



Media, Nationalism, and the Kashmir Crisis: A Comparative Content Analysis of Two Leading South Asian Newspapers

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ABSTRACT

After the events of 5th August 2019, when the Indian Government revoked Articles 370 and 35A of its constitution, the political and media landscape regarding Kashmir conflict has been drastically changed. The study examines how the leading newspapers of India and Pakistan- Hindustan Times (India), and Dawn (Pakistan) framed Kashmir issue in their respective issues during three months' time. The findings of the study reveal that Hindustan Times provided

more coverage to Kashmir in sharp contrast with Dawn. However, the issue was highlighted through the lens of Article 370/35A, territorial sovereignty, and Indian state narratives and the frames used by the newspaper were often war oriented. On the other hand, Dawn focused on international reaction and emphasized peace oriented and solution frames. The study demonstrates how media framing reinforces national positions on contested political issues, shaping public consciousness and international perceptions.

Keywords

Kashmir Conflict; Media Framing; *Dawn*; *Hindustan Times*; Article 370/35A

Introduction

The Kashmir conflict has been one of the most enduring and volatile disputes between India and Pakistan and it has always gained immense attention since its genesis. Experts on South Asia believe that Kashmir is a nuclear flash point between India and Pakistan as both believe it as their undeniable territory. This dispute has year's long history which has shaped the strategic outlook of South Asia for more than seven decades. The dispute started after the partition of British India in 1947. Both countries have confronted wars due to this issue as each of the countries see it as their inevitable identity due to geo-political ideologies. Several wars, recurring military crises, and prolonged cycles of political unrest have entrenched the dispute, keeping the people of Kashmir in a state of perpetual

insecurity.¹ However, the events of August 5th, 2018, have marked a well-defined rapture in the long trajectory. When the Government of India revoked Articles 370 and 35A, provisions that had granted Jammu and Kashmir an autonomous status, the constitutional, political, and security landscape of the region was fundamentally reconfigured.² The unilateral decision not only altered India's internal administrative framework but also has resulted in universal outrage as well.³ Pakistan believes that this move by the government of India is an illegal annexation of the state that paves a way further towards the deprivation of Kashmiris-Pakistan is of the view that India violated international law and United Nations resolutions.⁴ While India, conversely see this change as a sovereign constitutional reform meant to facilitate the administrative matters of the state that is likely to ensure the stability, integration, good governance, and development of the state. The above opposing interpretations

¹ Syed Mubashar Hussain Shah, Babar Hussain Shah, and Qurat ul Ain, "An Analysis of Challenges in Reporting by Journalists in Conflict Zone: Case Study of Muzaffarabad & Srinagar," *Journal of Peace, Development and Communication* 5, no. 3 (2021): 149–160, <https://doi.org/10.36968/JPDC-V05-I03-11>

² M. Abbas, Ghulam Mustafa, and Muhammad Arslan. "India's Constitutional Change: Revocation of Article 370 and 35-A and the Repercussions from Pakistan." *UOS Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities* 8, no. 1 (2024): 24–37.

³ Adeela Ahmed, Arsim Tariq, and Rashida Abbas. "Demographic Changes in Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK) and the Future of UN Resolutions." *International Journal of Kashmir Studies* 3, no. 2 (2022).

⁴ Kashmir, the UN and Pakistan-India Standoff: Revisiting International Law and Political Will". 2025. *Journal of Asian Development Studies* 14 (2): 579-97.

highlight the deep-rooted ideological divide that has deeply impacted the course of relations between India and Pakistan.⁵

This revocation of the special status of Indian held Kashmir severely triggered relations between India and Pakistan once again resulting in domestic political mobilization, and widespread media attention. Under such circumstances, the role of media; specifically, English language newspapers became more crucial in narrating, legitimizing, or challenging state actions. As the media is considered as the fourth pillar of the state, its importance under such crucial circumstances can never be undermined. The media plays a critical role in shaping, influencing or holding opinions about different issues. Media framing is one of the important media techniques that are widely used to put certain events in certain desired frames. Prior scholarship demonstrates that media coverage of Kashmir has historically reflected national positions, reproduced state narratives, or mobilized public sentiment during crises.⁶

Against this backdrop, the present study investigates how the leading English-language newspapers of Pakistan and India, Dawn and Hindustan Times, covered the Kashmir issue in the three months following 5 August 2019. These newspapers have been selected for their credibility, wide & wise readership and significant influence on

⁵ I. A. Abbas, and Khan, M. A. "The Politico-Economic Dimensions of the Kashmir Conflict." *Pakistan Journal of Law, Analysis and Wisdom* 1, no. 1 (1998): 112.

