

Media and Foreign Policy Discourses: A Case of India-Pakistan Relations

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Abstract

The paper focuses on the emerging themes, and analysis trends and patterns of the foreign policy discourses in the print media between Pakistan and India, over a period ranging from April 2014 until May 2015. Each theme is an area of concern in the bilateral relations between Pakistan and India. These themes are covered from various newspapers, but the main focus is on regional media. The paper explores different dimensions of the similar issue framed differently in both countries and their implication on the foreign policy. Also an insight to the public opinion through online participation in public debate and sharing of content is quantified. It is noticed that Indian mindset is more communally charged and views Pakistan with a specific security lens. Whereas, Pakistani print media reflected a conciliatory policy, which was rejected by India. Recently, it has begun to counter Indian propaganda in the print media. The issue of Jammu and Kashmir ranks highest on public opinion in both countries, but with a different dimension of concern.

Keywords: Pakistan, India, Media, Foreign Policy, Agenda-Setting, Kashmir.

Introduction

Media, besides a main source of information for the public, has emerged as a 'strategic actor' in shaping and guiding public discourses. Moreover, it provides an orientation to the public on issues of foreign policy and brings forth salient features of the issue through effective presentation. This 'transfer of media salience' to what public deems salient is what is known as 'agenda-setting.' Media, therefore, emerges

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as the ‘fourth state’¹ in the political system, with a direct bearing on public opinion and decision-makers.

In the context of media’s strategic significance, framing theory explains as to how something is presented to the audience (called “the frame”) which influences the choices people make about the way to process that information. Frames are thought to influence the perception of the news by the audience as they not only tell the audience what to think about (agenda-setting theory), but also how to think about that issue (second level agenda setting, framing theory)².

Information then becomes a commodity of exchange, which drives all actors and their actions. The possessors of this information are the leaders, journalists and elites of the country. State and government institutions tend to manipulate public opinion to set it in-line with its foreign policy objectives and decisions in order to command public support. Hence, the relationship between media, public opinion and foreign policy is of a complex and dynamic nature. In this regard, the following paper will explore different dimensions of narrative presented in India and Pakistani print media on bilateral relations. The intended research will delve into differentiating the frames used for highlighting specific issues and how the information is presented. Furthermore, it will factor out possible policy implications in light of the emerging narrative and also to take into account the trends in public opinion as a result of these publications in print media. Some additional themes are added keeping in view their significance, and irrespective of media’s attention on these issues during the researched period.

¹Edward L. Glaeser and Claudia Goldin, “The Rise of the Fourth Estate. How Newspapers Became Informative and Why It Mattered,” NBER Working Paper no. 10791 (September 2004), <http://www.nber.org/papers/w10791>

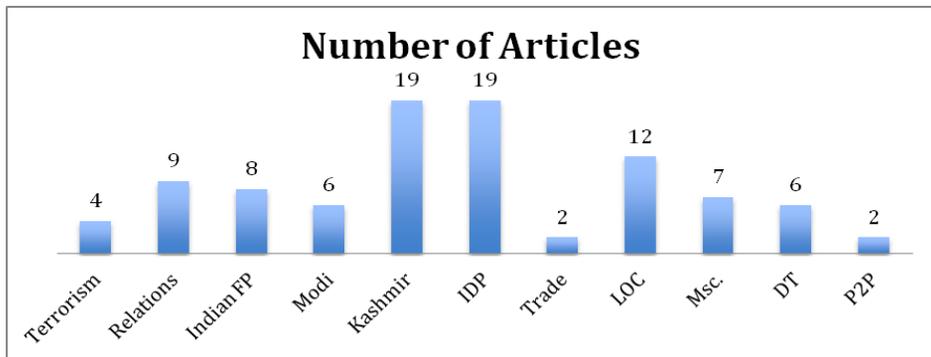
²Mass Communication Theory, “Framing Theory,” <http://masscommtheory.com/theory-overviews/framing-theory/>

Research Methodology and Findings

For the purpose of exploring public discourses in media, a content analysis of opinions of two leading English newspapers on India and Pakistan bilateral relations from March 2014 till March 2015 is reviewed. The *Times of India* (TOI) is selected to represent the Indian print media's framing of Pakistan whereas *Dawn* is selected to represent frames on India in Pakistani print media. Besides these newspapers, other news sources have also been used to complement the emerging narrative.

In this regard, content analysis of 94 opinion articles from the *Dawn* newspaper of Pakistan was undertaken. The segmentation of these opinion articles, based on dominant themes discussed, is represented in the following bar-chart.

Figure No. 1



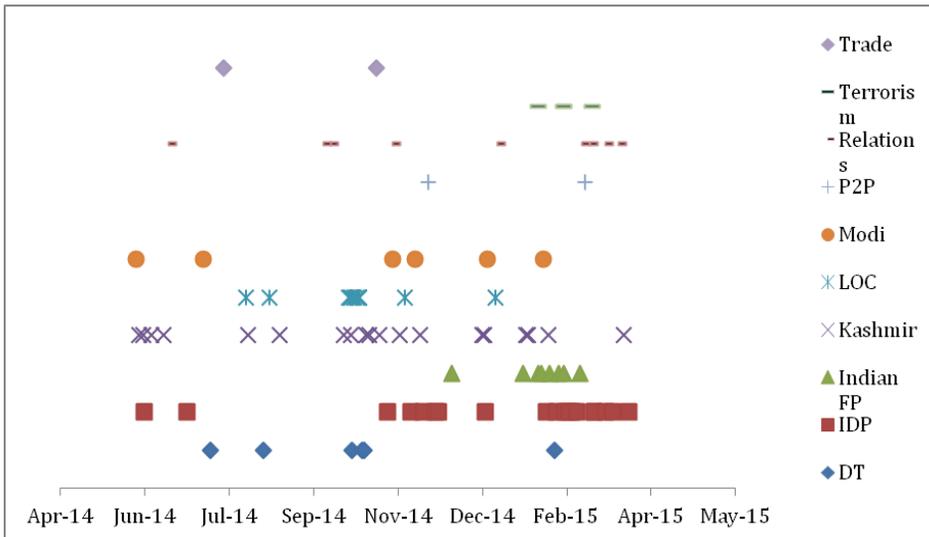
It is noticed that Kashmir and India's Domestic Politics (IDP) are amongst the highest published themes. The renewed interest of Pakistani media on domestic politics of India is noteworthy. The undertaken period for study witnessed heightened tension on Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir. Consequently, media paid more attention to Kashmir issue along with LoC, as shown in the bar-chart.

