

**Issues of Pakistan in Indian Newspapers: An appraisal**  
**Madhuchhanda Das: Research Scholar & Silajit Guha: Reader**  
**Department of Mass communication, AUS**

**KEYWORDS:** News Flow. News Determinant. Foreign Coverage. Conflict. Objectivity. Bias.

**ABSTRACT:** The press presents centrality to public life because it provides a forum for debating issues of national importance. It is found that the coverage of foreign news in the Indian Press has declined in absolute terms in recent times, but in case of covering Pakistan the story is somewhat different. It is not merely a sophistry that the Indian media is apt to display an astonishing interest in matters pertaining to Pakistan as compared to any other South Asian countries. The present study is a content analysis of foreign news with special reference to Pakistan, by two major English leading dailies in India, The Times of India and The Hindu. The news stories were recorded and collated under the various module headings: Politics, religion/religious, culture and history, arts and entertainment, conflict, military and security issues and economics. An item analysis revealed that conflict is the most preferred criterion in covering Pakistan encompassing 35% and 36% in The Times of India and The Hindu respectively. Conversely Military and Security issues dominated in both these news papers; politics is the third leading category. Despite the emergence of numerous domestic and regional news organizations in India, the role played by them is negligible, not more than 20 % news stories sourced from the national news agencies. Instead of mentioning distinctly the sources of news, The Times of India uses the umbrella terms like agencies; there were 37 % of Agencies stories covered by The Times of India during the study period followed by news from AFP, Reuters and AP. In case of The Hindu, the staff reporter and correspondents were the major source of news accounting for 81 % of total Pakistani news.

**INTRODUCTION:**

The imbalance in global news flow is a universal phenomenon and presumed to be a matter of concern for both the developing and the developed nations, albeit to varying degrees. While Many Voices, One World or other similar concerns were expressed at the international forums over the news flow from the North to the South, not much is talked about how the news flow is

determined between the South and the South. In addition to the concerns on the news flow imbalance, it is also important how a particular nation finds, what kind of news are found to be interesting by its readers about a neighbour. If the national newspapers of a country are dominated by a certain kind of news items originating from across the boarder, and if the practice is near exclusionary, then it can be assumed that is not only a balance of news problem, but at the centrality of news production process lies a parochial view of the world. The dynamic and complex relationship between the Indian media and Pakistan issues has become the prior means of concern. So a content analysis of foreign news with special reference to Pakistan, by two prominent English leading dailies of India, The Times of India and The Hindu is attempted to examine the attitude of prominent Indian newspapers towards Pakistan issues and it is found that the reporting pattern in both the newspaper follows along a particular trajectory despite professed differences in the editorial policy of the two newspapers.

**Media coverage of foreign affairs :**

The internationalization of news was first started with the rise of global news agencies in the 19th century. With the expansion of technology this process was further accelerated in the 20th century and stimulated by war, trade, imperialism and industrial development. A distinctive news story pertaining to conflict, disaster and even progress in South America, might elicit interest even as far as Central Asia. The advent of television has increased the cross-cultural flow of news. Previously foreign news mainly with politics, war, diplomacy, trade and now the scope of international news has now expanded and includes sport, media and entertainment, finance, fashion and tourism. But if we discuss about the media of the developing world we will find it blinkered and extremely inward looking.

Foreign coverage has declined in absolute and relative terms (Martin Moore, 2010). The unbalanced global flow of news has been raging for several years. A plethora of empirical studies of imbalance news illustrated that the news media in all developing countries were heavy importers of news, while audiences in developed countries were supplied with home-produced news,

even when it was about foreign events. The “lack of autonomy in news production” troubled national cultural progress in the countries like India which were often ex-colonies and limited their full independence and sovereignty. International news--as a percentage of the total news hole--had shrunk to its greatest extent, (Michael Emery 1989). The media in many developed countries did not give emphasis to foreign news, which anyway was mostly about events in countries that were large, rich or proximate both geographically and culturally. Further, such news was intently focused on the interests of the receiving country.