⁶ Syed Abdul Siraj, "War or peace journalism in elite US newspapers: Exploring news framing in Pakistan-India conflict." *Strategic Studies* 28, no. 1 (2008): 194-222.

public and policy discourse.⁷ Both newspapers enjoy a central position in the media systems of their respective countries: Dawn is known for its impartiality, independence, objectivity, and historical legacy as well.⁸ On the other hand Hindustan Times, founded by Mahatma Gandhi, is considered India's widely circulated and influential newspaper.⁹

The study is based on the technique of content analysis to examine the magnitude of coverage, placement, themes, and the framing strategies that were employed by the selected newspapers. The study is rooted in the tradition of agenda setting theory that focuses on priming and framing of certain issues.¹⁰ The study further aims to determine the extent of coverage by the selected newspapers while covering different aspects related to the issue of Kashmir. The study is primarily focused on the Framing technique that highlights the certain aspects of a certain issue of phenomenon while excluding other aspects of the issue thus contributing to national narratives or challenging dominant discourses.¹¹ Kashmir is a geopolitically

⁷ Altschull, Agents of Power: *The Role of the Press in National Politics*, 84–87; Sreedharan, *South Asian Media Systems*, 101–104.

⁸ Talib, *The Dawn of Journalism in Pakistan*, 37; Jannepally, *Independent Press in South Asia*, 49.

⁹ Srirupa Roy, "Instituting diversity: Official nationalism in post-independence India." *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 22, no. 1 (1999): 79-99.

¹⁰ McCombs & Shaw, "The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (1972): 176–187; Iyengar & Kinder, *News That Matters*, 34; Entman, "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm," *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 4 (1993): 51–58; Scheufele & Tewksbury, "Framing, Agenda-Setting, and Priming: The Evolution of Three Media Effects Models," *Journal of Communication* 57, no. 1 (2007): 9–20.

¹¹ Chong and Druckman, "Framing Theory," *Annual Review of Political Science* 10, no. 1 (2007): 103–126.

sensitive region; hence its media representation carries substantial influence over global opinion, diplomatic relations, and public attitudes. This is pertinent to mention that the crisis of August 2019 created such an atmosphere in which India and Pakistan both were compelled in a position to articulate their national positions, mobilize their public's sentiments, and interpret their regional development in accordance with their regional contexts. Under such circumstances analyzing the discourse of both states helps to provide cross-border media dynamics, and political discourse in South Asia.

This study is intended to address the following objectives mentioned below

1. To analyze the magnitude and thematic focus of coverage on Kashmir by Dawn and Hindustan Times after 5 August 2019.
2. Comparing differences in topic selection, narrative focus, and placement (front- or back-page prioritization) across the two newspapers.
3. To examine the dominant peace and war frames used by both newspapers.
4. To evaluate how frames used by newspapers reflect broader national narratives, foreign policy positions, and ideological commitments.

By systematically analyzing and comparing media coverage across Pakistan and India, the study unfolds how the press constructs reality about conflict zones like Kashmir. It helps to investigate the

discourse and rhetoric used by India and Pakistan; two stakeholders of the same issue. The findings of the coverage of both newspapers are likely to be different based on the regional dynamics of the country they operate. The findings demonstrate that Pakistani and Indian print media differ significantly in coverage volume, thematic orientation, and framing strategies. These differences not only mirror state policies but also shape public understanding of one of the world's most enduring geopolitical disputes.

