

‘KASHMIR UNREST OF 2016’

Abstract

A qualitative content analysis of the articles published in the online portals of Dawn and Times of India during the Kashmir unrest of 2016, the study aims at identifying and analyzing the news frames used in these articles and to identify the presentation given to Burhan Wani and governments of India and Pakistan by both news portals while reporting about this conflict that began after Burhan Wani was killed in an Indian police encounter. Conflict reporting is central to the public interest and has high news value as it informs citizens on the security implications. The media, therefore, has a supreme responsibility over the information that is communicated to the audience. The reader’s perception of the conflict can be affected by the pattern of reporting chosen by the news portals. As Kashmir conflict has been an interest of international peace, the reporting of the conflict by the national dailies of Pakistan and India will be vital to understand the stance presented by these news portals. The study is based on agenda setting and framing media theories, and carries an exploratory manner to create the basis of analysis and understanding of the topic.

Key Words: Kashmir, Conflict Reporting, Content analysis, Burhan Wani

Content analysis of articles in online portals of Times of India and Dawn on ‘Kashmir Unrest of 2016’

Kashmir faces perennial heat of political, social and economic issues that arise from both internal and external conflicts. In 1947 with India’s independence, Kashmir, an erstwhile princely state, was unclear of its future. Maharaja Hari Singh the last ruler of Kashmir signed the instrument of accession with Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India. Nehru extended military and administrative support to Kashmir valley. But ever since then the valley faced several internal and external conflicts. (Sehgal, 2011) The identity, border and administrative issues were a reminder of an unfulfilled basic right of

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Kashmiris for a 'free and fair' plebiscite, Instrument of accession signed with India by the maharaja of Kashmir, had that basic right promised to the people, a democratic platform to decide their own future and to end warfare relating to its administration but has not been fulfilled till today. The valley has been sanctioned by resolution 45 by the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan. According to which the United Nation, a peace and cooperation organization, said that Kashmir's problems can be resolved permanently and a steadfast political solution can be attained only if it is in accordance with the *consent* of the people. In Kashmir, the world's most militarized zone with 70,000 soldiers, human rights violations were reported and the draconian practice of the AFSPA and PSA has increased the *voices* of dissent from civilians in the region. (DAR, 2014)

Burhan Wani

The name 'Burhan Wani' gained popularity in the India held Kashmir since 2013. Wani's social media activism made him a common name in the streets of Jammu and Kashmir. Through his videos and posts on online platforms he spoke against savagery shown towards the civilians by Indian police. On July 8th 2016, Burhan Wani was shot dead in an encounter hosted by Indian police. This led to a flood of violent commotion in the valley termed as 'Kashmir unrest of 2016'. As stated by The Diplomat, the rebellion begun by Wani is one of its kind massive uprising since 1980's in the Kashmir valley against the Indian government. It says that the 'Burhan Wani impact' has a longing effect on the people in the valley and the repercussion is felt in the zone in various shades of protest. Burhan Wani has become the image of the young, educated and vibrant youth of 'freedom fighters'. He was commander-in-chief of the militant group based in Kashmir, Hizbul Mujahideen. He is said to be the millennial icon or poster boy who has been claimed to have influenced the thriving crowd of Kashmir to come out into the streets with a renewed force of resistance. Wani was a bright student in school and comes from a well-educated and sustaining family in Kashmir. Unlike a lot of other militant groups in most conflicted regions Wani walked into the streets and common walks of society without being fearful of anything even after the death of his brother, who is believed to be killed by Indian security forces. He was determined to raise voice and arms against the atrocities, oppression and brutality faced by the innocent people of Kashmir. He raised slogans and spoke incessantly about 'Azad Kashmir' and the need of self-determination to restore peace in the valley. (Fahad Nabeel, 2017)

Wani's influence on the youth and new age militancy through online propaganda was also gaining steam in political discussion as an aftermath of his death. Wani set an example and an alternative method of protest that

can be termed as 'online radicalization'. To something that is more relevantly stated as a virtual war, Wani used social media - Facebook to increase influence over people at their homes and to a mass outside Kashmir which ached his popularity worldwide. He uploaded videos in which he spoke about the Indian government, the draconian 'special power and acts' of the army and urged that the future of Kashmir lies in the hands of the youth. And that they should come out of homes & fight. He also recruited militants to his group through Facebook. (Rao, 2017) The curfew that was in place to curb this uprising followed by Wani's killing went for more than 3 months causing a new era of political tension.

