

The Role of Media in Conflict Resolution: Analyzing Peacebuilding Strategies and Communication in the Kashmir Conflict

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Abstract

This study examines the media's role in shaping peacebuilding strategies and communication to resolve the conflict in Kashmir. This study typically focuses on the abrogation of Article 370 in Kashmir from August 2019 to October 2019. It also highlights how Indian and Pakistani media outlets framed the abrogation of Article 370. Using a qualitative content analysis of prime newspapers from both countries, such as Dawn and The Nation from Pakistan and The Times of India and The Hindu from India, the research finds different patterns in media coverage. The findings disclose that Indian media predominantly presents its move as a need for development and security concerns. Pakistan's media frames this issue as a violation of self-determination and international law. These distinct narratives contribute to influencing public perception, policymaking, and geopolitical tension. This study concludes that media framing plays a crucial role in building narratives; they need to promote peace journalism techniques to resolve the conflict among the conflicting parties. This study also highlights fostering balanced and unbiased reporting for the long-term solution.

Keywords: Media Role, National Security, Economic Development, Humanitarian Crisis, Violations, Framing Theory, Peace Journalism, Biasness

Introduction

When the partition was held, British India was divided in 1947 into two countries, Pakistan and India. They (India and Pakistan) gained independence, and they were engaged in a territorial dispute known as Kashmir, which caused massive destruction due to this many people suffered, and this created geopolitical tension. India and Pakistan fought three major wars over the Kashmir region, and also, small skirmishes happened in this region. Both nations have nuclear arms, and their wars in the Kashmir region cause the danger of starting a nuclear war. Media played a big role in spreading the diverse opinions of stakeholders, sometimes misinformation causes a big war, and adds to the conflict's complexity. It is important for conflict resolution efforts to understand how the media influences perceptions and decisions related to policies about Kashmir (Encyclopaedia Britannica, (n.d)).

National Interests are important for both countries, so their media outlet played a big role in shaping the narrative over the Kashmir issue globally. The media is pivotal in affecting political discourse and public opinion on conflicts.

Their main goal is to present the Kashmir conflict in a way that serves their particular national interests.

The media of both countries depict different opinions over the Kashmir region. Indian media depicts Pakistan as an aggressor state, highlighting regional counterterrorism initiatives, and usually adopts a security-focused perspective. For example, the Times of India framed the issue as national integration and economic development within Kashmir. They supported the government's decision and focused on economic growth and bringing stability to Kashmir. On the other hand, The Hindu shows some concerns about Kashmir, such as the lack of public consultation and the imposed lockdown. They are raising concerns about human rights and democratic values. Overall, they presented in their media outlet that Pakistan sponsored terrorism in Kashmir. These different narratives show how different media outlets played a role in shaping public discourse and perception about sensitive issues.

Alternately, Pakistani media outlets like Dawn and The Nation depicted India as an oppressive power. Dawn highlighted the deprivation faced by the Kashmiri people. For example, during that time, they imposed the lockdown, did not consider the will of the Kashmiri people, deployed heavy military, and imposed limitations on movement and liberation. And it depicted India as an undemocratic state. The Nation also criticized India's actions in Kashmir and described it as violating human rights and suppressing the voices of the Kashmiri people. They called International attention to the issue and convinced global powers to take action. This is how they framed the issue (Islam, 2016).

Not only does the media have an informational function, but it also acts as a battlefield for opposing viewpoints. Journalist Baba Umar claims that the Indian media is frequently seen as a "public relations machine" for the Indian government, and doesn't sufficiently report on local viewpoints and pro-independence protests. However, because there is little access to ground reporting in Kashmir, Pakistani media frequently rely on foreign news outlets, which might result in a biased portrayal of events. Both domestic and foreign public opinions of the conflict are influenced by this disparity in coverage (Hernández, 2020).

Considering these obstacles, there is a chance that the media will support peacebuilding efforts. Peace journalism promotes fair reporting that encourages communication and understanding between opposing sides. Nonetheless, research shows that efforts to promote peace journalism are still rare in Pakistani and Indian media coverage of the Kashmir dispute (Khalid, 2020).

This study attempts to answer three important questions in order to examine how different media tactics can support peacebuilding initiatives in Kashmir. This study uses qualitative content analysis of major newspapers from both nations from August to October 2019, a critical time after India revoked Article 370. The goal is to understand the narratives these media outlets create and how they

relate to peacebuilding.