Other issues pertaining to bilateral relations between Pakistan and India average out at five to six articles over a year. It is evident that media's agenda setting objective is heavily centred on the disputed issue of Jammu and Kashmir for this period. Bilateral Indo-Pakistan relations

and Indian Foreign Policy (IFP), especially concerning the United States of America (US), come next in debate along with Dialogue and Talks (DT) between Indian and Pakistan. Interestingly, trade and people to people (P2P) exchanges are represented least in the electronic media, depicting the agenda priority of the media.

The following diagram is a scatter plot highlighting the coverage of issues corresponding to time, with date of publication labelled in the X-axis and key themes labelled on the Y-axis. The diagram is a presentation of the frequency of opinion articles published with respect to specific theme.

Diagram No. 1



A comparative analysis of the scatter plot of the *Dawn* and *TOI* highlights that Pakistani media tends to respond and react after the occurrence of an incident. This response is based on the nature of the situation, along which media tangents its narrative. For instance, it is noticed that Pakistani media responded by gravitating its coverage on Kashmir and related issues especially after the cancellation of Foreign Secretary levels talks between India and Pakistan in September – November 2014. Also noteworthy is that media tends to react or respond aggressively after the cancellation of talks, as a huge segment of data lies during this time interval.

More interestingly, Indian foreign policy and domestic politics were debated extensively in Pakistani media only after the cancellation of talks. One explanation for this trend can be the growing ‘friendly’ relations between the US and India, and American President’s visit to India. Another interesting trend in Pakistani media is the emergence of an extensive campaign geared towards highlighting Indian sponsored terrorism and involvement in Pakistan. These allegations of Indian involvement in Pakistan are also a reaction to counter Indian media and government campaign of maligning Pakistan. This trend can be seen only after the cancellation of talks and seems to rise in the coming period.

Other themes seemed to have adjusted themselves in light of these major political changes. For instance, only one article is published on dialogue and talks after its cancellation. Also, media has focused more on Modi and his policy after the cancellation of bilateral talks, which served as a tipping point in Pakistani print media on the coverage and framing of Pakistan-India relations. It can also be noticed that media gains a momentum in fine tuning public perception in line with government’s policy prior to its implementation. Based on the outcome of the policy, this momentum is either sustained or a shift takes place, again setting another momentum for building public opinion.

The trends in terms of public participation, in the following bar-chart, provide a key insight into emerging public opinion on these issues. For this purpose, the number of ‘likes’ and ‘shares’ on online-forums are quantified, which represent concurrence of readers with ideas and frames presented in the article. Also these two variables are easily quantifiable and adhere to the theoretical framework used; where framing is associated with a ‘like’ and agenda-setting is associated with a ‘share.’

Figure No. 2

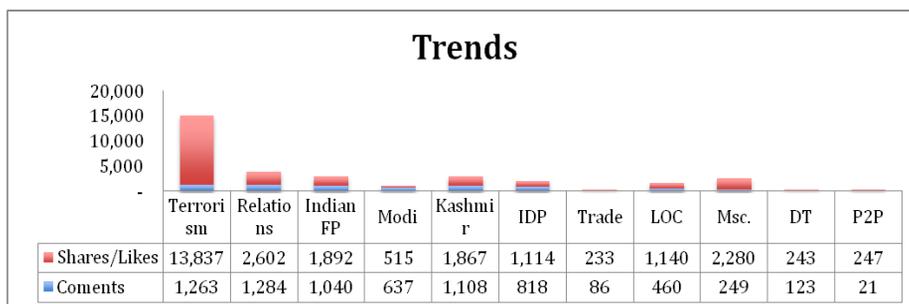
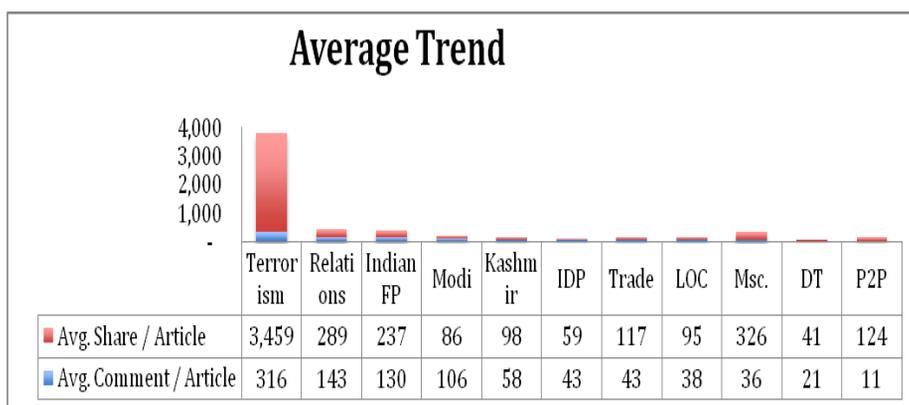