Role of media and conflict reporting

The Kashmir conflict has been of interest for international peace, yet the reporting on this issue by Indian media has been *indifferent* and often used to convey *national interest* by being the *mouthpiece* of the Indian government. (Gadda, 2017) Therefore it is important to understand this difference in reportage by best analyzing two news agencies that are headed from countries that have historical contests over Kashmir. Apart from news articles other mediums like films are a main source from which the rest of the world watches the plights of Kashmir. The depiction of Kashmir in films, especially the ones produced in India is important and to be studied to understand what they conceive and perceive about Kashmir and its reality. A study done on Bollywood movies from 1992 to 2015 was carried out and it was analyzed that Kashmiri men were often depicted as one dimensional, often the strugglers or militants. Indian characters were shown to be dominant and Pakistani roles were shown to be as instigators, traitors or terrorists. This leaves an incomplete picture of the multilayered dilemma in Kashmir as most of it is never presented. The Indian army and government are mostly referred to as lead/main characters with a ring of heroism. This also shows the 'nationalist sentiments' engraved deeply in the Indian society. (Baig, 2016) Another study shows the drag of India and Pakistan coverage being a key reason behind the prolonging conflict in Kashmir insurgency. The media showcased Kashmir more as a turbulent area lying at the tug of war. The main frame used in an extensive study on the reportage of various Indian and Pakistani newspapers was 'blaming' and 'responsibility' other than the conflict frame. Both sides of the media criticized in its articles the government policies and emphasized more on reports that can be termed as 'Anti-Peace'. The press itself created a non-conducive and exacerbated environment that curled attempts of peace in the region. (Sreedharan, 2009) Several studies have shown how different media has been sidelined as, 'Hindu Press', 'Muslim Press' the 'local press' and the 'Indian press' creating variations of theme and frames while depicting similar issues. (Shaukat, 2017)

There is a lot in common for every conflicted and war fed region in the world; 'lost livelihood, prolonged curfews, families involved in violent agitations, damaged properties and the persisting psychological scar.' The role of media in these sensitized regions is indispensable at times, as it becomes the only medium to deliver the voices of the people struggling in these belts. But in a region like Kashmir where there are several causes, consequences are limitless, it matters 'whose voice the media gives prominence'. Especially when the conflict is interloped between civilians, state, militants and radicalizers. (Chaurasia, 2016) Through this study we analyze the reporting of two most read national dailies in Pakistan and India to understand the stance of government and media as presented by them during 'Kashmir unrest of 2016'.

Scope of the study

The findings of this study will summarize the reportage of news stories and will help in future to understand the role of media in improving or worsening conflict in a region. The press is hurled with a greater responsibility in reporting about conflicted zones because most often these reports and articles can pave way for greater understanding regarding the issues among the readers, victims and governmental officials. This machinery of peace journalism can be essential in reinstating peace in these regions. It can wheel political and social changes by mobilizing positive ideas for a noble outcome. Especially in Kashmir, while there are several voices amounting to spikes of problems, the media can do a greater good by not instating biased, absurd and subjective reviews on the reality. Reporters and editors can use the findings of this study to reaffirm their agenda of promoting positive stories by focusing on peace journalism.