Literature Review

The reporting of the Kashmir dispute in four major English-language newspapers: The Hindu and The Times of India from India, and Dawn and The Nation from Pakistan was compared by (Khan & Khan, 2020). They evaluate the coverage using Lynch & McGoldrick's Two-Sided Conflict Model and Galtung's Model of Peace Journalism. They covered many events, but they also talked about the removal of Article 370. They claimed that Dawn had the most coverage that was focused on peace, while The Hindu had the least. However, The Nation's coverage is entirely focused on the war, but The Times of India's coverage was 92.85%. Interestingly, none of the pieces were classified as neutral, suggesting that these publications strongly favored war framing. Also, the study indicates how the conflict is typically portrayed in both Indian and Pakistani media using a two-sided model that prioritizes state narratives over grassroots perspectives. In addition to oversimplifying a complicated subject, this framing ignores the opinions of those who are most impacted by the conflict (Khan & Khan, 2020).

Media Framing in Dawn:

In its report on the revocation of Article 370, Dawn highlighted the instant ramifications for Kashmiri autonomy and presented the actions of the Indian government as a serious violation of the rights of the Kashmiri people. Articles emphasized the implementation of communication blackouts and curfews, characterizing these actions as repressive strategies meant to quell opposition and maintain population control. This story supports the theory that biased reporting by the media can increase tensions by promoting unfavorable opinions about the acts of the Indian government. How these events are presented as an outright attack on Kashmiri identity and autonomy shows a critical attitude toward the policies of the Indian government, which many perceive as an effort to change the region's demographic composition (Dawn.com., 2019)

During the revocation of Article 370, Dawn reported important details from the local activists and human rights organizations that described several violations and abuses. While Indian authorities maintained that every aspect was normal, the newspaper's coverage consistently highlighted the humanitarian crisis caused by these activities as well as how severely restricted life was in Kashmir. In addition to providing a narrative that criticizes state overreach and encourages peace-oriented ways by highlighting human rights violations and the voices of those affected by India's actions, this framing also raises questions about the long-term effects on regional conflict resolution (Dawn.com., 2019)

The Nation's Point of View:

The Nation's coverage strongly opposed the human rights violations in Jammu and Kashmir. They constantly reported the curfews, roadblocks, and

ensorship, and deployed military forces in the region of Jammu and Kashmir. They also point out how it affected the people in Kashmir. Along with this, they criticize the Indian decision because it is unilateral, and this decision was abrogated without the will of the people living in Jammu and Kashmir. This is also against international laws and undemocratic steps. The Nation frequently published opinion papers to get global attention on this issue. After all of these efforts, international media also opposed the Indian action, and The Nation emphasized the statement of the Pakistan officials and global leaders to criticize the revocation of Article 370 and call for the will of the people of Kashmir to resolve the Kashmir conflict. The Nation newspaper often describes this as an Indian hegemonic move that violates human rights. This newspaper also highlighted the protest and encouraged solidarity for Kashmir. This media outlet played a big role in shaping public opinion and promoted Pakistan's foreign policy narrative about Kashmir (Nation., 2019)

The Times of India:

It is one of India's major English newspapers, and provides deep coverage of Kashmir. The Times of India largely framed the abrogation of Article 370; they portrayed it as an important move for the political situation and as essential for national security, economic development, and eliminating terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir. They justified the removal of Article 370, said in papers it is important for development, and highlighted equal rights for the people of Kashmir. They portrayed in the newspapers that the people of Kashmir also benefit from the same legal and economic opportunities as citizens in the rest of India. The Times of India also focused on justifying the abrogation of Article 370 through the legal and constitutional process, and it also provides the Indian expert opinions. They supported and promoted the Indian government's narrative. Along with this, they framed the security measures and justified the communication lockdowns, military deployment, and curfews as an important step for maintaining law and order in the region. Also, avoid the violence in the region. Even though there were certain adverse voices, they were overwhelmed by the decision's obvious benefits. This newspaper is a key mainstream in promoting and framing the government agenda. This selective focus on state narratives rather than local viewpoints points to a lack of application of the ideals of peace journalism (The Times of India, 2019)

The Hindu:

It is also a widely known English newspaper in India. They largely covered the abrogation of Article 370 they used the balanced reporting approach. They justified the government's actions to abrogate Article 370. The Hindu newspaper promoted the government's decision and said behind this decision were reasons such as economic development, national solidarity, and reducing terrorism in the region. Along with this, they also raised concerns about other media outlets such as Pakistan and International critics, on the issue of Kashmir.

