



Media conformity with foreign policy in India and Pakistan: Frame analysis of Baluchistan separatists movement and Khalistan movement

Abul Hassan^{1*}  | Syed Muhammad Saqib Saleem²  | Ali Ashraf³ 

Abstract

India and Pakistan are indulged in multiple mutual disputes which motivates their respective medias to frame certain conflicts according to their ongoing foreign policies. This research focuses on conflict framing in India and Pakistan's print media coverage of Baluchistan separatists movement (in Pakistan) and Khalistan movement (in India) to analyze the cross border framing trends on both sides. This study aims at identifying the counter narrative framing of rival country's internal conflict through framing and media's conformity with the foreign policies of their respective governments. Content of the 3439 news stories from four English dailies; Times of India, The Hindu from India and Dawn and The Nation from Pakistan, during the rule of rightwing political parties (2014-2018) in India and Pakistan; PJP and PML-N, was analyzed through 'conflict frame'. The researcher found that both sides adopted counter coverage approach in covering the Baluchistan separatist movement and Khalistan movement. If Pakistani media gives coverage of Khalistan movement in Indian Punjab, the Indian media, on the other hand, counter the coverage by plying-up the news of Baluchistan separatists movements in Pakistan and vice versa. The study concludes that both countries' rightwing political parties targeted the sensitive internal conflicts and built propaganda in counter coverage.

Keywords: India, Pakistan, conflict, Khalistan, Baluchistan

Author's Affiliation:

Institution: The University of Lahore¹ | Forman Christian College (A Chartered University)² | University of Central Punjab³

Country: Pakistan

Corresponding Author's Email: *abulhassaneesa@gmail.com

The material presented by the author(s) does not necessarily portray the view point of the editors and the management of the ILMA University, Pakistan.

(Print) 2707-8906 (online) 2788-8304, published by the ILMA University, Pakistan.

This is open access article under the  license. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>

INTRODUCTION

Pakistan and India have a long history of wars, disputes and conflicts (Paul, 2006). After their independence in 1947, the two nations grew their enmity to a level where each one tries to challenge and defeat the other in sports, showbiz, politics and trade etc. on national and international grounds through propaganda by their respective medias and governments. Both sides blame each other for the creation of internal insurgencies as India blames Pakistan for the Khalistani movement by Sikhs, which is the largest rebel movement of separation by any minority in India. Whereas Pakistan, on the other hand, put the responsibility of instigating Baluchistan separatist movement on India. Both areas Punjab and Baluchistan, geographically as well as demographically are polarized on the bases of ethnic disparities, political injustices, territorial inequalities, economic discriminations and external interventions.

Majority of Sikhs, the second largest minority in Indian Punjab demand a separate homeland for their religious existence with the movement named “Khalistan”. As Pakistan blames India for interfering in Pakistan’s biggest province and with intermingling with Baluchi people to ignite the environment of separate land for them, India puts the same blame against Pakistan for its support for Khalistan movement and a separate land for Sikhs.

Sikhism pertains to the faith of Sikhs in India and Pakistan hailing in the shared parts of Punjab by both countries. Sikhs, the 3rd largest minority in India and almost 40 thousand Sikhs living in Pakistan, are another religious group besides Hindus and Muslims in respective countries. Sikhs, by their religious attribution, are associated to the land of Punjab which has its territorial existence in both India and Pakistan. Their struggle for separate land for Sikhs in India as “Khalishtan” is a point of conflict for Indian state and many disputes have erupted over this issue between Sikhs and many Indian governments. While in Pakistan, Sikhs are in less number with few incidents of minority injustice and religious conflict.

As Baluchistan is the largest province by area of Pakistan and of critical significance as it has only nine million of population with multiple factions and groups of independent clans claiming to live according to their cultural setups. Besides that the large polarized area of this province, untouched abundance of natural and mineral resources, costal harboring area connecting Arabian sea and deviant groups of population, are the factors which lured the international bodies to deploy their strategic international agendas. Presence of Indian intelligence in Baluchistan is significant because it has been considered the weakest territory for Pakistan’s socio-eco-political perspective for quite a long period of time. Pakistan has reservations that India has been interfering through Baluchistan by funding deviant groups to stand against Pakistan and captured a spy named “Kulbhushan Sudhir Yadhav” in 2016 and demanded that the world should comprehend it as an intrusion in international boundaries.