Figure No. 3



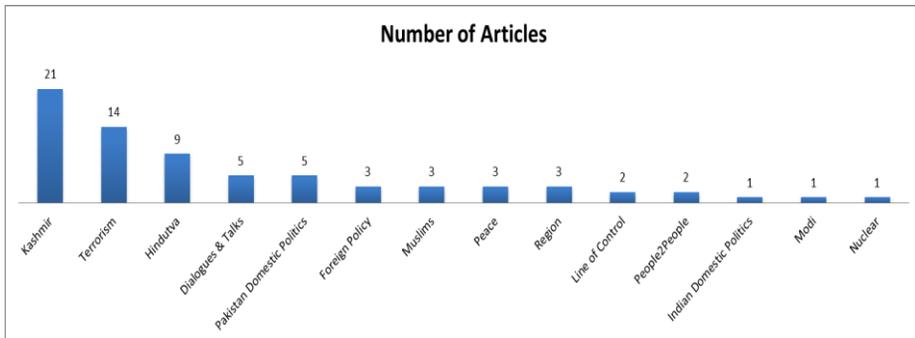
In contrast to the frequency of themes published in opinion articles, online public participation has mushroomed around different themes. As it can be seen in the bar-chart graph above the public opinion is focused on terrorism. There are 13,837 shares and 1263 comments on online forums for three articles which focused on terrorism.

In light of the concept ‘transfer of salience’ which relates to agenda-setting theory explained above, it can be seen that Kashmir and internal domestic politics (IDP) of India, though ranked highest on publication front but when it comes to debate and public attention, they averaged out. There may be several reasons for this; firstly, according to the theory, ‘media effects’ take some time to influence people. Secondly, the frames used in Kashmir and LoC articles adhere to similar frames used in articles on terrorism. For instance, the Jammu and Kashmir conflict is

viewed from a security lens in India and Pakistan. Moreover, the issue of terrorism captures public opinion irrespective of the core issue of Jammu and Kashmir and becomes a cross-sectional theme that catches everyone’s attentions.

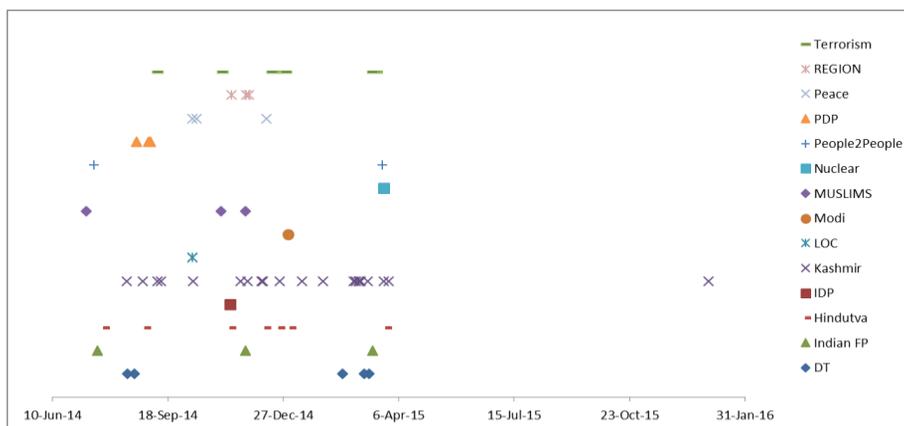
The bar graph below shows the head-count of 73 opinion articles published in *TOI* over the reviewed period, segmented into themes. It can be seen that Jammu and Kashmir issue has also dominated Indian print media, followed by terrorism. Both these themes are also intertwined. Surprisingly, Hindutva is the third most debated issue in Indian media, and most of the debate has been critical of extremist Hindu ideology. In contrast to Pakistani media, Indian media has not followed Pakistani domestic politics with same vigour and interest. In addition, Pakistan--India relations and regional dynamics are represented to the minimal, besides India-Pakistan trade is non-existent on Indian print media agenda list.

Figure No. 4



The following scatter plot represents the coverage of *TOI* on India-Pakistan relations with respect to time. The theme of Jammu and Kashmir is projected in most sustained and extensive manner during the reviewed period. A closer review of this thread with respect to time reveals that Jammu and Kashmir issue is discussed more rigorously especially after the cancellation of talks. Arguably, the reason for this is to counter Pakistan’s renewed interest on Kashmir issue, and since the formation of new state assembly of BJP and PDP alliance, Kashmir’s domestic politics is debated more rigorously on public forums.

Diagram No. 2



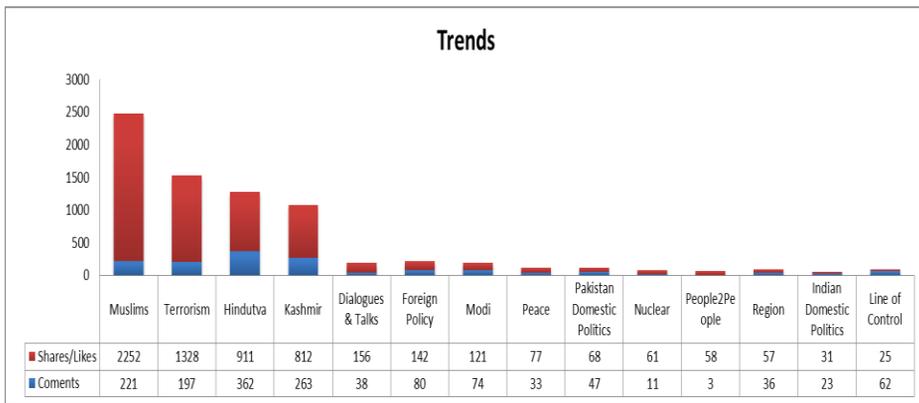
Another key difference in the framing of Jammu and Kashmir is that of the context in which the issue is framed. For instance, Pakistani media frames Jammu and Kashmir issue as a conflict between India and Pakistan that has its historical roots. Whereas, Indian media ignores the conflict and occupational status of its forces in Jammu and Kashmir and frames it as any other Indian state. Because of this, the public opinion in both countries is completely divergent and non-reconcilable.