They also focused on the impact of the decision on India's democracy. This major newspaper also reported expert opinions, where they questioned the democratic value of India because the Indian government made this decision without the concerns of the people of Kashmir. They were also concerned about the locals of Kashmir who struggled and suffered because of the government's decision. The Hindu criticized the communication blackout, which isolated the Kashmir region. They also reported how this decision affected India, domestically and internationally, and also highlighted the statement in newspapers from protestors, Pakistan, Human Rights organizations, and the United Nations. Although the Hindu offered a wealth of information regarding government acts (The Hindu, 2019)

Impact on Public Perception:

Research indicates that media narratives about Kashmir have a significant impact on public attitudes in both India and Pakistan. Researchers claim that biased reporting exacerbates existing biases and hostilities within communities, making conflict resolution more challenging. Indian media often portrays Kashmiris as militants, justifying harsh government responses, while Pakistani media emphasizes civil rights violations and frames Kashmiris as oppressed. This conflict creates polarizing public sentiments that hinder dialogue and peacemaking (Riaz, Ahmad, & Shah, 2018)

Long-term implications:

Narratives in Pakistani and Indian publications and consistently biased reporting could have severe long-term implications for the peace in South Asia. When such reporting reinforces established narratives that exacerbate tensions between India and Pakistan, it becomes more difficult to have a constructive conversation. Both sides emphasize that, despite the importance of dialogue, current media practices frequently hinder attempts to address the Kashmir issue by favoring conflict-oriented narratives. For example, the Indian media often covers this issue as a national security issue. The media in Pakistan, on the other hand, often highlights violations of human rights and depicts Kashmiris as the targets of state threats, which can heighten tensions and prevent effective peace efforts. Additionally, the conflict and each other are viewed differently in both countries due to the skewed media coverage. Some Studies promote genuine discussion on promoting peace in the region, and both parties agree that media coverage needs to be more neutral and take into account a range of opinions, particularly those of Kashmiris (Pirzada, 2021).

Theoretical Framework

This study employs two different theories, Framing and Peacebuilding, to explore the role of media in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Firstly, this study will use framing theory to analyze how different media outlets portray the conflict in Kashmir. The framing theory states that how information is portrayed

in the media affects how the general public perceives and understands situations (Entman, 1993). It demonstrates how, rather than merely reporting events, the media actively shapes reality by highlighting some elements and downplaying others. The Kashmir dispute is framed differently in Pakistani and Indian media, which influences viewers' perceptions of the issue and frequently feeds into nationalistic narratives and preconceived notions.

Secondly, this study will use the peace journalism theory to provide a framework for assessing how the media could encourage constructive dialogue and efforts at conflict resolution. This concept encourages a journalistic approach that prioritizes peace above conflict by highlighting civil rights, peacemaking, and the viewpoints of all parties (Ercoşkun, 2021). Using this framework, the study aims to ascertain if media bias boosts tensions or promotes communication and understanding. This dual theoretical framework will ultimately guide the analysis of editorials from well-known newspapers, illustrating how media practices impact public perceptions and the dynamics of the Kashmir conflict.

Research Question:

Do Indian and Pakistani media outlets present the Kashmiri concerns following the abolition of Article 370?

How much do efforts at peace journalism figure into the coverage of the Kashmir issue?

How may media tactics be strengthened to assist in resolving the Kashmiri conflict?

Hypothesis

According to the study's hypothesis, the media may either help resolve the conflict in Kashmir by disseminating narratives that emphasize peace, or it can exacerbate tensions by publishing data that is biased.

Methodology

This study uses a qualitative methodology to analyze media coverage from Pakistani and Indian outlets using content analysis. The analysis focuses on editorial content from distinguished newspapers. This study takes four newspapers, two from Pakistan, such as DAWN and THE NATION, and two from India, such as THE HINDU and THE TIMES OF INDIA. The purpose of this selection is to make possible a comparative analysis of the various media outlets from different countries in India and Pakistan over the Kashmir issue. Specifically, the analysis of the newspapers focuses on the major political shifts that have occurred since the Indian government revoked Article 370 from August 2019 to October 2019.