Foreign hard news had fallen from 5 percent to 3 percent of the total news hole and that foreign stories were far less likely to appear on the front page, (Carl Sessions Stepp' 1999). In recent years, in response to corporate demands for larger profits and an increasingly fragmented audience the coverage of international news by the U.S. media have declined significantly. The readers and viewers in post-Cold War America cared more about celebrities, scandals and local news than to the international affairs. In consequence to which the newspaper editors and television news executives have reduced the space and time devoted to foreign coverage by 70% to 80% during the past 15 to 20 years. British media were highly accepted for a balanced coverage of international interactions, compared to other moderately developed nations. But in reality, “The international documentary is virtually dead” in Britain, as per 3WE's (Third World & Environment Broadcasting Project) report for 2001, named *Losing Reality*, recommended that it has found a trend of declining coverage of international issues and an increase in entertainment and “dumping down”.

### **The dominance and influence of big three:**

The flow and structure of international news are the determining factor in shaping the picture of the world in one's mind. The New International Information Order (NIIO) (1980) discussion came out with the fact that third world newspapers are dependent heavily upon western wire services, have little choice but to publish what they get. The dominance of big three (AP, AFP, Reuters) cannot be unseen. These agencies are the only source used by third world newspapers and the way they structure the news is necessarily identical with that of the news eventually published. Horton (1978), Rubin (1977), Sussman (1977), Rosenblum (1977, 1979) and Righter (1978, 1979) dealt with the issue and con-

cluded that “news is heavily biased towards the industrial countries” Righter (1979). Horton (1978) aggress that “the news flow is too heavily weighed with news about the industrial countries.” Rosenblum (1979) carries the subject one step further and states that “in the pears of most Third World Countries, news items are predominantly from industrialized countries”. Rosenblum (1979) also believes that the United States media coverage of the developing countries has tended to be ill informed and superficial. “Rubin (1977) concludes that “Africa has been the most neglected part of the world in terms of correspondents”. Much of the criticism of the present “order” stressed that structural dependence upon western agencies results in imbalanced foreign coverage, at the expense of the third world. Hence, after analyzing all these statements we can emphasize the point that the western media coverage of the world is thin and maintains its audience in a state of near ignorance.

### **The Indian media and Pakistan :**

Indian newspapers have reduced distances, gone away with national boundaries and time differences and brought the horrors of terrorism into almost every house around the nation. Large scale coverage is devoted to Pakistan by Indian media which have continued to cast a shadow over the South Asian region. The Indian press is overexcited to cover issues of Pakistan as this region is often recognized as a high risk conflict zone because of history of tense relations- border clashes, limited or large scale wars between these two neighbors. The leading newspapers of India have been found to be quite apt in displaying an astonishing interest in matters pertaining to Pakistan as compared to any other country in its neighborhood. Both the media-India and Pakistan are trapped in “narrow nationalism” and is part of the problem in relations between the two countries (Najam Sethi, December 2009). The regular coverage of the controversy in Pakistan was in sharp contrast to the amount of interest shown in developments in Bangladesh at about the same time.

Subarno Chattarji, in his work, *Tracking the Media: Interpretations of Mass Media Discourses in India and Pakistan*, in August 18, 2008, dealt with the ways in which English language publications contribute to and function within middle class matrices of modernity, consumption, conflict, and conservatism in India. The prominent Indian national newspapers have galvanized the nation in times of war with Pakistan with their print

reportage and visual coverage. Nevertheless, when it comes to covering Pakistan's proxy war and terrorism against India, the record of the Indian media is not at all that promising and praiseworthy. However, the criticism applies more to the Indian electronic medium than the Indian print medium. Indian print medium has the advantage of time in order to present a relatively more balanced reportage, which crystallizes in the time span between terrorist incidents and their reportage in print. Theoretically privately-owned Pakistani TV channels cannot be seen in India. But in case of dramatic story the footage finds its way to Indian audiences (Sevanti Ninan, Mar, 2007).