Furthermore, the frequency of highlighting communal issues has risen after the advent of BJP government and Narendra Modi in Indian print media. As can be seen in the scatter plot, Hindutva and Muslims in Indian print media are a consistent theme. This will have grave implication on public opinion and can widen the communal divide in secular Indian society. In contrast to Indian print media, Pakistani print media has focused less on these issues except that publications on Hindu nationalism has been associated with and published in articles on Modi and his nationalistic policies. Modi, after assuming the office, is discussed more extensively in Pakistani print media in comparison to Indian print media.

Moreover, India-Pakistan scatter plots reveal, that Indian print media is covering more themes than Pakistani print media. Secondly, Pakistani print media seems to be working on an action-reaction principle, which is evident from their editorial policy after the cancellation of foreign secretary level talks with India. Whereas, Indian print media is working

in a more calculated, consistent and planned manner, therefore, its scatter plot is evenly distributed. Though such conclusions have their limitations based on the data used for study, still these scatter-plots give an insight to the editorial policy and direction in which public opinion is formulated. A more thorough review of these articles shows that Indian print media is also mildly critical of Indian domestic politics. However, on the matters of foreign policy and Pakistan centric issues, Indian print media tows state policy.

Figure No. 5



An insight into the online public participation in the form of comments and shares shown above provides a different view in comparison with the themes published. When it comes to most debated themes by audience, discussion on Indian Muslims emerges as a leading thread in public opinion, followed by terrorism and Hindutva. Jammu and Kashmir, which is widely published, is not proportionally represented on public opinion radar. This variation between the published themes and most discussed and shared themes can be explained through the framing and agenda setting theory.

The frames used in Indian print media for the studied period is found to be communally charged which impacts how public views and contextualizes certain issue. For instance, the debate on Jammu and Kashmir entails discussion on terrorism and Muslims and their association or vice versa. All these themes are inter-related and complement each other in shaping the public discourse. The foreign

policy implication for such communally charged public opinion will take a toll on Pakistan.

Pakistan-India Relations: Transfer of Salience

It is also important to note that a single incident can interrupt the progress made in bilateral relations. For example, in August 2014 the cancellation of foreign secretary level talks between the two countries, when India pulled back in protest to Kashmiri leaders meeting with Pakistan High Commissioner³. The following period was marked with unprecedented firing on the LoC and exchange of blame from both sides.

Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan met in Ufa, Russia, on the sidelines of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Summit. The Indian Prime Minister paid an impromptu visit to Lahore on his way back to India from Afghanistan. Unlike before, no high expectations from this meeting were set in the media. However, one thing is evident that the points agreed between the two countries coincide with the frames and agenda-setting write-ups in the print media over the period studied, validating the dynamic relation between media and foreign policy discourses. For instance, Mumbai attack case and terrorism topped the agenda item for discussion between the meeting of National Security advisors of India and Pakistan. It is also important to note that trade and economy is missing from the joint presser given after Ufa meeting that is in accordance with their minimalistic representation in print media, validating the effect of agenda-setting.

The Media and the Re-election of Nawaz Sharif

The re-election of Nawaz Sharif as the Prime Minister of Pakistan for the third time, set a new record in the history of the country. Pakistani media framed Nawaz Sharif's emergence as an unprecedented and historical event. A leading Pakistani newspaper, *The News* stated: "Nawaz sworn in as Prime Minister for record 3rd time," and wrote

³Mateen Haider, "India calls off foreign secretary level talks with Pakistan," *Dawn*, August 18, 2014. <http://www.dawn.com/news/1126123>

about his political career⁴. The *India Today* newspaper wrote, four days prior to the general elections in Pakistan, that Nawaz Sharif is expected to win, besides the need for economic reform, balancing civil-military relations and mending ties with [the] US were quoted as amongst the challenges that he would be facing⁵. The initial report on 2013 elections and Nawaz Sharif's re-election centered on the electoral process, democratic transition of power and unprecedented third tenure of Premiership.

Given the history of Nawaz's previous tenure, his policy of reconciliation with India spurred some hope of peace in media. *The New York Times* headlined, "After Vote in Pakistan, Some Hope in India" writes that Mr Nawaz Sharif believes in maintaining pragmatic relations with India⁶. In the given context, Nawaz Sharif's emergence in Pakistan had all plus points on the India-Pakistan relations' scorecard. Media anticipated not much, but some momentum in the stagnant relations.

The Media Framing of Modi

Bharatia Janata Party (BJP) emerged as the single largest political party, forming a simple majority government after 2014 elections. An article in the *Indian Express* starts with a question, "What happened on May 16?,and is answered with one word, Modi,"⁷ hereby framing Modi as someone larger than life, more than a personality and a phenomenon, and who packaged BJP's manifesto into an 'Indian Dream' of Hindutva. An article in the *Dawn* was headlined, "Areas of concern," Modi is

⁴"Nawaz sworn in as Prime Minister for record 3rd time," *News*, June 05, 2013, <http://www.thenews.com.pk/article-103935-Nawaz-sworn-in-as-Prime-Minister-for-record-3rd-time>

⁵"Opinion polls predict Nawaz Sharif poised to win May 11 general elections in Pakistan," *India Today*, May 7, 2013, <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/pakistan-general-elections-opinion-polls-nawaz-sharif-poised-to-win-india-today/1/269642.html>

⁶Gardiner Harris, "After Vote in Pakistan, Some Hope in India," *New York Times*, May 13, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/14/world/asia/pakistan-vote-inspires-measured-optimism-in-india.html?_r=0

⁷Surjit S Bhalla, "Modi happened in Election 2014," *Indian Express*, May 20, 2014, <http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/modi-happened-in-election-2014/>

portrayed as a ‘Sanyasi’⁸. His attributes and characteristics, based on his lifelong affiliation with Hindu extremist outfit Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and allegation of instilling Hindu-Muslim riots in Gujarat, are painted with connotations attached to Hindu religion.