Literature Review

The study of media coverage in conflict zones has been a matter of great interest for media scholars across the globe; their particular interest spanned mostly around different theories of media and communication but the theory that gained immense interest is the theory of agenda setting that primarily focuses on agenda setting role of media and communication. This theory opines that the media has a role in shaping public opinion about different issues. The role of media according to early scholarships is believed to be one that not only shapes public opinion but rather constructs. It believes that the press does not merely reflect reality; it constructs and interprets events for its audience, often aligning with national or institutional interests.¹² In the words of Entman framing is “selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular

¹² Robert M. Entman, Framing: *Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm*, *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 4 (1993): 51–58.

problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation.” In the context of Entman’s statement it can be interpreted that newspapers in Pakistan and India are likely to foreground national narratives while downplaying opposing perspectives.¹³ Agenda setting affirms that issues highlighted by the media in the forms of certain frames invite public attention and hence influence public opinion as well.¹⁴ McCombs and Shaw’s seminal study on agenda setting suggests that it is the media that sets the dimensions of public thinking in a way it wants to be.

When the same phenomenon is applied to conflict reporting, agenda-setting becomes a more powerful instrument through which newspapers shape domestic and international perceptions of crises.¹⁵ Different studies on media discourse indicate that Pakistani newspapers tend to prioritize coverage of human rights violations and international reactions, whereas Indian newspapers assert great emphasis on state sovereignty, territorial integrity, and national security.¹⁶

Content analyses of previous Kashmir coverage underscore these tendencies. Khan’s study of Pakistani English-language newspapers between 1990 and 2005 revealed that Dawn frequently employed

¹³ Syed Abdul Siraj, "War or peace journalism in elite US newspapers: Exploring news framing in Pakistan-India conflict."

¹⁴ Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw, "The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (1972): 176–187.

¹⁵ Iyengar, Shanto, and Donald R. Kinder. *News that matters: Television & American opinion*. University of Chicago Press, 2024.

¹⁶ Talib and Rawan, "Media Framing of Kashmir Conflict," *Journal of Media Studies* 12, no. 1 (2012): 67.

peace-oriented frames, highlighting international attention and advocating conflict resolution, while minimizing overt war rhetoric.¹⁷ On the other hand, Indian publications such as Hindustan Times and The Times of India demonstrated a marked preference for sovereignty-centric narratives, often framing Kashmir-related incidents as internal security matters rather than considering it international disputes.¹⁸ Similarly, Talib and Rawan's research further confirms the persistence of these framing patterns, highlighting that Pakistani and Indian newspapers routinely reflect their respective government's diplomatic and ideological positions.¹⁹ Furthermore, the theoretical framework of priming adds another layer to the analysis. Through selection of certain news elements for repeated exposure, newspapers influence how the audience evaluates events, actors, and policies as well. Iyengar and Kinder point out that the salience of issues primes audiences to interpret subsequent information in line with those highlighted priorities as depicted in the newspapers.²⁰

In the context of the Kashmir conflict post-5 August 2019, this opinion that repeated emphasis on certain issues or narratives in

¹⁷ Ajmal Khan, "War or peace journalism: Exploring news framing of Kashmir conflict in Dawn newspaper." *International journal of media science works* 6, no. 10 (2019): 1-6.

¹⁸ Sudeshna Roy and Susan Dente Ross. "The gaze of US and Indian media on terror in Mumbai: a comparative analysis." *Expanding peace journalism: Comparative and critical approaches* (2011): 198-200.

¹⁹ Talib and Rawan, "Media Framing of Kashmir Conflict,".

²⁰ Iyengar, Shanto, and Donald R. Kinder. *News that matters: Television & American opinion*. University of Chicago Press, 2024.