The foreign desk ranks well below the national desk in a typical Indian news organization. It's not hard to find the reasons for the bias. News mediums own gate-keeping mechanism and news flow by way of agencies are the determinant factors. If we discuss how Indian media covers its neighbourhood, we will find little or no coverage that seeks to analyse the social dynamics of the South Asian countries. An extraordinary interest is always there in covering Pakistan by Indian media. The Indian national dailies have the record to report in times of war with Pakistan with their print reportage and visual coverage. Conflict, terrorism, warfare, insurgency are the mostly preferred apprehensions towards covering Pakistan. Indian Press is much more interested in Pakistani politics than the Pakistanis are in Indian politics, (Masooda Bano, 2007). Simultaneously there is hardly any coverage of Indian political developments by Pakistani media, if the story is sensational enough will certainly printed in Indian newspapers.

#### **The objectives of the study are:**

1. To find out whether conflict is the most preferred criterion of the coverage of Pakistan by Indian newspaper
2. To identify the sources of news in order to know the aspect of objectivity of coverage

#### **Methodology:**

The technique of content analysis had been employed for the purpose of the study. This study had evaluated foreign news coverage with emphasis on Pakistan by two Indian major English dailies The Times of India and The Hindu over a period of four months. January 2011 to April 2011. Each news item had recorded and collated under the various module head-

ings: Politics, religion/religious, culture and history, arts and entertainment, conflict, military and security issues, economics. The international page, cover page and editorial page were mainly selected for analyzing quantitatively.

#### **The newspapers for the study:**

The Times of India: Owned and managed by Bennett, Coleman & Co. Ltd. (The Times Group), by the Sahu Jain family is the leading English broadsheet in India. The Times of India is the highest circulated English-language daily in India, certified by Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC). In 2008, the newspaper reported (with a circulation of over 3.14 million) as the 8th largest selling newspaper in any language in the world.

#### **The Hindu:**

The Hindu is an Indian English-language daily newspaper, with a circulation of 1.45 million- the second-largest circulated English newspaper in India. The Hindu was first published in 1878 by a group of six young men, led by G. Subramania Aiyer, as a weekly, and became a daily in 1889. In 1995, The Hindu became the first Indian newspaper to offer an online edition. Owned by Kasturi and Sons and edited by N. Ram, the newspaper is published in the city of Chennai.

#### **Sample**

**Population:** All newspapers published from India

**Sample:** The two leading dailies, The Times of India and The Hindu

**Sampling technique and Selection:** The sampling technique is Purposive. The researcher had selected The Times of India and The Hindu because of their credibility and the distinct International/ Global page. Each newspaper had scanned for foreign news especially Pakistani news for a period of four months .i.e. from January 2011-April 2011. Each sample newspaper then analyzed for one day in a week starting with Monday and once seven days were covered over a period of seven week, the researcher had reverted back to Monday on the eighth week. The process would ensure equal importance to all the days in a week at both conflict ridden times and normal times and thus to leave less room for error.

#### **Unit Of Analysis And Data Collection:**

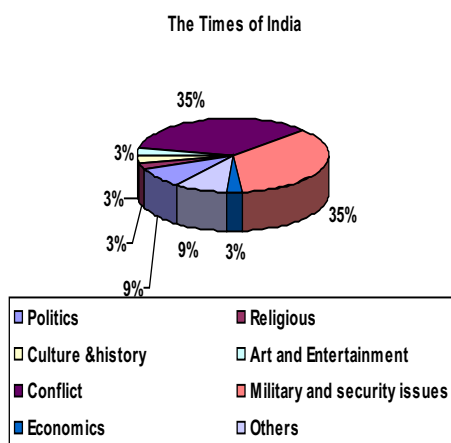
The unit of analysis for The Times of India and The Hindu was the news item from foreign countries or one

which was based in India but had foreign origins and special emphasis was given to Pakistani news story, the mostly covered Pakistani news item and its sources. It has been found that total number of foreign stories appeared in the Times of India in the front page, editorial page and international page is (50 +31+103) 184 and in The Hindu is (21+30+93) 144. Out of which total number of Pakistani news in front page, editorial page and international page of Times of India is (16+4+14) 34 and in The Hindu is (6+9+10) 25.

