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FRAMING ANALYSIS OF INDIAN CLAIM ON SURGICAL STRIKES AGAINST TERRORISTS IN PAKISTAN THROUGH THE LENS OF PAK- INDIA PRESS

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Abstract

This study is framing analysis of four leading Pakistani and Indian English language newspapers to explore the coverage and framing of the Indian claim of surgical strikes on the hiding terrorists in Pakistani territory. The universe for the present study constitutes one-month front-page news of Dawn, The News, The Hindu and The Times of India from 30 September 2016 to 30 October 2016. The purpose of selecting this period was because the Pak-India press covered this issue exclusively and repetitively during the period of this research. In this study, online editions of The Times of India, The Hindu, The News, and Dawn were selected and front-page news as a sample was taken from their online editions. The findings reveal that Pakistani government, military and media straightaway overruled the Indian claim asserting that their army never crossed the international border but had only clashed with Pakistani soldiers on the border. Afterward this claim from the Indian side, a heated war of words started amongst the media of both countries. This paper explores the various dimensions and magnitudes of this issue framed differently in the Pak-India press and their implications and effects on the foreign policy and bilateral relations. The results of this study also show that the Indian press reinforced the Indian government's claim of surgical strikes against the terrorists. This incident was framed as a massive moral and military victory against the militants in Pakistan. On the contrary, Pakistani newspapers categorically overruled and rejected this claim. It was observed that this incident was framed as an illusion, political stunt and propaganda against the civil and military establishment of Pakistan.

Introduction

Since 1947, Pakistan and India have a hostile and aggressive relationship except for short periods of reconciliation. Both nations have battled three wars and have been through numerous critical situations when their troops were mobilized and deployed at their international boundaries. The historical backdrop of Pakistan and Indian relations uncovers that it has been antagonistic connections between both bordering nations. The elements, for the most part, incorporate the presence of different ideologies and philosophies or religions, the inheritances of pioneer administrator, the part of identities, the blemish of the local and global political framework, shared pictures (Paul, 2005; Khalid, 2012; Ray, 2011).

After the finish of the British Raj in August 1947, India and Pakistan the two new sovereign states were developed on the world map. Approximately twelve million individuals were migrated after the British Raj whereby hundreds and thousands of people were killed. The Indian government announced to be a secular state having Hindu in majority and Muslims were declared as a minority. Whereas, Pakistan has risen as the Islamic Republic where Muslims were in great numbers (Khalid, 2012; Beam, 2011; Umbreen & Mariam, 2013; Ray, 2011, p. 24).

Since the inception of these two Asian countries India and Pakistan set up discretionary relations yet the brutal partition and many other regional incidents would entrench their bilateral ties. After their partition, both India and Pakistan have fought triplet historical wars, one of them is the 1965 war and the other is the Kargil war, including many other prominent conflicts and military operations. The Indian Held Kashmir strife is the main issue of enmity between India and Pakistan relations and the exception of the Indo-Pak War of 1971 and Bangladesh Freedom Fight, which came with the after-effects of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) referendum.

Various measurements took place to boost bilateral relations e.g.; the 2003 truce assertion, Delhi-Lahore Transport administration, and cricket discretion were fruitful in de-raising pressures. In 2001, Indian Parliament's crucial practice of provoking Pakistan added fuel to the fire and both countries were almost ready to initiate an atomic fight. In 2007 Samjhauta Express explosions brought sixty-eight casualties of Pakistani passengers, was likewise a substantial point in deterioration of relations. Moreover, in 2008 Bombay attack was a clear-cut "Dump Policy" of Pakistan to give a counter-reaction to 'Samjhauta' incident. Aggression and counter-attacks from both sides brought distortion to the Indo-Pak dialogue process. (Thapar, 2008).

With the arrival of new governments and general races of political parties in India and Pakistan, the resumption of peace talks gradually diversified in the 2016 Pathankot attack. In September 2016, a psychological oppressor brutal act on the Indian military zone in Kashmir. In one of the brutal incidents of that certain time, nineteen military personals of India were violently killed. India claimed and finger point Pakistan-arrange-Jihadist group. The aggression flamed up on LOC and shape a form of skirmishes by India and Pakistan and further aggression grabbed India and Pakistan military personals to the death zone. In the mid of December 2016, personal grudges and mushroom growth of bilateral entrenchment have shadowed a ray of hope which could expectedly lead to healthy ties among both Asian sovereign States (Frederic, 2014).