Discussion and Analysis

From August 2019 to October 2019, the revocation of Article 370, Indian

and Pakistani media outlets presented different narratives because of their national and political interest. Indian media outlets such as the Times of India frame the issue as the decision is crucial for the development and integration of the country. Another Indian media outlet, The Hindu, frames the issue as promoting the same agenda as it is needed for the prosperity of the country, and justifies the government's action to abrogate Article 370. Along with this, The Hindu also criticizes the government's actions, such as abrogating Article 370 without the concern of Kashmir, communication blackout, and reports the impact on the Indian democracy. For the viewers, overall, Indian major newspapers framed the government's action as legal and crucial, which would bring prosperity to the country (Hindustan Times, 2023)

The abrogation of Article 370 was presented by Pakistan media outlets, such as Dawn and The Nation, as an infringement on Kashmir's independence and human rights. Dawn framed the issues as human rights violations, such as curfews, deployed Indian forces, and communication blackouts. Also, this media covered the protest while Indian media showed nothing. The framing also raises questions about the long-term effects on regional conflict resolution. Other Pakistan media outlets, such as The Nation, also raised concerns about Kashmir and very often published articles, and after all these efforts, international media also paid attention to the abrogation of Article 370 and criticized India for its undemocratic actions in Kashmir. This newspaper also highlighted the protest and encouraged solidarity for Kashmir (Khan, A.; Raza, A., 2024)

The Indian media portrayed Indian actions as crucial for the development, while Pakistan media outlets portrayed Pakistan as a protector of Kashmir rights. These strong disparities demonstrate how the media in each nation nourishes nationalistic feelings, determining public opinion and conversation about the dispute.

More effective media strategies might be very beneficial for fostering dialogue and addressing the Kashmir dispute. By adopting the principles of peace journalism, media organizations may focus on stories that promote empathy and understanding rather than utilizing sensationalism to heighten conflicts. Indian media might highlight stories of Kashmiris' tenacity, while Pakistani media should highlight positive developments in Kashmir without using antagonistic terminology.

Both countries must adopt a balanced approach that stimulates other disputing parties to resolve the conflict through negotiations. India and Pakistan media outlets need to assist in bridging the gap, promote understanding between people, and support long-term conflict settlement initiatives in Kashmir by promoting a narrative focused on peace. In the end, shifting the focus of narratives from conflict to collaboration may open the door to productive dialogue and cooperative attempts to achieve peace. Also, both media need unbiased reporting to achieve peace (Smith, 2024).

Findings

Pakistani media framing

From August to October 2019, Pakistani media sources presented the abrogation of Article 370 in Dawn and The Nation, India violates the rights of human rights, and the infringement of Kashmiri self-determination. They questioned the Indian government for the violence and instability in Kashmir, portraying the Indian activities as forceful and dictatorial. Dawn and The Nation portrayed Pakistan as a protector of Kashmir, frequently published opinion papers, and this framing referred to international law and human rights standards.

Pakistani media outlets such as Dawn and The Nation also reported the humanitarian crisis in Kashmir, such as curfews, communication blackouts, the arrest of political leaders and locals in Kashmir, and the deployment of the Indian military in Kashmir. Pakistani outlets sought to strengthen Pakistan's position on the world scene and incite public emotion against India by focusing on stories of tyranny and self-determination. This strategy aimed to raise awareness of what was presented as an urgent human rights issue that required international intervention in addition to fostering solidarity with Kashmiris (Thankachan Keerthana, Peedikayil Tomas, & Vishnu, 2024)

Indian media framing

From August to October 2019, Indian media outlets such Times of India framed the abrogation of Article 370 from a security perspective. They framed that the government's action is needed for state security and integration. They presented the only government perspective, and they did not highlight the internal problems in Kashmir that happened because of this action. Such as the Indian government took action without the will of the Kashmiri people. On the other hand, The Hindu also framed the abrogation of Article 370 as it is needed for national security concerns and to foster economic development. Despite this, they also questioned the Indian government's actions as undemocratic. The framing often utilized terminologies such as "terrorism," "militancy," and "national unity," which reinforced the government's belief that the actions were necessary to prevent violence and maintain regional peace (Ahmad & Sajjad, 2024).

The Indian government and these media outlets framed the issue of Kashmir and the abrogation of Article 370 as security concerns, improving the economy, and giving access to locals to empower them through government initiatives. They presented their action as positive and beneficial. Simultaneously, the Indian media minimized Kashmiri voices that opposed the action as an infringement of autonomy and human rights while emphasizing possible advantages like more investment and infrastructure development. The media played a big role in justifying the Indian government's actions, and they

legitimized the government's narrative by showing the potential advantages of the decision by emphasizing the legal defense, which in turn strengthened residents' sense of patriotism and marginalized opposing viewpoints.

Initiatives for Peace Journalism

Initiatives for peace journalism in Pakistani and Indian media during this time were unsuccessful. While some media sources tried to embrace narratives that were more focused on peace, these endeavors were usually overwhelmed by reportage that was primarily nationalistic or security-driven.