### Categories of Pakistani News:

1.1. A. An item analysis of The Times of India revealed that in covering Pakistan the Indian newspaper conferred superfluous weight to conflict. Conflict is at the heart of every news story of Pakistan covered by The Times of India. Politics, religion, art and entertainment, culture and history, military and security issues, economics and others are 7 different categories of Pakistan news covered. The maximum number of stories dealt with conflict 35% (12). The Times of India's coverage of military and security issues 35% (12) comprises of dispute, Army, Para-military forces or the police and security issues as national integrity and national fabric. These two are the extensively covered topics by The Times of India. Where 9 % (3) stories were of politics, 3% (1) of stories on religious issues, 3% (1) stories on culture and history, 3% (1) stories on art and entertainment, 3% (1) stories of Economics and others carried 9% (3) stories of Times of India during this period of time.

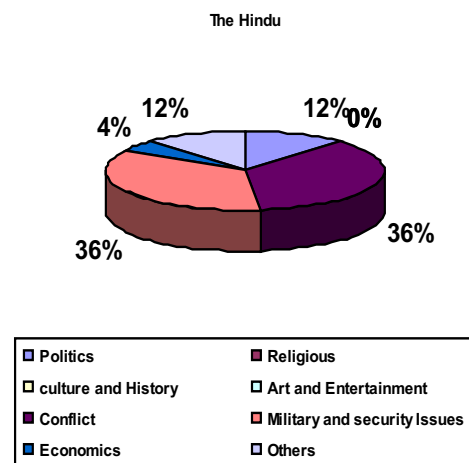
Fig. 1.1 .A. Categories of Pakistani news covered by The Times of India



1.1. B. An item analysis of The Hindu comes out with the fact that conflict, military and security issues

are highly covered news items. Intra-state conflicts comprising proxy war, terrorism, insurgency and militancy were spanning the entire length and breadth of the newspaper. A very coincidental revelation is that conflict, military and security issues hold the top position sharing the same number of news, in case of The Hindu too. By analyzing these three pages of the Hindu (front page, editorial page, Global pages) it has been found that, maximum number of stories dealt with conflict 36% (9) and military and security issues 36% (9). There were 12 % (3) stories on politics, 4% (1) stories on economics and others occupied 12% (3). There were no stories on religious, art and entertainment and culture and history.

Fig.1.1. B. Categories of Pakistan news covered by The Hindu



### Sources of Pakistani News:

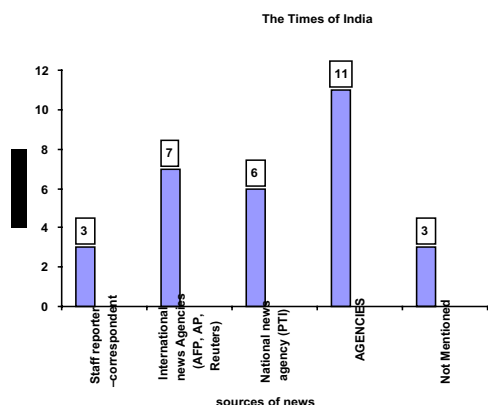
1.2. A. Sources of Pakistani News and western dominance

Six (6) major sources have been identified ranging from staff reporter to the top three global news agencies (AFP AP and Reuters,) and other western and Asian News agencies. The news where the source names were not mentioned taken under Not Mentioned category. Staff reporter – correspondent were clubbed together to from one single sort. The mostly preferred trend of The Times of India is that instead of mentioning distinctly the agencies name, the newspaper use agencies, and thus agencies is another category. It is significant to note that there were 37 % of Agencies stories in The Times of India whereas 10 % news falls in Not Mentioned category. There were 24 % Pakistani stories from AFP, Reuters and AP. Whereas National news agency (PTI)