Moreover, in comparison to Manmohan Singh, his predecessors, Modi is considered to be a Hindu nationalist and an advocate of anti-Pakistan sentiment who fans hatred and indulges in war-mongering. In an editorial headlined: “Will Narendra Modi become India’s Putin?” *The Washington Post* wonders if Mr Modi will be a leader “whose economic ambitions are derailed by nationalism and authoritarian temptations.”

Media Reporting on Jammu and Kashmir Conflict

Both countries have a different national narrative on Jammu and Kashmir issue and till date it remains an undecided fate. The Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif reiterated Pakistan’s official stance on Kashmir and demanded its resolution in accordance with the United Nations Security Council Resolutions⁹. In his inaugural speech, Nawaz Sharif said, “Kashmir is the lifeline of Pakistan and is our national issue, and its solution is as dear to me as it is to every Pakistani”.

Whereas, India claims Jammu and Kashmir to be an integral part of India and adhere to no compromise on India’s unity and integrity¹⁰. Indian Ministry of External Affairs criticised Pakistan’s stance on Jammu and Kashmir and raising the issue at International multilateral forums, by labelling it as a bilateral issue¹¹. Pakistan, in response, has always held high the sanctity of UN Resolutions and even in the light of

⁸F.S. Aijazuddin, “Areas of concern,” *Dawn*, June 05, 2014,
<http://www.dawn.com/news/1110600/areas-of-concern>

⁹Mateen Haider, “Kashmir issue should be resolved under UN resolutions: PM Nawaz,” *Dawn*, February 17, 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1164195>

¹⁰“The Jammu and Kashmir Issue,” *Ministry of External Affairs India*,
<http://mea.gov.in/in-focus-article.htm?18971/The+Jammu+and+Kashmir+Issue>,
accessed November 12, 2015.

¹¹“India reiterates that Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India,” *Ministry of External Affairs India*,
http://mea.gov.in/pressreleases.htm?dtl/25097/India_reiterates_that_Jammu_and_Kashmir_is_an_integral_part_of_India, accessed November 10, 2015.

bilateral relations, India's non-seriousness on Jammu and Kashmir leaves no other options for Pakistan.¹² Resultantly, the national narrative on Jammu and Kashmir is divergent, completely opposite of each other in India and Pakistan.

An instance of this divergent and opposing policy perspective on Jammu and Kashmir can be analysed from the statement of Chief of Pakistan Army General Raheel Sharif in which he called Kashmir the jugular vein of Pakistan¹³. In another statement, General Raheel Sharif termed Kashmir and Pakistan as “inseparable” and that Kashmir is an “unfinished agenda of partition.”¹⁴ Pakistani media framed these statements in the historical context of partition and annexation of Kashmir, attaching emotional connotations and popular aspiration of Pakistani nation which support the right of self-determination of Kashmiris.

In contrast, the *TOI* headlined, “Pakistan army chief's Kashmir statement has more to do with domestic reassertion of supremacy,”¹⁵ framing the entire statement in the realm of Pakistani domestic politics, and scraping off the significance of the statement in relation to the issue of Jammu and Kashmir between India and Pakistan. The difference in the two frames of the same statement not only highlights two opposing views on Jammu and Kashmir conflict, but also signifies how media feeds to public opinion with respect to foreign policy orientation.

In September 2014, Jammu and Kashmir witnessed one of the worst floods in recent history. The *TOI* headline was, “Facing the Floods: Kashmir Tragedy & Army's rescue mission is above politics as India

¹²“Text of Pakistan's Response to the Indian Statement during the Asian-African Summit,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs Pakistan*, Sec. Press Releases/Speeches, (<http://www.mofa.gov.pk/pr-details.php?mm=Mjc0MA>,

¹³“Kashmir a 'jugular vein of Pak': Army chief Sharif,” *Hindustan Times*, May 01, 2014, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/army-chief-gen-raheel-sharif-calls-kashmir-a-jugular-vein-of-pakistan/article1-1214336.aspx>

¹⁴Mateen Haider, “Pakistan and Kashmir are inseparable: General Raheel Sharif,” *Dawn*, June 03, 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1185928>

¹⁵Sameer Arshad, “Pak army chief's Kashmir statement has more to do with domestic reassertion of supremacy,” *Times of India*, May 11, 2014, <http://blogs.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/gray-areas/pak-army-chiefs-kashmir-statement-has-more-to-do-with-domestic-reassertion-of-supremacy/>

unites for support” highlighting Indian army’s efforts to rescue people in Kashmir.¹⁶ Indian media framed a positive picture of Indian Army, who is often blamed for human rights violation in Jammu and Kashmir. Whereas, in response to Indian media writes in the *Dawn* newspaper, “Srinagar floods rather than a humanitarian issue became a sickening eulogy of Indian army helping Kashmiris.”¹⁷

The floods in Jammu and Kashmir brought to light the intolerant religious sentiment of Indian society, which feeds on communal fault lines. Comparing relief and rescue efforts on both sides of Jammu and Kashmir, an article in the *TOI* writes, “Something for all Kashmiris to think about, particularly that minority who want to secede from India. If they had their way, where would they be today, and to whom would they have turned for help?”¹⁸ Such sentiments in Indian media stereotypes Muslims as isolationists and continues to assert Hindu psychological print on Kashmiris.