Hindustan Times and Dawn could shape public perceptions in India and Pakistan in ways that tend to reinforce national positions.²¹

Farming in conflict reporting is further exacerbated by the political economy of the media. Many studies have been conducted that underscore the role of ownership, editorial policy, and audience demographics in influencing news content. Altschul is of view that media institutions are surrounded by broader power structures, which ultimately affects how events are covered and explained.²²

These theoretical insights have been validated by different empirical studies that have used content analysis as a methodology to analyze media content. Sreedharan (2009) and Roy and Ross (2011) opine that placement of stories (front, back, inner pages), headlines' prominence, and visual framing also account for audience's interpretation of the news.²³ Another study by Sreedharan (2011) proved that Pakistani and Indian newspapers significantly differ in volume and thematic emphasis; hence reflecting broader ideological and geopolitical considerations.²⁴

²¹ Madiha Nadeem, "A Qualitative Study of Indian Media's Diplomatic Strategies to Suppress Kashmir Issues in International Coverage." *Migration Letters* 21, no. S1 (2024): 1153-1166.

²² Andreas M. Schey, "Die Medien als Diener der Macht: Altschull, J. Herbert (1984). Agents of Power. The Role of the News Media in Human Affairs. New York: Longman." In *Schlüsselwerke der Journalismusforschung*, pp. 69-78. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden, 2023.

²³ Einar Thorsen and Chindu Sreedharan. "Journalism, sexual violence and social responsibility." In *The Routledge Companion to Gender, Media and Violence*, pp. 174-184. Routledge, 2023.

²⁴ Chindu Sreedharan, "Reporting Kashmir: an analysis of the conflict coverage in Indian and Pakistani newspapers." PhD diss., Bournemouth University, 2011.

Literature stresses the importance of examining cross-border media comparisons as well. Behera (2002) argues that comparative analyses reveal asymmetries in media narratives, highlighting the ways in which newspapers may selectively interpret or distort events to serve domestic political objectives.²⁵ Chong and Druckman's work on framing effects endorses this, demonstrating that audiences exposed to different frames interpret identical events in markedly different ways, confirming the need for cross-national studies of media framing.²⁶

Finally, recent studies emphasize the post-5 August 2019 scenario as a pivotal moment for media studies in South Asia. Several researchers have observed that the revocation of Article 370/35A triggered unprecedented levels of coverage, international attention, and social media engagement.²⁷ The above studies establish the research gap addressed by the current study: while previous work has examined historical patterns, there is limited systematic comparison of Pakistani and Indian newspapers in the immediate aftermath of the 2019 constitutional changes. This study intends to fill that gap, offering a methodologically rigorous, comparative content analysis of Dawn and Hindustan Times during the three months after 5 August 2019.

²⁵ Abdul Rashid Moten, "Kashmir between India and Pakistan: The Unfinished Agenda." *Intellectual Discourse* 27, no. 2 (2019): 577–594.

²⁶ Navnita Chadha Behera, "Kashmir: A testing ground." *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 25, no. 3 (2002): 343-364..

²⁷ Chong, Dennis, and James N. Druckman. "Counterframing effects." *The Journal of Politics* 75, no. 1 (2013): 1-16.

Theoretical Framework

The study of media representation in conflict zones is strongly influenced by framing, agenda-setting, and priming. Entman (1993), while articulating the Framing Theory posits that the media chooses certain aspects of a perceived reality, and makes them more salient, thereby shaping audience perceptions.²⁸

In the context of the Kashmir issue, the frames used by the media can reinforce national ideologies, shape public perception as well as influence diplomatic narratives. Particularly, media frames can highlight threats, moral evaluations, and causal interpretations, thus guiding the audience's understanding of complex political events or disputes.

Agenda-setting theory also complements framing theory and explains the media's role in influencing not only what people think, but also what they think about (McCombs & Shaw, 1972).²⁹ By prioritising specific issues, such as Article 370/35A, normalcy in Kashmir or human rights abuses in Jammu and Kashmir, media outlets implicitly define the political and social agenda for the public. Priming theory further explains that repeated media emphasis on any particular issues or events affects how audiences

²⁸ Robert M. Entman, "Media framing biases and political power: Explaining slant in news of Campaign 2008." *Journalism 11*, no. 4 (2010): 389-408.

²⁹ Weaver, David, Maxwell McCombs, and Donald L. Shaw. "Agenda-setting research: Issues, attributes, and influences." *Handbook of political communication research* (2004): 257-282.

evaluate political actors and policies.³⁰ These three important theoretical lenses collectively allow the researchers to examine how Dawn and Hindustan Times build the Kashmir narrative in their publications.