In India, the media put elevated efforts into highlighting the stimulating stories of Kashmir's strength and resilience, but these stories are frequently ignored. Despite the challenges faced by Kashmir, such as political instability and conflict, their stories of tenacity and determination often failed to be observed or ignored by the public or media. On the other hand, Pakistan media outlets highlighted the human rights concerns in Kashmir on a large scale, rather than focusing on promoting dialogue between states to resolve the issues and understand each other, they increased hostilities. By adopting successful peace journalism techniques, both countries draw attention to impartial reporting and encourage communication between conflicting states could be advantageous for all (Yousaf, Sarwar, Sabir, & Ali, 2021)

The media outlets of both countries might be extremely helpful in resolving the Kashmir conflict between the conflicting parties by redefining narratives about the abrogation of Article 370 and supporting long-term efforts that foster understanding and cooperation between them (Safdar & Ali, 2022).

Recommendations

The media outlets in India and Pakistan need to use particular approaches to encourage narratives that emphasize peace. Indian media outlets should concentrate on inclusive narratives that promote the viewpoints and experiences of Kashmiris while demonstrating community efforts and resilience, rather than solely security-related topics. This can mean presenting local leaders and community-based initiatives that promote understanding and communication. Indian media outlets should also seek impartial journalism that covers security measures while noting human rights issues. Along with this, Indian media needs to adopt unbiased reporting, which improves not just understanding between the conflicting parties but also promotes peaceful building strategies between them. They need to show the actual reality of Kashmir and the will of Kashmiri people in media outlets rather than just prioritizing the state's national interest.

On the other hand, Pakistan media outlets need to focus on promoting peaceful dialogue between the conflicting parties rather than increasing hostility. Pakistani media should offer a more balanced view of the situation, avoiding polarizing language and recognizing the positive developments in Kashmir. They need to do more work on the Kashmir issue by spreading awareness, so

international media and institutions pay more attention to it. By presenting narratives of cooperation and humanity, Pakistani media sources can contribute to the development of a more positive paradigm that encourages connection with Indian peers. By providing journalists with the resources they need to report responsibly, training programs based on the principles of peace journalism could benefit both media ecosystems.

Both countries, India and Pakistan, need to understand the will of the Kashmiri people. Under Article 370 Indian government took the rights of Kashmir by using an aggressive approach, such as a communication blackout, curfews, and military deployment. Their media needs to use unbiased reporting, which, as a result government changes its harsh policies towards Kashmir. Both media outlets in Pakistan and India need to promote peaceful journalism techniques that resolve the conflict.

If both media do unbiased reporting, they get the global attention to resolve the conflict through peaceful means. International media play an essential role in efforts to settle the conflict in Kashmir by providing unbiased coverage that takes into account a variety of perspectives. They can bring prominence to local voices and highlight the humanitarian aspects of the conflict, increasing global awareness of the problem. By highlighting narratives that are centered on peace and encouraging communication between Indian and Pakistani media, international media can help close gaps and make the public conversation more informed.

Indian media outlets need to share the ground reality of Kashmir under the abrogation of Article 370, and their government needs to again overlook their tyrannous and unacceptable policies. Pakistan media needs to spread more awareness and voices of Kashmir at the international level, so they can help to bridge the gap to resolve the conflict, and also they need to work to improve relations with India by fostering peaceful dialogue between them.

Conclusion

Both Pakistan and Indian media outlets framed the abrogation of Article 370 by using different narratives according to their state interest. The result shows that the Indian biased reporting about the revocation of Article 370 framed this issue as needed for the development of Kashmir, and also considered the security concerns. The Times of India promotes the state's interest, not showing the perspective of what Kashmir wants. The Hindu also promotes the state's interest, but along with this, they also highlight the humanitarian violence in Kashmir on a small scale.

On the other hand, the result shows that the Pakistani media framed the abrogation of Article 370 by highlighting the Indian violence and aggressively imposing restrictions on Kashmir. Pakistan media outlets such as Dawn and The Nation cover the protest and humanitarian violence, curfews, communication

blackouts, and raise questions about long-term regional stability, and publish papers to draw international media attention.

These framing techniques have a crucial impact on public opinion, frequently solidifying prejudices and making attempts at communication more difficult.

As we know media tend to promote peace rather than act as a source of conflict. Both India and Pakistan media outlets need to adopt peacebuilding approaches. Both the Indian and Pakistani media may help resolve the conflict in Kashmir by embracing the paragons of peace journalism and emphasizing fair reporting. In the end, narratives need to be changed from ones of division to cooperation in order to foster mutual understanding between the parties and pave the way for lasting peace in the region.

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