As the floods faded in Jammu and Kashmir, state government elections captured media’s attention. The status of Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370 of Indian Constitution and its abrogation became BJP’s electioneering slogan. In an opinion article of the *TOI* titled “Separatist, Politicians, Media & Kashmir” writes, “Article 370 is an impediment to Jammu and Kashmir’s economic and social integration not only with the rest of India but with the entire world. It must abrogate.” BJP’s communally charged election manifesto promised resettlement of Hindu pundits in Kashmir. BJP in light of its past experience tapped into majority Hindu sentiments with rights tunes of communal hatred and seized their imagination with false promises. In

¹⁶“Facing the floods: Kashmir tragedy and Army’s rescue mission is above politics as India unites in support,” *Times of India*, September 09, 2014, <http://blogs.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/toi-editorials/facing-the-floods-kashmir-tragedy-and-armys-rescue-mission-is-above-politics-as-india-unites-in-support/>

¹⁷Sameer Bhat, “The day Srinagar sank,” *Dawn*, September 20, 2014, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1133039>

¹⁸Jug Suraiya, “Kashmir’s silver lining,” *Times of India*, September 11, 2014, <http://blogs.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/juglebandhi/kashmir-silver-lining/>

response, the *Dawn* newspaper in Pakistan in its headlines wrote, “Pakistan warns India against unilaterally altering status of Kashmir.”¹⁹

The rhetoric of integrating Jammu and Kashmir in Indian Federation and subsequent settlement on Hindu pundits rallied Hindu voters under BJP’s flag. Although BJP failed on its 44+ mission, the results of elections scored another historic victory for BJP in Jammu and Kashmir. It also highlighted the communal politics of BJP and the fractured vote along communal lines in Jammu and Kashmir. As a result of these elections, BJP entered into a coalition government with People’s Democratic Party (PDP).

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed gave credit to Pakistan, militants and the Hurriyat leadership for the smooth conduct of the state assembly polls.²⁰ These remarks fell hard on the BJP and were brushed aside in the Indian media by calling it Mufti’s satire but, in principle, it raises a number of questions on the legality of Jammu and Kashmir’s accession and on its internal politics.

Media on the Violation of the Ceasefire and the Line of Control

The violation of ceasefire and firing at the Line of Control (LoC) can be viewed as of reactionary nature, to any incident affecting bilateral relations. Moreover, such incidents of ceasefire violation have latent meaning, too, that have implications on domestic politics of the two countries.

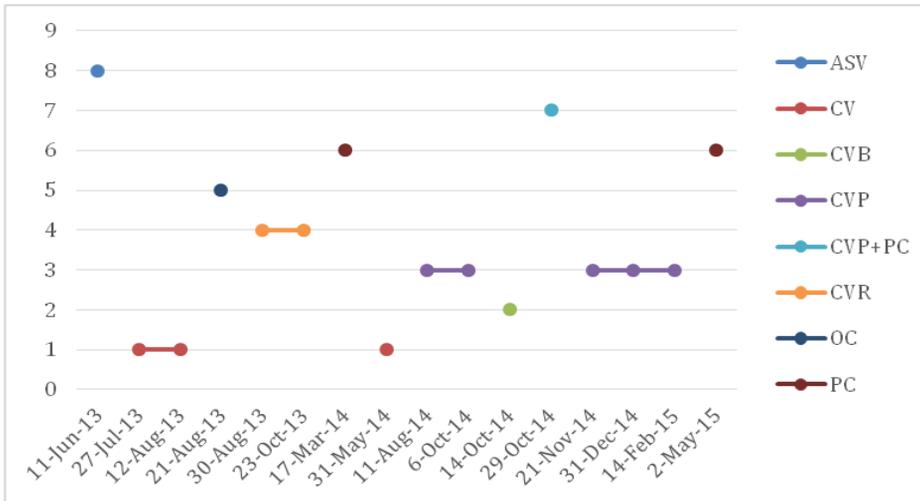
From May 2013 till May 2015 period, 15 press releases on ceasefire violation at LoC were reported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Pakistan. Pakistan lodged five complaints on ceasefire violation, with one complaint over airspace violation. There were three incidents of

¹⁹Mateen Haider, “Pakistan warns India against unilaterally altering status of Kashmir,” *Dawn*, January 23, 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1158481/pakistan-warns-india-against-unilaterally-altering-status-of-kashmir>

²⁰Vivek Katju, “By praising Pakistan, J&K CM Mufti Mohammad Sayeed crosses a red line,” *Times of India*, March 4, 2015, <http://blogs.economictimes.indiatimes.com/et-commentary/by-praising-pakistan-jk-cm-mufti-mohammad-sayeed-crosses-a-red-line/>

ceasefire violations where serious concerns were raised, which involved killing of a Pakistani soldier in Kargil Sector. As a result of these violations, Pakistan summoned Indian High Commissioner once and also gave a briefing to diplomatic corps on the situation at LoC. The following scatter plot represents these incidents with respect to time.

Diagram No. 3



Early reporting in the first week of August 2014 in the *Dawn* writes, “A day after Pakistan returned an Indian Border Security Force (BSF) soldier as a good will gesture, authorities in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) received on Saturday the body of a villager killed by the Indian troops along the LoC.”²¹ Pakistani print media highlighted Indian hostility and barbarity while framing these violations and subsequent killing of innocent people. In response, Pakistan’s Defence Minister said that desire for peace with India should not be misunderstood.

Media framing on both sides of the border, especially during the critical period of September till November 2014 was in line with state’s official stance. A concept defined in communication studies as ‘March

²¹Tariq Naqash, “AJK villager’s body handed over by India,” *Dawn*, August 10, 2014, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1124439/ajk-villagers-body-handed-over-by-india>

behind the Flag’ explains media’s behaviour during this period. Media during conflicts or emergency periods frames news in a nationalistic manner, which is deemed suitable for harnessing public support. Moreover, frames of killing of innocent civilians and soldiers in the line of enemy fire leave lasting impact on readers’ mind. Hence, media framing of incidents at LoC are emotionally charged and help in building public pressure for or against foreign policy decisions.