Since 2013, both countries have initiated various steps to normalize and improve their relationships. In 2015, a few meetings held to resume peace talks between both neighborhood countries, in which Indo-Pak peace consent was the major and mutual subject from both sides. In 2015, new Indian premier, Modi and Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif were agreed to carry

on the dialogue process. Regardless of these effective endeavors, relations between the nations have crumbled and the war hysteria has sowed the seeds of distrust and fear among both nations. (Frederic, 2014).

The “Surgical Strikes” Claim and Pakistani Reaction

On 29 September 2016, the whole world was shocked when India claimed that "surgical strikes" were conducted against the militants hiding in the Pakistani Kashmir. According to the Indian military, "we received very credible information regarding terrorists those were planning to infiltrate inside Indian Kashmir and in many other areas in order to conduct terrorist attacks. According to them this very counter strike was meant to obstruct their intrusion".

The Indian government and media presented this operation as anticipatory "self-defense against terrorism". They claimed that we have stroked against the militant and terrorist hideouts along with "those who are trying to support them." Indian information minister Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore stated that this successful operation was conducted "on the ground".

Pakistani government and military officials immediately dismissed and rejected the news by saying that Indian troops did not conduct any sort of "surgical strikes against terrorist units" alongside the Pakistani Kashmir. "There had been cross-border fire initiated and conducted by India which is an existential phenomenon," said by Pakistani army sources. "The claim of surgical strike against the supposed terrorists' hideouts is an illusion that is being purposefully generated by Indian government and their media to build fabricated narratives of war," the Pakistani army stated. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif strongly condemned and denied the fact that such unprovoked and naked hostility of Indian army can create unrest in the region. He further said that this quest by Indian army to create media hype by rebranding cross border fire as surgical strike is a fabrication of the truth where two Pakistani soldiers were martyred. Pakistan reacted to these claims as "fabricated and illusion" by the Indian government.

Significance of the Study

The importance and role of media particularly the print media are acknowledged all through the whole world. In today's period, it is difficult to live without media. We see the world, as the media exhibits and presents to us. We have some particular image of the world issues in our brains as a result of media presentation. This study is intended to examine whether and to what degree Indian and Pakistani press perform its role in covering the issue concerning Indo-Pak relations. This study likewise concentrates on the role of Pakistani and Indian print media in advancing reciprocal relations between both adversaries.

Methodology

This current study is a framing analysis of four elite Indian and Pakistani English language dailies: The News, Dawn, Times of India and The Hindu, in order to explore the news coverage and framing of Indian claim on surgical strikes against terrorist's hideouts in Pakistan. The Times of India and The Hindu are selected to represent the Indian print media's framing of surgical strike claim whereas Dawn and The News are selected to represent frames on India in Pakistani print media. The universe for the present study constitutes front-page news of the above-said newspapers from 30 September 2016 to 30 October 2016. The leading purpose of selecting this period was because the Pak-India press covered this issue exclusively and repetitively during the period of this research. In this study, online editions of The Times of India, The Hindu, The

News, and Dawn were selected and front-page news as a sample was taken from their online editions. All the newspapers published a total number of 116 news (Dawn, 20; The News, 25; The Hindu, 36; Times of India, 35) on the front page regarding the Indian claim of "Surgical Strikes" and these news were considered as the unit of analysis. The slant of news published regarding this issue was also examined as favorable, unfavorable, and neutral. The slant of news were analyzed by examining the coding unit of analysis which is the whole paragraph.

Findings and Discussions

Frequency of the News Stories Published:

For one month (30 September 2016 to 30 October 2016) Pakistani and Indian press donated exclusive coverage to the issue whereby Dawn published 20; The News, 25; The Hindu, 36 and Times of India published 35 news stories on their front pages regarding the issue of Indian Surgical Strike in Pakistani territory.

Slant for the issue of Indian Surgical Strike:

The issue of Pak-India relations has always been an imperative topic of discussion in the media of both countries for quite a lot of reasons. The media from both sides has been playing a key role either in igniting the issue or extinguishing it.