Both the nations parted from each other when the British ended their rule in the subcontinent in 1947 and left the matters to both India and Pakistan. Further, the

east wing of Pakistan became Bangladesh in 1971. Both India and Pakistan had multiple disputes over different issues and have fought wars since their separation (Dixit, 2003). While Kashmir has been the main issue behind the wars (Schofield, 2010), constant intrusions into each other's borders is another issue (Sisson& Rose, 1990). The other issues include terrorist activities, economic tussle and occupation of Siachin territory. Their motivations for conflict do not limit to the territorial reasons rather they include all types of social, economic and political issues. Different regimes from both India and Pakistan have dealt with different socio-economic-political disputes that erupted from either side over the years. The peculiar presentations of the disputes and conflicts in media from either side played a role in making different kinds of opinion among the cross border audience. Both the Indian and Pakistani medias use the platform in a way to engage their respective audience with the information and stimulate their patriotic feelings for their own countries and feelings of hatred for the rival country.

The conflict frame highlights conflict between countries, crowds and individuals as a source of grabbing public attention. Neuman et al. (1922, pp.61-62) studied the certain frames that media used to draw the audience's attention to a series of conflicts. Such conflicting issues are very common in Indian and Pakistani media's framing of news. Journalists shape news stories which denote conflict of interest on social, economic and political grounds. An example would be of Sikhs who are the second largest minority in India but if the movement of a separate land for Sikhs by the name of Khalistan ever erupts, Indian media frames it as a conflict initiated by Pakistan. It turned Pakistan's initiative as a conflict when the authorities opened Kartarpur corridor, a Sikhs religious place, to facilitate Sikhs pilgrims to visit and perform their religious practices. The Indian media said it collided with Indian foreign interests as Sikhs would fall for Pakistan's opening arms and will weaken India's stance of enmity with Pakistan. On the other hand, Indian media highlight Pakistan's biggest province by area, Baluchistan, as a turbulent area where the public asks for separation. Pakistan, on the other hand, claims that India media instigate the sentiments of those deprived people of Baluchistan, who are not happy with Pakistani government or authorities for some internal reasons.

Study Objective

To Study the Indian and Pakistani English print media framing of each other's internal territorial issues

Research Question

What are the framing trend of Indian and Pakistani English print media towards presenting each other's internal territorial issues

Hypothesis

H:Both Indian and Pakistani media use conflict framing to cover Baluchistan separatist movement and Khalistan movement, respectively, to present counter narrative of each other's internal territorial issue.

FRAMING THEORY

Framing is basically choosing a version of reality and reproduce it with a presentation to be perceived as an intended fact. Gamson (1992) described framing processes of cold war era where bipolar powers were using the media tool to construct the desired reality. Framing can initiate a process and set a dimension for their audience (Entman, 1993), as in the case of Iraq and Kuwait war. US derived its policy for Iraq related news, in which the media was constrained to only two themes, war against Iraq or war following sanctions. Keeping aside all the justifications and arguments and analyses, the audiences' mind was directed towards an already planned tactic while leaving no remedy consideration for them.

MEDIA CONFORMITY OF FOREIGN POLICY

Media, whether private or state owned, always influence and remain under pressure of the respective government and for that it has to design and modify its organizational policies and proceedings by taking care of the government's interests and policies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Territorial conflicts between India and Pakistan are aggravated through Baluchistan and Khalistan projections through their foreign policies and media campaigning. The biggest province by area in Pakistan, Baluchistan has suffered multiple backlashes from the decisions of political parties and dictatorial regimes and dwells in uncertainty of integrity and provincial survival (Zeb, 2015). On the other hand, Sikh ideological connection with a separate land instigate a scenario of independent state which Sikhs can call their own holy land (Salma, 2010). While Indian insurgency in Baluchistan (Khetran, 2017) has initiated a movement of separate territory for Baluch population which feels deprived and has suffered from the hands of different political and military powers (Bansal, 2006). Whereas, India blames Pakistan for its involvement in instigating Khalistan movement among Sikhs inside and outside India (Purewal, 2011) for their strategic balance of power as a counteraction of Indian involvement in Baluchistan separatist movement instigation.

Uluğ and Cohrs (2016) studied conflict framing along with other frames related to terrorism, and indicated that media, while framing a conflict, portray it with accordance to their ongoing governmental policies.

The researcher reviewed literature on the multiple domestic and international dimensions of the framing theory, including war and peace perspectives, health crisis, and formulation of public opinion in order to see how Pakistan and India can deplete their media in similar fashion in order to improve their mutual relations. The researcher found that the Israel-Palestine conflict continuously appearing in comparative media debates throughout the world. Karniel et al. studied the international political agendas through news framing of "Israel-Hamas prisoners exchange deal" (2017), which was given more than normal coverage by the media on both the sides and the world media. It was the largest coverage ever on the

number of prisoners exchanged between the two countries.