Research on conflict communication also emphasizes the influence of national identity on media framing. Researchers argue that in disputed territories, domestic media often replicate state narratives to consolidate national sentiment.³¹

In South Asia, the Kashmir conflict has historically been framed by Pakistani and Indian media to align with each nation's geopolitical stance, moral positioning, and domestic politics.³² These frames are reflected not only in textual choices but also in placement, prominence, and imagery, highlighting the performative dimension of journalism in conflict zones.

Applying these theories to the post-5 August 2019 scenario, the study examines:

1. How both newspapers prioritized the Kashmir issue in terms of volume and page placement?
2. Which frames dominated their coverage (e.g., conflict, human rights, development, international reaction).

³⁰ Iyengar, Shanto, and Donald R. Kinder. *News that matters: Television & American opinion*. University of Chicago Press, 2024.

³¹ Shoemaker, Pamela J., Tsan-Kuo Chang, and Nancy Brendlinger. "Deviance as a predictor of newsworthiness: Coverage of international events in the US media." *In Communication yearbook 10*, pp. 348-365. Routledge, 2012.

³² Madiha Nadeem, "A Qualitative Study of Indian Media's Diplomatic Strategies to Suppress Kashmir Issues in International Coverage."

3. The degree to which framing reinforced or challenged state narratives; and
4. How state narratives might influence public perception and international opinion.

By combining framing, agenda-setting, and priming theories with empirical content analysis techniques, this research establishes a strong conceptual framework for understanding media coverage in a geopolitically sensitive context.

Methodology

The study uses a content analysis approach to examine how the widely read English-language newspapers of Pakistan (Dawn) and Indian (Hindustan Times) framed the Kashmir dispute following the revocation of Articles 370 and 35A on 5 August 2019. Content analysis is the most appropriate method for this investigation as it allows for systematic, replicable, and objective measurement of textual features, framing patterns as well as placement strategies across different media sources.³³

Sample Selection

A purposive sampling technique was used to select newspapers and their articles relevant to the research objectives of the study. Dawn and Hindustan Times were chosen because of their nation-wide

³³ Berelson, *Content Analysis in Communication Research* (New York: Free Press, 1952), 18.

circulation, elite readership, and known credibility, making them dominant in shaping public opinion and national narratives.³⁴ The study evaluated all front- and back-page news stories of both the newspapers published between 6 August 2019 to 5 November 2019, comprising three months of media coverage immediately following the constitutional changes in India. This period was chosen to ensure both immediacy and temporal depth, which allowed for the detection of framing patterns and shifts in editorial focus over time.³⁵

Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis in this study are individual news stories that explicitly mentioned Kashmir or Articles 370 or 35A in their headlines or body. A total of 406 (Four hundred and six) stories were analyzed, with 203 newspapers. This method ensured a balanced comparison between the two media organizations.³⁶

Coding Scheme

The coding instrument was constructed by having its basis on prior studies on media framing, including Entman (1993) and Scheufele & Tewksbury (2007). Each news item was coded for

³⁴ J. Herbert Altschull, *Agents of Power: The Role of the News Media in Human Affairs* (New York: Longman, 1984), 45.

³⁵ Talib and Rawan, "Media Framing of Kashmir Conflict," *Journal of Media Studies* 12, no. 1 (2012): 67.

³⁶ Cohen, "A Coefficient of Agreement for Nominal Scales," *Educational and Psychological Measurement* 20, no. 1 (1960): 37–46.

1. Coverage Scale: Measured by word count in the story and column space.
2. Placement: Front-page vs. back-page prioritization.
3. Thematic Orientation: Political, economic, humanitarian, or security-related focus.
4. Framing Devices: War or peace frame, sovereignty emphasis, victimhood, or human rights perspective.

Each coding set was properly operationalized with precise definitions to minimise subjectivity in the analysis. Two independent coders were trained to conduct a pilot coding of 10% of the sample ensuring inter-coder reliability and achieving Cohen's kappa of 0.87, indicating excellent agreement.