In this regard, figure 1 is evident in this struggle. As figure 1 indicates, The News gave 85 percent unfavorable slant, 5 percent coverage for the favorable slant for the issue of surgical strikes while 10 percent news coverage was found as neutral. The Dawn donated its 90 percent slant against the Indian claim of launching surgical strikes in Pakistan, while its 4 percent coverage was neutral.

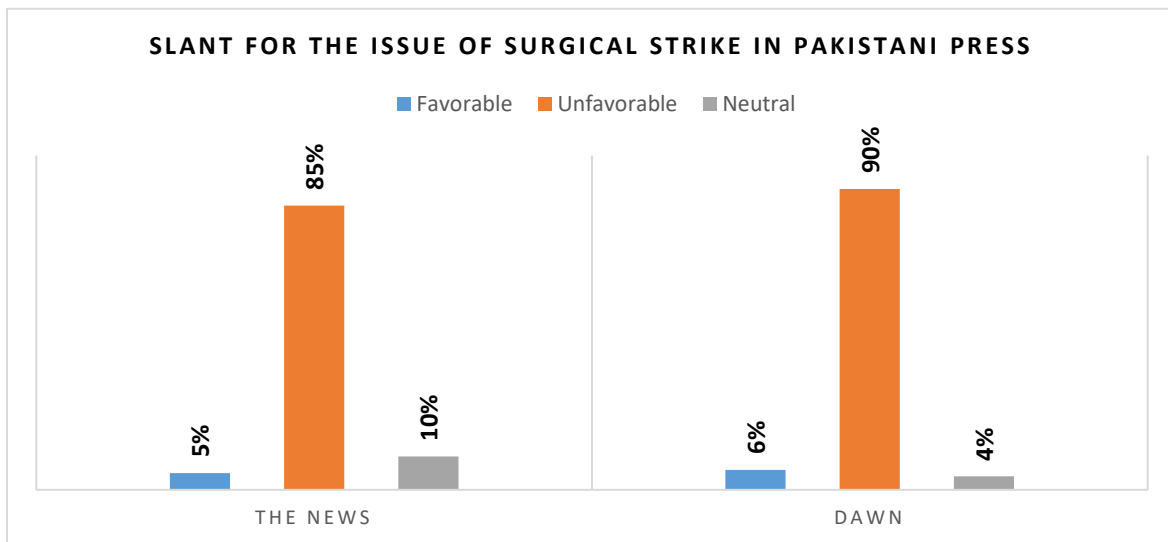


Figure 1. Slant for the Indian Claim of Surgical Strikes in Pakistani Press

In this regard, figure 2 tells a very different story. As figure 2 indicates, The Hindu gave 95 percent favorable slant, 3 percent coverage for the unfavorable slant for the issue of surgical strikes while only 2 percent news coverage was found as neutral. Time of India donated its 94

percent slant in favor of the Indian claim of launching surgical strikes in Pakistan, while its 4 percent coverage was neutral.