Karniel et al. quantitatively evaluated the content of the news on the prisoner exchange from the national and international media from the USA, Britain and Israel, and pointed to a clear difference between the agendas and presentation preferences of the national and international media (2017). The American and British media projected the matter without attaching any emotional sentiment to the matter. They neutrally covered and did not sensationalize the news like the Israeli media which subjected this matter to their national agenda (Karniel et al., 2017). The study clearly pointed to the role of Israeli media and journalists in highlighting their national issues relating to the opponent country (Karniel et al., 2017). They emanated news with bias, reflecting their ideological perceptions and the sentiment of their people and the government. Karniel et al. (2017) concluded that media can twist facts on any issue in the most desired way, even critical and/or dangerous.

Cabling et al. (2017) conducted a critical discourse analysis of news framing by Qatari and Philippine media about a peace contract signed by the government of Philippine and Moro Islamic Liberation Front. They focused on the framing of news about Bangsamoro, an autonomous area in Mindanao of Philippine due to coverage of the Islamic ideology/perspective. They found that the Philippine government and media targeted and victimized and the said local media as the trouble maker region while the Qatari media presented news on the miseries of Muslims in the said region due to the large number of Pilipino citizens working in Qatar. They perceived its direct and indirect impact on the Philippine government and its citizens. Cabling et al. (2017) consider Qatari media's indirect positive projection of the Muslim minority area of Bangsamoro an example of biased journalism. As opposed to the Qatari media, the Philippine government and media highlighted the issue with a focus on their national integrity and, therefore, they made it a subject of serious concern for the state sovereignty. Cabling et al.'s (2017) comparative study of Philippine's and Qatari media showed a clash of sociological interests, political dependencies, economic bindings and religious references that shaped the perceived reality and derived multiple news frames for the audience in the two countries.

Entman (1991) pointed to similar risk and opportunity frames for the Americans and Russians in "the KAL attack" coverage. He pointed to the impact on the public sentiment when the American media framed the story of the shooting down of a North Korean plane as "the KAL attack" by the Soviet Union (Entman, 1991). He noticed the impact of retentive or pre-existing cultural expectation or the schema of anti-Soviet perception among the American viewers. The American viewers took the Soviet shooting down of the North Korean plane as an attack whereas they considered they believed the shooting down of an Iranian plane by the Americans was the result of a technical fault. The U.S. media showcased the Iranian plane incident neutrally and unlike the KAL incident, in order to avoid the blame for the aggression towards the enemy country. In view of the American-Russian discontent, it framed the Russian incident negatively. In both the cases, the American media maneuvered the reality and made the events less or more noticeable for the targeted audience. The American media achieved their goals through desirable frames to influence the mind of the audience. The Time and Newsweek further confused their

readers or diverted their attention from the actual happening by killing the news story, playing down and declaring it an ambiguous happening, or describing the shooting down of the Iranian plane by the Americans with such headlines as “Why It Happened”. They framed the story of the shooting down of the Korean plane by the Russians with such headlines as “Murder in the Air” and “Shooting to kill: The Soviets destroy an Airliner”. This difference in framing clearly depicts the real intention of the said magazines behind the framing of the two similar scenarios with two different intentions.

Galtung and Ruge (1965) indicated that a negative and sensational news spreads out in a society more quickly than a positive and less sensational news. Though constructive and productive in its nature, the positive news is less acknowledged by the society against a negative news. Galtung, and Ruge studied these factors in regards to the disasters of Cyprus, Congo and Cuba as represented in the print media of Norway (1965). They focused on the categories of unpredictability, frequency, cultural proximity, manifold conditions and demand which the press attempts to fulfill to satisfy the emotional needs of the subscribers (Galtung, & Ruge, 1965). They found that news stories helped the Norwegian readers perceive and interpret the facts of the crises of Cuba, Cyprus and Congo. They had an impact on common perception and popular and patriotic beliefs of the readers, whether true or false, and the readers intended to adhere with their stereotypical beliefs and felt content in practicing them (Galtung, & Ruge, 1965).