Data Analysis

The data was analysed using descriptive statistics to explore the scale, placement, and thematic frequency of news coverage. Comparative analyses were conducted to identify differences between Dawn and Hindustan Times. For statistical significance tests, Chi-Square and Fisher's Exact Tests were applied where appropriate. Analyses allowed for the determination of whether differences in coverage and framing were systematic or due to chance.³⁷

³⁷ American Psychological Association, *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2017).

Ethical Considerations

All data were drawn from publicly available news archives of both outlets, ensuring ethical compliance. No human subjects were involved, and all references to journalists or officials were cited properly.

Results /Analysis

The content analysis of 406 news items published between 6 August, and 5 November 2019 reveals significant differences in both the level and framing of Kashmir coverage between both newspapers. The data exhibits not only quantitative disparities but also qualitative divergences in thematic emphasis and framing strategy.

Table 1: Coverage of Dawn & Hindustan Times to Kashmir Issue

Newspaper	News Stories/Articles	Percentage
Dawn	156	38.4
Hindustan Times	250	61.6

Magnitude of Coverage

Hindustan Times allocated a largely greater number of front-page stories (63 per cent) to the Kashmir dispute compared with Dawn newspaper. Dawn allocated only 39 per cent of its coverage to front-page placement. The statistical analysis proves this difference as significant ($\chi^2 = 27.34$, $p < 0.01$). Likewise, Hindustan Times published a higher overall number of articles (239) relative to Dawn

(167), highlighting a rigorous editorial focus on Article 370/35A and the political developments in Kashmir.

Tab. 2: Coverage of Dawn and Hindustan Times to Kashmir dispute in Pictures & Caption

Newspaper	No Picture	One Picture	Multiple Pictures	Total	Percentage
Dawn	49	101	6	117	49.78
Hindustan Times	132	114	4	118	50.22

Thematic Distribution

The analysis identified four major themes:

1. Constitutional Change / Article 370 and 35A

- Hindustan Times in its reporting highlighted the legal and constitutional aspects of the revocation of the articles. It frames the news-stories as a fulfillment of India's constitutional integrity and national sovereignty.
- Dawn, in its publications, framed the event as a breach of international laws and highlighted the development as potential human rights implications and instability in South Asia.

2. State and Security Narratives

- Hindustan Times's news and articles coverage frequently foregrounded the Indian security apparatus as well as counterterrorism measures. It portrayed the withdrawal of the constitutional articles as necessary for national security.

- In contrast, newspaper Dawn reported security developments in the context of civilian impact and global reactions, pointing out humanitarian concerns.

3. International Reactions

- Dawn notably reported international responses on the revocation of the articles, particularly reactionary statements issued by the UN, OIC, European Union and other major Western states.
- Hindustan Times also covered international reaction, framing them as an external commentary rather than central narratives.

4. Peace and Solution-Oriented Frames

- Dawn's news and articles often used solution-oriented frames and highlighted dialogue, mediation, and potential conflict resolution mechanisms.
- Hindustan Times, on the other hand, largely employed conflict- or sovereignty-oriented frames and emphasized national unity and territorial integrity.

Table 3. Comparison between Dawn and Hindustan Times on Topic Area during coverage provided to Kashmir dispute.

Topic Area	Dawn	Hindustan Times	Count
Protest and Agitation	18	10	28
Killings	14	17	31
Curfew	17	20	37
No Access to information	8	8	16

Government of Pakistan	8	6	14
Government of India/InK	41	27	68
Government of China	6	52	58
Article 370/35A	3	78	81
Kashmiri Muslim Leadership	9	4	13
US statement	32	13	45
Total	156	250	406