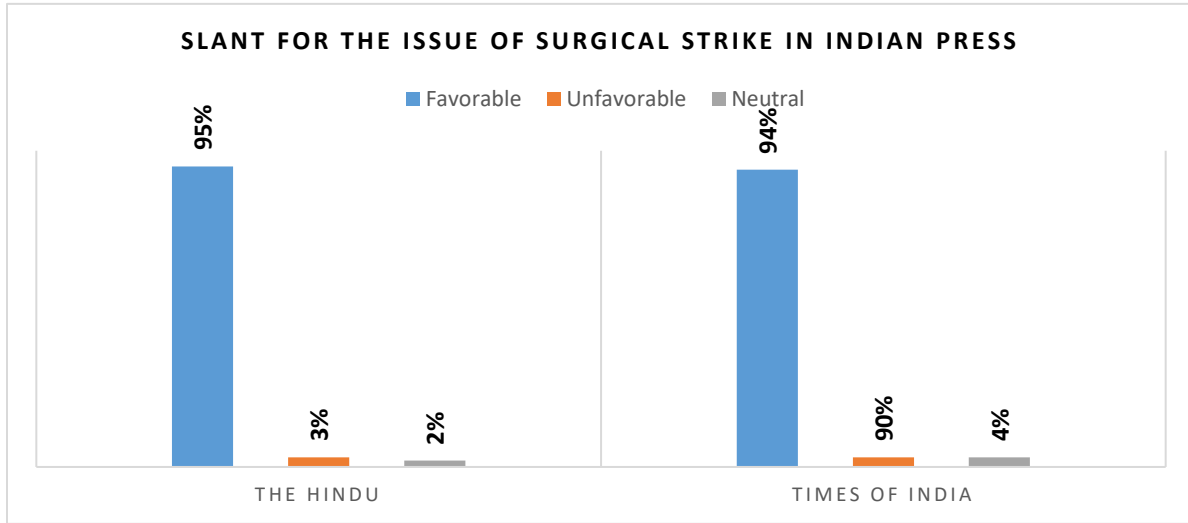


Figure 2. Slant for the Indian Claim of Surgical Strikes in Indian Press

Framing of Indian Surgical Strikes:

Today, media has become a very significant source of information and facts regarding conflicts and politics for the public that leads them to make their perception towards any issue or event. The media’s power to frame issues has earned them to the title of “fourth state”. The representation of issues regarding any conflict or in wartime media becomes more critical as it reports certain issues in certain manners, which powerfully affect the dynamics and the results of such conflicts.

In this regard, the media applies certain frames that influence and manipulate the minds of the public. Figure 3 shows the frames applied in the selected Indian newspapers regarding the issue of Indian claim on surgical strikes in Pakistan. It shows that The Hindu and Times of India used frames of “great victory” and “Self-defense” while reporting this issue. The findings tell that the frame of “great victory” was dominant in the news coverage of Indian surgical strikes.

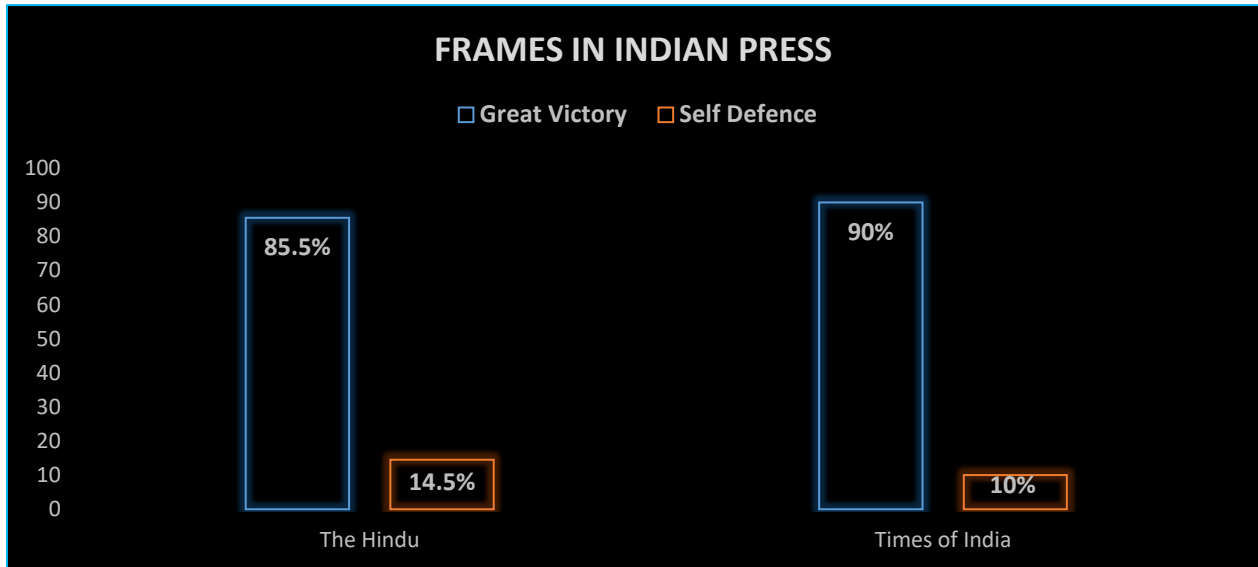


Figure 3 Frames in Indian press on Indian Surgical Strikes claim in Pakistani territory

The findings show that Indian newspapers reported the surgical strikes to claim as it was a great victory and it was done in self-defense. While giving an interview to NDTV, Amit Shah (BJP president) stated that “surgical strike conducted by the Army in Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir changed the world's outlook towards India and showed the country is committed to "self-defense". The decision to conduct the surgical strike was taken with a political will”.

