh response from the opponent military and leadership [9]. The Indian media not only supported arrest of thousands of Kashmiri youngsters but also silently neglected the corruption stories of BJP government in Rafael deal with France. Daily dawn framed all the information with objectivity however; on 15<sup>th</sup> of February 2019, the second largest circulated newspaper of Pakistan the news international shared an article in which they shared narratives of Kashmiri leaders and video content of suicide bomber. This depicts difference in mass media of the country that how their narratives vary in state affairs. After Pulwama attack Indian mainstream and social media was completely on demand from their govt. to take revenge from Pakistan. Hashtags like (Revenge Pulwama, we want revenge not condemnation) were seen everywhere on Indian media. The anchorpersons were in angry mood like Arnab Goswami, when wife of slain soldier asked from him about the failure, that why govt. has failed to stop attack people called her coward. The Indian media also claimed of Balakot strike but there are some questions, which they failed to answer like (Where are the footages of strike? What is the exact number of casualties? Was Pakistan prepared or not?) However, they failed to answer these questions [10].

In order to de-escalate the tensions between two neighboring nuclear power states Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan announced the release of Indian Pilot Abhinandan Varthaman. The International and local leaders praised this step of Pakistani govt. for resolving issues. President of Turkey Erdogan, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and other leaders supported this step of the country. However, Indian government and political leadership were still busy in propagating against Pakistan.

### Galtung peace model

Johan Galtung, the main and founding figure of peace research in the editorial to the first edition of journal of peace research in 1964 explained the idea of negative and positive peace. However, in 1060's Glatung further explained the concept towards indirect and structural violence or peace. According to Galtung perception,

negative peace is the one where there is absence of violence and war and positive peace means integration of human society [11].

This theory of peace has undergone changes since its evolution (1964), Galtung's views on peace and violence keep changing continuously because of causes and effects of violence and that was the reason he added more terms to it. The main problem and challenge for him was those critics who opposed views of Galtung on peace project. In the era from 1964 to 1971 Galtung published many papers for the explanation of his structural theory which includes; aggression (1964), institutional conflict resolution (1965), integration (1968), violence, peace and peace research (1969), structural and direct violence (1971) and imperialism (1971). For understanding of direct-structural and cultural violence model Galtung coined concept of power and its four dimensions which has impact on positive and negative peace: Cultural, economic military and political. According to Galtung violence can be broken with peace flowing from cultural through structural peace towards direct peace [12].

## Conclusion

After studying editorials of two main newspapers (THE HINDU and DAWN) of India and Pakistan, it is very clear that both the sides somehow misguided the audience however; the role of Indian media was not responsible one. Every local and International media house reported on Pulwama bomb blast in different way according to their organizational policy but as per this piece of study, we found Indian media along with their government played an important role to miss lead their local civilians and international community as well.

According to the coverage of Pakistani media and speeches of Prime Minister of Pakistan this incident, occur due to brutal steps of Indian military in Kashmir; however, the Indian side only reported and focused on happening of the attack and they completely neglected the actual reason of the attack. On both sides, media tried their level best to give coverage in patriotic way. We also examined that the Pakistani media in some cases reported for friendly bilateral ties with India but the Indian media as expected exaggerated the whole content and their coverage was war friendly. Beside all these aspects our last question was that whether Indian or Pakistani political leadership played important role in de-escalating the tensions. After observation and deep study, we came to know that Imran Khan was the leader who played his role for peace by releasing Indian pilot after 27 February 2019 incident. Therefore, after analysis and study we can say that Indo-Pak media always focus on events and issues rather than the reasons. They only highlight

the agenda and policy of the state against each other.

## References

1. Bar-Tal, Daniel. "From Intractable Conflict Through Conflict Resolution to Reconciliation: Psychological Analysis." *Polit Psychol* 2 (2000): 351-365.
2. Higginbottom GM. "Sampling Issues In Qualitative Research." *Nurse Res* 12 (2004): 7.
3. Din, Jamal Ud and Muhammad Ahmed Qadri. "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." *Rev Appl Manag Soc Sci* 4 (2021): 421-430.
4. Shahzad, Shakeel, Zia Ullah and Imad Khan. "Opening of Kartarpur Corridor: A Critical Discourse Analysis that How Indo-Pak Media Projected the Corridor Initiative." *Rev Polit Public Policy Emerg Econ* 4 (2022): 1-6.
5. Naqvi, Syed Mushahid Hussain and Aminah Gilani. "The Post Pulwama Kashmir Crisis: A Critical Appraisal." *Int J Kashmir Stud* 2 (2020): 4-29.
6. Farooq, S, and S Gul. "From Pulwama to Indian Revocation of Article 370 in Indian Held Kashmir." *Global Legal Stud Rev* 5 (2020): 8-14.
7. Danish, Malik Haq Nawaz and Mehvish Riaz. "Semiotic Facet of Reconciliation: Politics of the Representation of Indo-Pak Relations in Google Ad." *Ann Soc Sci Perspect* 3 (2022): 137-151.
8. Tyagi, Aman, Anjalie Field, Priyank Lathwal and Yulia Tsvetkov, et al. "A Computational Analysis of Polarization on Indian and Pakistani Social Media." *Intern Conf Soc Inform* 2020: 364-379.
9. Halder, Avipsu. "Capitalism and the Ethics of Sport Governance: A History of the Board of Control for Cricket in India." *Sport Soc* (2021): 1291-1304.
10. Kamboh, Muhammad Khaliq, Sadoon Masood, Ghulam Mustafa and Nida Shabbir. "Mapping of Outsource Diplomatic Initiatives: A Case of Pakistan-India Relations." *J Indian Stud* 7 (2021): 93-106.
11. Gillani, Aleem. "Determinants Of Indo-Pak Wars: Analysing Through Prism Of Waltz Three Images Of War." *J Pos Sch Psychol* 7 (2023): 447-457.
12. Shah, Usman Ali, Riffat Alam and Muhammad Junaid Ghauri. "Editorial Treatment of the Pulwama Attack in Indo-Pak Press: War and Peace Journalism Perspective." *J Dev Soc Sci* 3 (2022): 27-40.

**How to cite this article:** Asfandiyar "Indo-Pak Newspapers Coverage of the Pulwama Incident." *J Mass Communicat Journalism* 13 (2023): 528.