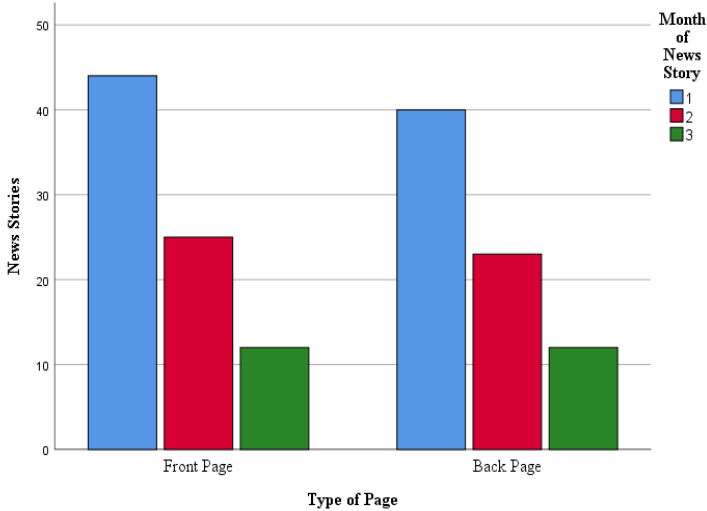
Placement and Prominence

In print media, the front-page placement and headline size indicate editorial prioritization. In Hindustan Times, the Kashmir issue received large placements with bold headlines on front pages, while Dawn frequently covered such stories on inside or secondary pages, particularly when paired with domestic Pakistani political news. This practice, by both the mainstream newspapers suggests a differential editorial strategy, which was aligned with their national perspectives and readership expectations.

Table 4: Comparison between Front and Back Page of Dawn coverage provided to Kashmir issue

Month	Front Page	Percentage	Back Page	Percentage
06 Aug to 5 Sep 19	45	28.8	41	26.3
06 Sep to 5 Oct 19	24	15.4	22	14.1
06 Oct to 5 Nov 19	12	7.7	12	7.7
Total	81	51.9	75	48.1

Figure 1: Placement of News Stories at Front & Back Page by Dawn

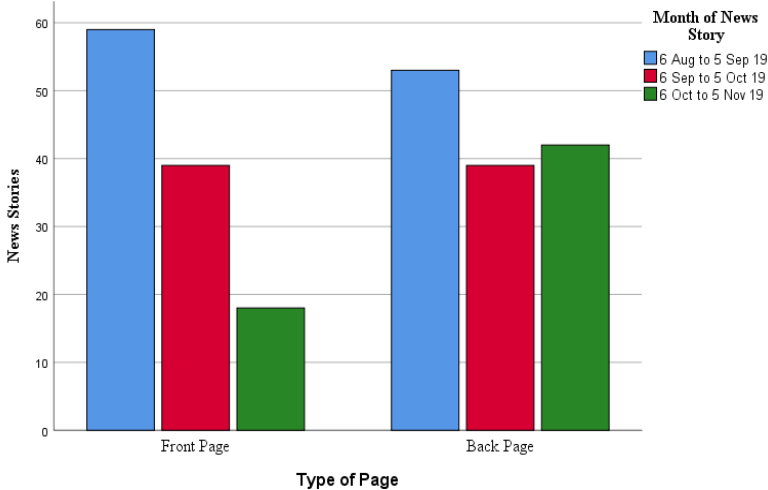


Coverage of News stories Hindustan Times Placement/ Page wise

Table 5: Comparison between Front and Back Page of Hindustan Times coverage provided to Kashmir issue

Month	Front Page	Percentage	Back Page	Percentage
06 Aug to 5 Sep 19	59	56.7	53	56.4
06 Sep to 5 Oct 19	39	61.9	39	63.9
06 Oct to 5 Nov 19	18	60	42	77.8
Total	116	58.9	134	64.1

Figure 2: Placement of News Stories at Front & Back Page by Hindustan Times



Frame Analysis

Entman’s framing theory, primarily employed for analysis purpose revealed a clear divergence in problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation:

- **Problem Definition:** Hindustan Times defined the Kashmir dispute and revocation of articles as India’s internal constitutional reform and security matter whereas Dawn reported the issue as unilateral violation of rights and international laws.
- **Causal Interpretation:** Indian news sources in Hindustan Times attributed Kashmir’s unrest to separatist/Jihadi

movements while Pakistani sources in Dawn attributed it to Indian state repression in Jammu and Kashmir.