Research Methodology

The study uses Framing and Agenda setting theory as the broad framework of the research. And uses exploratory research design. Dawn is the oldest, leading & most widely read English daily in Pakistan and Times of India the most circulated English daily of India with Pan India readership. 21 articles from Dawn and 29 articles from TOI was selected using systematic sampling from first-two weeks (July 8, 2016 to July 25, 2016) of the 'Kashmir Unrest of 2016'. Qualitative content analysis, specifically textual and frame analysis is used to study content of these articles. Textual analysis was needed to describe the characteristics of the published text. This theoretical framework is used in the '*Content Analysis of articles in online portals of Times of India and Dawn on 'Kashmir Unrest of 2016'*' as it helps in the validation of the objectives of the study that is, to identify and analyze the news frames used in the articles on

the online portals of the Times of India and Dawn through frame analysis, to analyze the representation of Burhan Wani in these articles through textual analysis and to analyze the role of government and military in the 'Kashmir Unrest of 2016' as presented in these articles.

Findings

Analyzing and interpreting the 50 articles related to 'Kashmir Unrest of 2016' it is found that the most prominently used frames in both Dawn and TOI were Political Frame, Conflict Frame and Human Impact Frame, in that order. As most used frame, political frame was further used for political opinions, prescriptions, resolutions, responsibility and blaming by both portals. Dawn's political frames conveyed policy prescription and resolution and TOI used it majorly for political blaming. By a political responsibility frame the researcher understands the instances in the article where one person or groups holds account of another person or group as reason for a cause, for e.g., looking at causes that began a protest, mentioning intermediators or the role of peacebuilding groups, like the UN and Human Right commissions. The Dawn has been observed to have focused on the political responsibility frame from the first article it has posted about the unrest on July 10, 2016 under the headline, '*FO terms Wani's killing, protesters' deaths extrajudicial*'. By the time the first article was published Kashmir protests between the civilians and the security personnel had begun. And there were already 4 civilians and a police officer reported dead. Times of India has not mentioned any instances where it highlights the responsibility of any actors in the protest, especially the government. Though proceeding, both Dawn and Times of India have highlighted the blame games by both Indian and Pakistan governments.

Dawn's human-interest frame conveyed despise of Kashmiri civilians and protest groups whereas TOI emphasized on the condition of security personnel, tourists and safety of Amarnath pilgrims. Dawn's conflict frame mentioned the extremity of Indian forces on the protesters, human rights violations, usage of tear gas, eye injuries, lack of hospitals and medical facilities to treat the victims and the day-to-day losses incurred to common people and school-going children due to curfew and protests from the angle of a civilian was focused, while Times of India's conflict frame primarily focused on the 'clash' between Indian security personnel and the protesters. The adjectives used to describe the civilians or locals creates a latent meaning that they are *frenzied and influenced* by a 'terrorist'. In a protest where the crowd included youth, boys, old men, armed, unarmed and women and all of them equally being affected. Children and adult non-participants of the protests also suffered as pellets were shot in the open causing injury even to people at homes.

Dawn mentioned the following few phrases among others to describe Wani, '*Kashmiri Leader*', '*iconic face of militancy*', '*separatist commander*', '*son of a school headmaster*' and '*chief of operations*'. These phrases when analyzed according to context of the articles were found to be neutral. Times of India has mentioned Burhan Wani as a '*terrorist*' in several articles including headlines of several articles. Phrases like '*Poster boy*', '*recruiter of Jihadis*', '*brainwasher*', '*most wanted terrorist*', '*propagandist*' among several others were used and when analyzed according to context of the articles were found to be non-neutral. He was named as a '*Poster boy*' in the first article on his death, it is understood that the term was not used here as a good remark as the sentence that followed mentions him as a '*school dropout*'. His death was described as a matter of jubilation for the security personnel for allegedly being an '*instrument for brainwashing*' the youth in Kashmir. The article latently creates an identity of Burhan Wani as a rebel, armed and unfocussed youth who instigates lawlessness in the area. The major factor that makes the article non-neutral is that there's only one source and that's a policeman. The article can also be called '*one-sided*' as the jubilation of security forces over his death and the '*successful encounter*' is discussed with just a brief and negative introduction given on Burhan Wani. Dawn mentioned the dialogues initiated by both Indian and Pakistan governments. Dawn reported on the accusations faced by the Pakistan government from Indian MEA and international bodies.