METHODOLOGY

Leading English newspapers of Pakistan and India, on the bases of their highest readership among national policy makers and international access were selected to be analyzed. News stories about Baluchistan and Khalistan issues were taken as unit of analysis in Headlines, sub-headlines and lead paragraphs from Front, international and back pages of the selected newspapers. To study analyze the media conformity with governments’ policies, the data was collected from a time frame of 1st June 2014 to 31st May 2018 when both India and Pakistan had rightist political parties; Bharatiya Janata Party and Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz respectively, in reign. The content of all 3439 collected news stories from the selected newspapers were purposefully selected for content analysis and later scrutinized with conflict framing.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The dailies frame the content of the news in a way to violate national interests and sometimes the national sovereignty of each other. On 14th November 2017, Times of India launched an anti-Pakistan and anti-Baluchistan campaign in London, with the headline: “‘Free Baluchistan’ campaign on London buses has Pakistan cry foul” and a lead paragraph, “The ‘Free Baluchistan’ campaign has found its way to London, with more than 100 buses flaunting posters about it”. On 28th December 2017, it started the same campaign in New York, with the headline: “After London, ‘Free Baluchistan’ posters appear in New York City’s Times Square”, and lead paragraph: “The campaign aims to highlight the alleged human rights abuses by

Pakistan in the region”. On 2nd May 2016, Times of India again hit Pakistan with the headline: “Activist wants India to liberate Baluchistan”, and details of the news stating: “Mobilizing Indians to do what Prime Minister Indira Gandhi did in East Pakistan in 1971. World Baloch Women’s Forum President Naela Quadri wants India to liberate” Baluchistan “from Pakistan, the way Bangladesh” was liberated. Pakistani newspapers, on the other hand, gave coverage to the Sikh separatist movement. On 8th June 2014, a headline in Dawn read: “Sikhs living abroad to hold ‘referendum’ for separate homeland” and on 24th April 2017, The Nation reported: “Massive Sikh gathering in New York demands separation of Punjab from India” in a headline along with the news: “banners displaying Kahlistan referendum 2020 by Pakistani Sikhs at Nankana sb” (“The Nation,” 2017). The news coverage indicates how both countries expose each other’s weaknesses for their native readers and the world. Indian media targets Baluchistan as Pakistan’s weakness while Pakistan showcase Khalistan movement as a counter to that.

Directional analysis of Territorial Conflicts

Newspaper	Slant	01 Jun 2014 to 31 May 2015	01 Jun 2015 to 31 May 2016	01 Jun 2016 to 31 May 2017	01 Jun 2017 to 31 May 2018	Total	Grand Total
<i>Times of India</i>	Positive	6 0.17%	4 0.12%	11 0.32%	7 0.20%	28 0.81%	871
	Negative	126 3.66%	173 5.03%	218 6.34%	233 6.78%	750 21.81%	
	Neutral	24 0.70%	17 0.49%	23 0.67%	29 0.84%	93 2.70%	
	Positive	4 0.12%	8 0.23%	16 0.47%	10 0.29%	38 1.10%	
<i>The Hindu</i>	Negative	214 6.22%	219 6.37%	216 6.28%	177 5.15%	826 24.02%	960
	Neutral	15 0.44%	21 0.61%	39 1.13%	21 0.61%	96 2.79%	
	Positive	19 0.55%	14 0.41%	16 0.47%	45 1.31%	94 2.73%	
	Negative	117 3.40%	108 3.14%	187 5.44%	160 4.65%	572 16.63%	
<i>The Dawn</i>	Neutral	33 0.96%	26 0.76%	21 0.61%	26 0.76%	106 3.08%	772

<i>The Nation</i>	Positive	12	6	10	8	36	836
		0.35%	0.17%	0.29%	0.23%	1.05%	
	Negative	190	174	191	161	716	
		5.52%	5.06%	5.55%	4.68%	20.82%	
	Neutral	25	19	15	25	84	
		0.73%	0.55%	0.44%	0.73%	2.44%	
Year wise total		785	789	963	902	3439	
		22.83%	22.94%	28.00%	26.23%	100.00%	

Table 1 shows the directional analysis of news related to the Territorial Conflicts. Indian newspapers have framed Pakistani issue related to Baluchistan separatists movement more negatively and Pakistani newspapers framed Indian issue of Khalistan less negatively. The Hindu from India and The Nation from Pakistan framed the Baluchistan and Khalistan movement more negatively with conflict frame than Times of India and Daily Dawn from India and Pakistan respectively.

News examples pertaining to ‘Conflict Frame’ are following;

The Hindu: “China warns its citizens in Pakistan of possible militant attacks” (8th December 2017)

Times of India: “‘Free Baluchistan’ campaign on London buses has Pakistan cry foul” (14th November 2017)

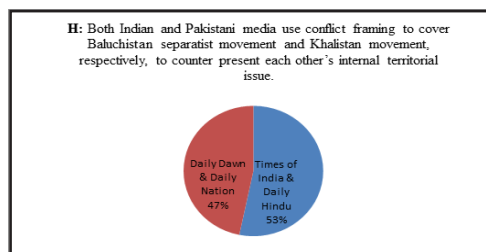
Times of India: “After London, ‘Free Baluchistan’ posters appear in New York City’s Times Square”

“The campaign aims to highlight the alleged human rights abuses by Pakistan in the region” (28th December 2017).