Media on Peace Talks and Composite Dialogue

Prior to the Jammu and Kashmir State elections in September 2014, Modi government was working towards reinstating ‘composite dialogue’ with Pakistan. Before the talks could begin, India called off the secretary level meeting on the pretext that Pakistan was holding meetings with the Kashmiri separatists. The timing of the cancellation of Pakistan-India talks in the wake of upcoming elections in Kashmir was unreasonable, especially the way in which Indian media framed it.

Pakistani media dubbed the cancellation of India-Pakistan Foreign Secretary level talks as a political stunt by Modi. *The Nation* wrote, “Unilateral cancellation of talks at Foreign Secretary level should be viewed in tandem with the upcoming State Assembly elections in Kashmir which may also have been a concern for those BJP member who wished to exploit communal sentiment in their best interest.”²²

Modi and Nawaz once again met in Ufa, Russia, on the sidelines of SCO Summit. The interesting takeaway from the joint statement includes, firstly, the shift from foreign secretary level talks to National Security Advisors meeting in New Delhi. Indian media has been hard hitting on the issue of terrorism and according to agenda-setting theory, terrorism in all its form, especially the Mumbai attack was on the agenda list of public opinion. Secondly, Indian media has been discrediting the civilian government in Pakistan, and propagated the military establishment as the real power brokers. *The Hindu* newspaper in an opinion article titled, “Sharif vs Sharif” wrote, “To get Raheel Sharif involved, India could propose subsequent meetings among army chiefs

²²Awais Bin Wasi, “The talks issue,” *News*, September 03, 2014, <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-9-270660-The-talks-issue>

of the three SAARC countries to discuss and finalise measures to end cross-border terrorism.”²³ Hence, the face-to-face meeting between military officials from both sides of the border is a critical shift in the nature and structure of dialogue between India and Pakistan.

Media Narratives on Terrorism

The narrative on terrorism in India and Pakistan is riddled with accusations and suspicions of waging proxy war and sponsoring terrorist activities on other’s soil. The media has lauded such concerns every now and then but the intensity and nature of these messages have increased in recent times. In this regard, there are certain themes and issues which are repeatedly propagated in media. The agenda and frames of these messages are, to some extent, worrisome for Pakistan, especially those propagated in Indian media.

Indian print media is pursuing an all-out confrontational policy towards Pakistan. For instance, the *TOI* published an opinion article titled, “The nucleus of Pakistan’s non-state actors,” in which it wrote “what we can do realistically is to raise the standard of our external intelligence gathering and raise the cost of any misadventure for Pakistan and hit them where it hurts.”²⁴ The statement by Indian Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Rajyavardhan Rathore, “We will attack any country including Pakistan to counter terrorism”²⁵ is an official validation of this Indian policy stance.

The spectrum of issues raised in Indian print media conspires on maligning Pakistan. Unfortunately, Indian media gives an impression of Pakistani establishment colluding with terrorists and using non-state

²³Sujan Dutta, “ Sharif gauges mood on Modi invite - Decision put off by a day, Pakistan PM’s namesake in army holds the key,” *Telegraph India*, May 23, 2014, http://www.telegraphindia.com/1140523/jsp/nation/story_18372677.jsp

²⁴Deepan Joshi, “ The nucleus of Pakistan’s non-state actors,” *Times of India*, February 1, 2015, <http://blogs.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/thediaryofacontrarian/the-nucleus-of-pakistans-non-state-actors/>

²⁵“ We will attack any country including Pakistan to counter terrorism, says Indian minister,” <http://feeds.pk/feed/29502/we-will-attack-any-country-including-pakistan-to-counter-terrorism-says-indian-minister>,

actors for meddling in India's internal affairs and letting them use its soil for launching terror attacks, i.e. Mumbai attack, which tops media's agenda-setting list.

The news of bail of accused of Mumbai Attack Zaki ur Rehman Lakhvi was negatively framed in Indian media and Pakistan's role in countering terrorism.²⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Pakistan in response said, "The case of Mumbai attack suspects is sub-judice. It would not be proper to cast aspirations on Pakistan's commitment to countering terrorism at a time when Pakistan has entered a critical stage of defeating the menace of terrorism." Furthermore, Pakistan has raised the issue of Samjhota Express and other incidents where India is accused of colluding with the terrorists.

The Indian media is quick to allege any attack in India on Pakistan. The recent example of this is the Gurdaspur attack on Police Station in India. The *TOI* headlined on July 27, 2015, quickly after the attack that, "Gurdaspur terrorists sneaked in from Pakistan to launch attack."²⁷ validating preconceived Indian media's partiality in blaming and framing Pakistan for terrorism.

On the other hand, Pakistani media seems to have taken a defensive approach in responding to these allegations. The amount of literature published in Pakistani media on terrorism remains limited in comparison to Indian media. Pakistan tends to view terrorism in light of regional power dynamics and separates it from other issues.

However, Pakistan also blames India for meddling in its internal affairs and using terrorism through non-state actors to malign Pakistan. The *Dawn* newspaper in an opinion article titled, "War in Shadows" alleges India for supporting Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Pakistani media is also concerned about Indian involvement includes

²⁶"Tragic duality: Bail for 26/11 accused Zakiur Rehman Lakhvi exposes gaps in Pakistan's anti-terror strategy," *Times of India*, December 19, 2014, <http://blogs.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/toi-editorials/tragic-duality-bail-for-2611-accused-zakiur-rehman-lakhvi-exposes-gaps-in-pakistans-anti-terror-strategy/>

²⁷"Gurdaspur terrorists sneaked in from Pakistan to launch attack," *Times of India*, July 27, 2015, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Gurdaspur-terrorists-sneaked-in-from-Pakistan-to-launch-attack/articleshow/48238654.cms>

terrorist activities in Balochistan. In Jammu and Kashmir context, Pakistan blames India for carrying state terrorism and violating human rights of innocent Kashmiris.