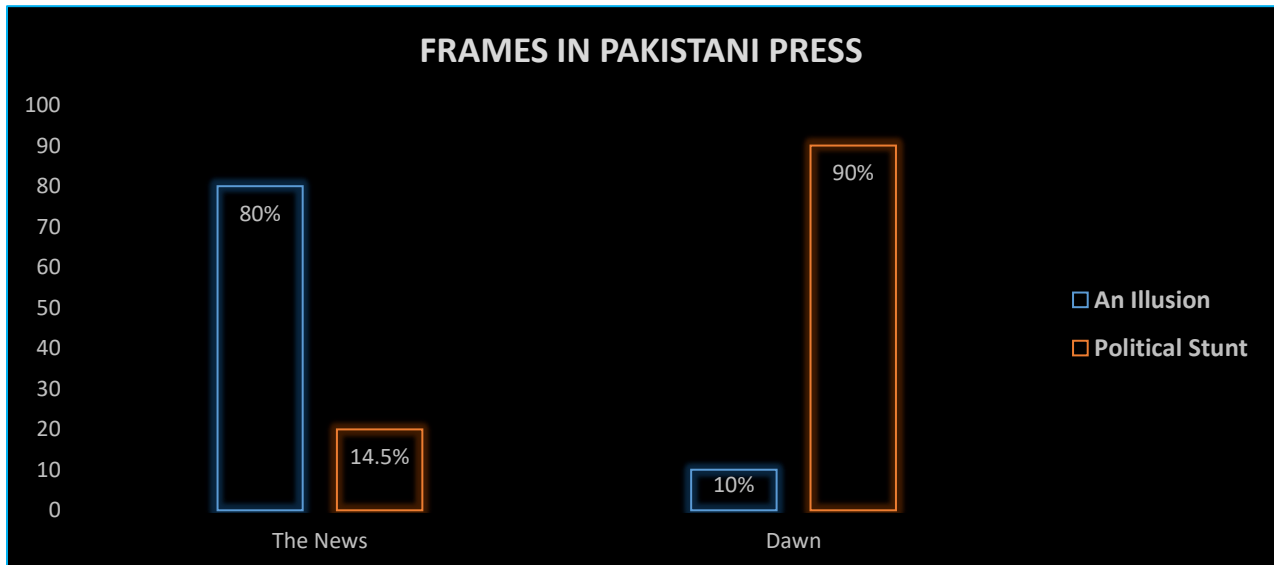


Figure 4. Frames in the Pakistani press on Indian Surgical Strikes claim in Pakistani territory

The above figure 4 shows the frames applied in the selected Pakistani newspapers regarding the issue of Indian claim on surgical strikes in Pakistan. It shows that The News and Dawn used

frames of “An illusion” and “political stunt” while reporting this issue. The findings tell that the frame of “An illusion” was dominant in The News whereas Dawn used the frame “political stunt” while its coverage on the issue of Indian surgical strikes.

The findings in figure 4 tell that Pakistani newspapers completely denied the Indian claim that their army has conducted surgical strikes in Pakistani territory. It was reported that such a claim was not more than a political stunt as the Indian government was failed to provide any solid evidence regarding the casualties and damage done in Pakistani territory.

Conclusion

This study is a framing analysis of the media coverage regarding the issue of Indian surgical strike claims in Pakistani territory to attack the terrorist hideouts between the print media of both countries. This is an exploratory study to find out the frame used in the selected newspapers of both countries. From the very first day of the partition, both Pakistan and India have been involved in hostile and aggressive relations due to various issues like territory, immigrants, and security. On 29 September 2016, it escalated and intensified when the Indian government claimed that they have targeted the terrorists hiding on the Pakistani side and it was a surgical strike. It was found that Indian newspapers The Hindu and Times of India gave an exclusive coverage by reporting it as a great victory and achievement in countering terrorism. It was also reported that all this was done in self-defense whereby it was portrayed as India was a victim of the menace of terrorism in the region. On contrary, Pakistani print media follow the line of the government, as this claim was completely false, rejected, and overruled in the coverage. They reported that it is a political stunt by the Indian government, as they want to prove that the Pakistani military and government is sponsoring and infiltrating terrorism to destabilize and disrupt the peace of India.

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