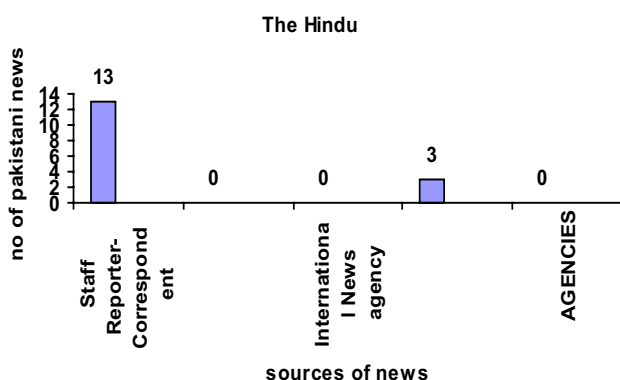
supplied 20 % and 10 % were collected from TNN (Times news network). Many of the foreign stories have multiple sources as AP, AFP and Reuters for one single story.

Fig. 1.2. A. Sources of Pakistani news in The Times of India



1.2. B. Six major sources were categorized in analyzing The Hindu too. The sources ranging from international news agency, national news agency, Agencies and the news having no source name (Not Mentioned) categories. Staff reporter and correspondents, clubbed together, and were ranking first as news source accounting 81 %. The newspaper is strictly depended on their own city based correspondent and staff reporter. There remains no role played by the top three global news agencies (AP, Reuters, and AFP) in reporting Pakistan. National news agency as PTI has sent the rest of the stories. So here, no such vague distinction as agencies or their laid no news story in Not Mentioned category.

Fig. 1.2. B. Sources of Pakistani news in The Hindu



## FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The analysis of the data reveals hitting facts. Both the

leading newspapers of the country have an abiding interest in covering Pakistan when it comes to conflict. Military might, Warfare, comparison of relative strength of the armed forces of both the nations and terrorism are what add to the gristmill of both these newspapers. There is no room to say that the researcher was surprised, in fact had it been otherwise, that would have raised a few eyebrows. Both the newspaper have shown scant regard for human interest stories, a cursory view reveals that most of the stories are besotted with a jingoistic undertone clothed in a language of concern at the growing might on the either side or a probable wartime situation at the border.

The Times of India in accordance with its practice of providing its readers with a wider spectrum of news is seen to be dabbling in a wide area of news production. It has given news on art and cultural scene in Pakistan. The Hindu is virtually silent on that. Both the newspapers have converged on the relative importance of certain particular issues out of a plethora of issues despite the fact that ostensibly they have completely different editorial policies and their perspective on what constitutes as news is also known to be radically different.

So far as the source of the news is concerned, The Hindu is the only newspaper in the country to be allowed by Pakistan to have its own correspondent on Pakistani soil. Predictably the newspaper has been able to come up with a good number of stories filed by its correspondent and yet in that case also, the bottom line happens to be conflict and military strength related stories. It is unfortunate that the correspondent of The Hindu has failed to go beyond the army jugular, has failed to understand that there could be a different framing strategy when it comes to news from Pakistan. The Times of India can not be accused of being parochial in the strictest sense of the term as it is known to depend squarely on the 'agencies' for its stories on Pakistan. The framing of news on Pakistan by 'agencies' follow a distinct pattern worldwide which as conceived by the popular press in the west, as one of the most dangerous places in the world and one of the most important nestling places of terrorism is the whole world. The Times of India has been forced to follow the beaten track even if they had on intention otherwise.

This entire story of following a certain news framing strategy on the whole by both the newspapers reveals a systematic failure on the part of these two leading newspapers of the country. Grown in the underdeveloped parts of the world and having achieved financial superpower status among the newspapers houses, both the newspapers could have tried to bring in certain amount of balance to the existing news flow. A news flow carries in it the framing strategy of newspaper powers, which The Times of India and The Hindu have decided to follow throwing into the winds their core journalistic practices. As for the unnegotiated public, the reporting practice brings into sharp focus a host of questions. These newspapers do not need to follow a didactic approach as proposed by the leaders on both sides, but they must seriously start considering that framing strategy should include a few more ideas within its ambit to give the people an impression that it is not war and jingoism which constitute the bedrock of Pakistani society.

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