TOI India has placed political dialogues between Indian and Pakistan like a series of debates. But it has not mentioned accusations on the Indian government by various international organizations and newspapers or even the accusations by the Pakistan government, regarding the conflict being, '*ethnic cleansing*' or use of '*extreme forces*' and human right violations. TOI laid focus on the loss incurred to government forces and installations. It has mentioned the actions of Indian government during the conflict as a '*right action*' to '*curb violence and terrorism*'. Dawn has addressed the '*death of civilians*', '*extra judicial*' killing of Burhan Wani, '*extreme force*' used by the Indian military, strict patrolling on roads during curfew and human rights issues. The sources used in Dawn were different from the sources used in TOI which were mostly police officers and unnamed officials. Dawn has sourced information from Wani's father, school children, injured men, teens, doctors in the hospital, US and UN spokesperson and opinion of editors and leaders among others in different formats of reporting including cover stories.

Conclusion

Dawn has reported neutrally, addressing human rights violation, extremity of security forces, self-determination policy, civilian death, dialogues both

from IMEA and PFO, with variant sources, cover story on concept of Azadi and the human-interest stories were focused on the Kashmiris and not just centric to pilgrims, tourists and Indian army. Times of India represented Indian government's decisions as supreme and as the right method to curb 'terrorism' in the valley, it downplayed the killing of civilians. In TOI, sources were majorly 'official' without their names. It did not represent the voice of all sides of the conflict. It was the mouthpiece of 'what the Indian government' thinks is right. Dawn represented Wani in a neutral manner, TOI negatively presented him. Dawn has mentioned the criticism of Indian and Pakistan equally and TOI has described it as a battle of dialogues between the two governments and politically blamed the Pakistan government for interference with India's internal affairs. We can add more relevance to this study in future through an in-depth research that would find out the *perception and influence* created on readers by the stories about Kashmir in national news portals.

Reflection

Mass media has a paramount role in conflict areas to accelerate or pacify any issue especially one which directly impacts daily lives of the people through curfews and protests. Media has a huge responsibility in conveying the neutral and unbiased story to its readers. As an international issue Kashmir conflict as reported by an Indian newspaper and how a rival country represented the issue creates a strong comparison to realize how the ethics of reporting varies with the change of actors in these narratives, namely here, the people, government and army. The editorial bias, especially the pressure to mouthpiece the government, questions the credibility of journalism as the fourth pillar of democracy. And as readers it becomes even more necessary to evaluate the choice of subscribing to a credible news source over the other and to actively fact check news against one that could awaken communal tensions or misinterpretation and misinformation.

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Appendix

Articles from Dawn

1. FO terms Wani's killing, protesters' deaths extrajudicial, *dated July 11, 2016*.
2. India-held Kashmir seethes as 25 killed amid protests after killing of militant commander, *dated July 11, 2016*.
3. Kashmir unrest: India asks Pakistan to stop interfering in 'internal affairs', *dated July 11, 2016*.
4. Indian lobby doing propaganda against Pakistan in US, says Aziz, *dated July 13, 2016*.
5. Kashmir unrest Pakistan urges EU, OIC to take notice of human rights abuses, *dated July 13, 2016*.
6. US stresses need for peaceful resolution in held Kashmir, *dated July 13, 2016*.
7. Death toll hits 38 as clashes spread in Indian held Kashmir, *dated July 15, 2016*.
8. India asks Pakistan to stop 'interfering' in Kashmir, *dated July 15, 2016*.
9. Cabinet meeting condemns Indian govt for calling Burhan Wani a terrorist, *dated July 15, 2016*.
10. India stops Kashmir newspapers from printing amid unrest, *dated July 17, 2016*.
11. Bilawal lashes out at those supporting Modi & TTP silent on Kashmir, *dated July 17, 2016*