Moreover, Indian and western media link terrorism to other bilateral issues. For instance, trade and security is linked with the question of terrorism. The changing dynamics in Afghanistan with the drawdown of US forces is linked to the question of terrorism. The recent statement by former President Musharraf warns about proxy wars between Pakistan and India in Afghanistan²⁸.

Media on Trade and Economic Relations

Unlike terrorism and other conflicting issues, trade is framed as a window of opportunity for restoring peace in the region. But the emphasis, in terms of repeatedly disseminating this message and agenda-setting, has been minimal. Early rumours in media centred on Nawaz Sharif's government would abolish negative list of trade items and grant Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status to India, and in return India would address Pakistan's safeguards on non-tariff barriers. Unfortunately, with the cancellation of talks, trade and better economic relations were put on the back burner in India-Pakistan relations.

Moreover, the policy of holding trade relations hostage to politics is a long-term disaster, and in this context, we have a guiding example of China-India bilateral trade relations. Indian media, despite acknowledging the positive externality of trade, terms CPEC as "unacceptable." There should be a mutual understanding among India and Pakistan that trade, if insulated from politics, will reap benefit. Innovation and out-of-the-box solutions can help promote trade, along with media prioritization.

Media on Nuclear Stability in the Region

Pakistan and India tense relations are often framed in the media as something that can lead to a disaster in the region. The apocalyptic

²⁸“Musharraf warns of proxy war with India in Afghanistan,” *Dawn*, February 13, 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1145291/musharraf-warns-of-proxy-war-with-india-in-afghanistan>

framing of nuclear issue in the media, both the countries have shown responsibility dealing with nuclear issue. Irrespective of the status of bilateral relations, both countries have never missed the deadline of exchanging information of nuclear material. It is also a fact that media updates are more centred around conventional arms build-up and more specifically testing of the missile system. Nuclear stability is not a permanent fixture of media reporting but is discussed in relation to other issues and themes. For instance, Kashmir and violations at LoC are considered a flashpoint for nuclear war between India and Pakistan.

The Indo-US nuclear deal was much debated in media, especially in Pakistani media which considered it unfair to Pakistan and framed it as a disturbing factor in maintaining balance of power in South Asian.²⁹ In addition, India's admission to Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) is debated in Pakistan, as it would tilt the balance of regional stability³⁰. The recent Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) reviews the conference in 2014 that urged Pakistan to become a signatory of the treaty. The international pressure was built in western media which challenged Pakistan's nuclear safety, control and command system. Such propaganda and concerns were adequately addressed by Pakistan and the Nuclear Security Summit held in 2014 and 2015 demonstrated full confidence in Pakistan's weapons and their safety.³¹

Conclusion

Media discourses on Pakistan-India relations, in the light of political communication theories present a worrisome, non-reconcilable, and conflicting narrative. It is debatable whether the foreign policy is driving this narrative or the narrative is driving the foreign policy decisions, especially after the cancellations of India-Pakistan talks of National Security Advisors, which were to be held on August 23, 2015. However, Pakistan pulled out of the talks on the basis of the preconditions set by

²⁹Mateen Haider, "Indo-US nuclear deal will negatively impact South Asia: Sartaj Aziz," *Dawn*, January 28, 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1159804>

³⁰K. Iqbal, "Expansion of Nuclear Suppliers Group," *Nation*, July 14, 2014, Sec. Opinion, <http://nation.com.pk/columns/14-Jul-2014/expansion-of-nuclear-suppliers-group>

³¹<http://www.livene.ws/pak.com/us-voices-confidence-in-pakistans-nuclear-safety-trade-controls/>

India. Quoting the Foreign Office's statement, the *Dawn* wrote that Pakistan suggested that apart from terrorism related issues, the two sides should include modalities and, perhaps, a schedule for discussion on all outstanding issues, including Kashmir, Siachin and Sir Creek, in accordance with the understanding of the Ufa statement, which is the only way to improve the prospects for peace between the two countries.

Having discussed the media discourses and their implication on foreign policy, it can be noticed that media and foreign policy, discussion is characterised by certain behaviour. For instance, Pakistani media functions according to action-reaction principle. Whereas, Indian print media is functioning in a calculated and sustained manner, shaping public opinion in an intended direction. The cancellation of talks and a punishing approach towards Pakistan is supported by the public opinion in India, and Modi will benefit domestically with this approach.

For any dialogue to be successful, it is imperative to build a conducive environment. In light of the narrative and public opinion in both countries, such environment is missing. Indian media needs to refrain from negative reporting on Pakistan and the paranoia it creates with regard to terrorism. Both countries, for any durable peace should keep a check on media narratives while highlighting the relations between the two and encourage it on advocacy of insulating trade from politics and focus on positive framing. The divergent and opposing narrative on Jammu and Kashmir must be reconciled before any solution and media has an important role in bridging these policy imperatives.

Most importantly, the leadership of the two countries should spearhead this behavioural change. Modi should follow the example of Vajpayee and work towards establishing a healthy personal relation with Nawaz. India has to realise that Kashmir is a fundamental issue which needs to be resolved. The dialogue between the two countries should not discontinue, least held hostage to other issues. The International community has to play its role in steering the Indo-Pak dialogue and peace process ahead. For any breakthrough in the future, media surely has a strategic role to play and for that it first needs to set its framing strategy right