Times of India: “Activist wants India to liberate Baluchistan” (2nd May 2016).

Dawn: “Sikhs living abroad to hold ‘referendum’ for separate homeland” (8th June, 2014).

The Nation: “Massive Sikh gathering in New York demands separation of Punjab from India” (24th April 2017).



Times of India covered 871 and Daily Hindu covered 960 news stories (collectively 1831 with 53% of the total data collected during the research timespan) related to Baluchistan separatist movements, Baluchistan liberation forces, incidents happening in Baluchistan and directly and indirectly relating them with Pakistani government's suppression of natives rights etc. While Daily Dawn with 871 and Daily Nation with 960 news stories (collectively 1605 with 47% of the total collected data during research timespan related to Khalistan movement, Sikhs' right suppression by Indian government, International movements for separate land for Sikhs as Khalistan etc.

CONCLUSION

The results of analyzed data related to framing trends revealed that territorial conflicts Baluchistan issues and Khalistan Movement, were presented through 'conflict frame' when both sides put the blame of trouble making on the each other. "Baluchistan" issue made more coverage as the arrest of Kulbhushan Sudhir Yadhav sparked a rift from both sides, India's coverage of Baluchistan separatist movement and Pakistan's counter coverage blaming Indian involvement to ignite separation of Pakistan's largest province got morality framing. Pakistani media framed India's internal matter of Khalistani movement by associating it with India's policy of occupying the rights of people to annex with freedom or live independent while Indian media framed Pakistan's internal matter of Baluchistan separatists by relating it with Pakistan's policy of injustice with the Baluchi people. The findings shows that both the Indian and Pakistani newspapers frame news stories to conform with the foreign policies of their governments. They depict issues of the other more negatively than positively. The dailies from both the sides similarly use the conflict of Baluchistan and Khalistan Movement. This study will be a guide to understand media's potential to effect foreign policies of both countries and maneuvering national and international perception about their social, economic and political aspects.

REFERENCES

- Bansal, A. (2006). Balochistan: Continuing violence and its implications. *Strategic Analysis*, 30(1), 47-63.
- Cabling, M. L., Drago, F., & Andrei, A. T. (2017). Exemplars in the coverage of the Bangsamoro framework agreement: using computational tools to compare Qatari and Philippine news framing. *Philippine Political science journal*, 38(2), pp. 104-22.
- Dixit, J. N. (2003). *India-Pakistan in war and peace*. Routledge.
- Entman, R. (1993). Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, 34(4), 51-58.
- Entman, R. M. (1991). Framing US coverage of international news: Contrasts in narratives of the KAL and Iran Air incidents. *Journal of communication*, 41(4),

pp. 6-27.

- Galtung, J., & Ruge, M. H. (1965). The structure of foreign news: The presentation of the Congo, Cuba and Cyprus crises in four Norwegian newspapers. *Journal of peace research*, 2(1), pp. 64-90.
- Gamson, W. A., Croteau, D., Hoynes, W., & Sasson, T. (1992). Media images and the social construction of reality. *Annual review of sociology*, 18(1), 373-393.
- Karniel, Y., Lavie-Dinur, A., & Samuel Azran, T. (2017). Professional or personal framing? International media coverage of the Israel–Hammas prisoner exchange deal. *Media, War & Conflict*, 10(1), pp. 105-24.
- Khetran, M. S. (2017). Indian Interference in Balochistan. *Strategic Studies*, 37(3), 112-125.
- Neuman, W. R., Neuman, R. W., Just, M. R., & Crigler, A. N. (1992). Common knowledge: News and the construction of political meaning. U of Chicago P.
- Paul, T. V. (2006). Why has the India-Pakistan rivalry been so enduring? Power asymmetry and an intractable conflict. *Security Studies*, 15(4), pp. 600-30.
- Salma, M. (2010). Pakistan in Regional and Global Politics. *International Journal of Peace and Development Studies*, 1(3), 32-34.
- Schofield, V. (2010). *Kashmir in conflict: India, Pakistan and the unending war*. NY: Bloomsbury.
- Sisson, R., & Rose, L. E. (1990). *War and secession: Pakistan, India, and the creation of Bangladesh*. CA: U of California P.
- Uluğ, Ö. M., & Cohrs, J. C. (2016). An exploration of lay people's Kurdish conflict frames in Turkey. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 22(2), 109.
- Zeb, R. (2015). *Pakistan's Other Problem: Narratives, Enduring Injustice and Ethnopolitical Conflict in Balochistan* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Western Australia).