12. Information blackout in held Kashmir, *dated July 17, 2016.*
13. A new age of militancy in held Kashmir, *dated July 17, 2016.*
14. Protests in held Kashmir led by UN- designated terrorists, alleges India, *dated July 21, 2016.*
15. Pakistan to ask UN human rights body to probe violence in held Kashmir: Aziz, *dated July 21, 2016*
16. Mishandled Kashmir poses grave danger: Sonia, *dated July 21, 2016.*
17. India to consider alternatives to pellet gun use in Kashmir, *dated July 21, 2016*
18. Kashmir can never become part of Pakistan, Sushma tells Nawaz, *dated July 23, 2016.*
19. Diary of a Kashmir curfew: 'Our eyes are crucial in envisaging our future', *dated July 23, 2016.*
20. Senate calls for implementation of UN resolutions on Kashmir, *dated July 23, 2016.*

Articles from Times of India

1. Hizbul Mujahideen terrorist Burhan Wani killed in J&K encounter, *dated July 8, 2016.*
2. Kashmir violence: Death toll rises to 16, Amarnath yatra resumed, *dated July 10, 2016.*
3. Kashmir violence: Policeman killed by mob, death toll rises to 18, *dated July 10, 2016.*
4. 11 killed, 200 hurt as valley erupts over Wani's death, *dated July 10, 2016.*
5. Despite violence, Centre stands by decision to kill Hizbul terrorist, *dated July 10, 2016.*
6. 3 terrorists gunned down in Kashmir's Budgam district, *dated July 12, 2016.*
7. UN chief calls for 'maximum restraint' to curb Kashmir strife, *dated July 12, 2016.*
8. Kashmir protests: PM Modi chairs meet, curfew continues for 4th day, *dated July 12, 2016.*
9. Who was the real Burhan Wani, 'paper tiger' or 'Indian agent'? *dated July 12, 2016.*
10. 10 CRPF men injured in blast by militants; death toll climbs to 30 in valley, *dated July 12, 2016.*
11. India hits back as Sharif uses Wani killing to stoke J&K fire, *dated July 12, 2016.*
12. Curfew, shutdown continues in Kashmir, *dated July 14, 2016.*
13. Pakistan 'extols' virtues of terrorists, covets the territory of others: India at UN, *dated July 14, 2016.*
14. Centre rushes eye specialists to J&K, *dated July 14, 2016.*
15. Hizbul commander Burhan Wani encounter is doubtful, says Prashant Bhushan, *dated July 16, 2016.*
16. Terror should be put down with an iron hand, Prime Minister says, *dated July 16, 2016.*
17. Muslims defy curfew for last rites of Kashmiri Pandit woman, *dated July 16, 2016.*
18. Now, Pakistan targets PM Modi directly, blames him for J&K violence, *dated July 16, 2016.*

19. Kashmiri youth raises slogan, held, *dated July 18, 2016.*
20. One killed in J&K as mob tries to storm Army camp, *dated July 18, 2016.*
21. Kashmir vacation turns nightmare for city residents, *dated July 18, 2016.*
22. Newspapers fail to hit stands in Kashmir for the third day, *dated July 18, 2016.*
23. Kashmir protests: curfew continues in valley, *dated July 20, 2016.*
24. Protest held against Pakistan, *dated July 20, 2016.*
25. Despite Article 370, can shift cases out of J&K: SC, *dated July 20, 2016.*
26. Kashmiri man gets into a fight over valley violence, *dated July 22, 2016.*
27. 'Kashmir's poetry reflects people's desperation, protest', *dated July 24, 2016.*
28. Rajnath in J&K to calm the situation, curfew lifted, *dated July 24, 2016.*