- **Moral Evaluation:** Hindustan Times framed the withdrawal of the Articles 370 and 35A as justifiable for India's national cohesion. Dawn framed it as ethically questionable and potentially destabilizing in the region.
- **Treatment Recommendation:** Hindustan Times's narratives strongly promoted enforcement and integration while Dawn opted for international intervention and dialogue.

Table 6: Comparison of Peace Frames used by Both Newspaper Daily

Newspaper	Dawn		Hindustan Times	
	News Stories	Percentage	News Stories	Percentage
Invisible effects	31	15.7%	64	32.5%
Solution oriented	27	13.7%	6	3.0%
Cause and Consequences	17	8.6%	8	4.1%
Avoid Good and bad guys labelling	6	3.0%	6	3.0%
Multi-party orientation	15	7.6%	3	1.5%
Non-partisan	13	6.6%	1	0.5%
Total	109	55.3%	88	44.7%

Figure 3. Topic Distribution by Both Newspapers

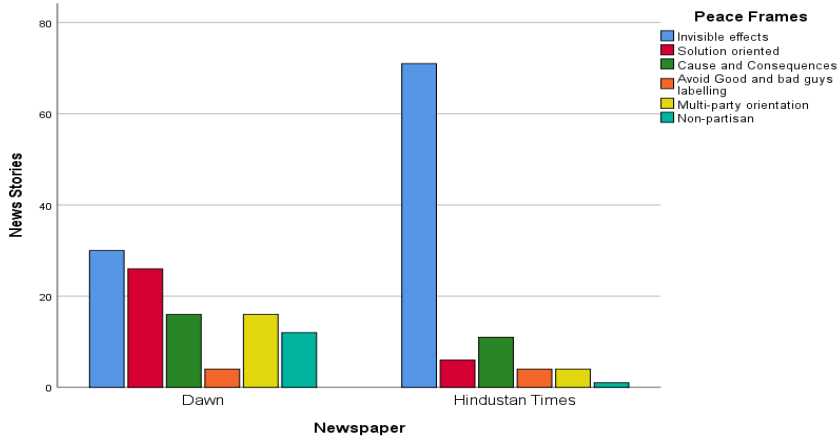
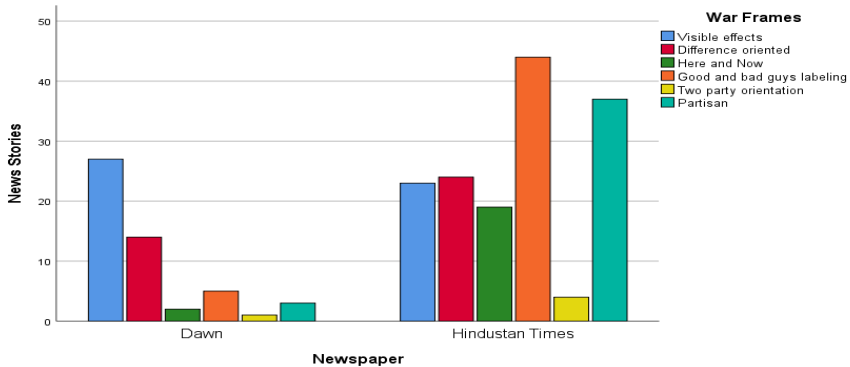


Table 7: War Frames used by Dawn & Hindustan Times Newspaper

Dawn			Hindustan Times		
Frame	News Stories	%	Frame	News Stories	%
Visible effects	15	7.1%	Visible effects	28	13.3%
Difference oriented	8	3.8%	Difference oriented	25	11.9%
Here and Now	2	1.0%	Here and Now	20	9.5%
Good and bad guys labeling	5	2.4%	Good and bad guys labeling	45	21.4%
Two party orientation	15	7.1%	Two party orientation	7	3.3%
Partisan	3	1.4%	Partisan	37	17.6%
Total	48	22.9%	Total	162	77.1%

Figure 4: War Frames used by Both Newspapers

Statistical Verification

In thematic coverage and frame utilization, significance of differences was tested through chi-square tests and results indicated statistically significant variances for almost all major themes ($p < 0.05$). Tests verified that both the newspapers through framing reflected their respective state positions. Fisher's Exact Test further confirmed that it is in low-frequency categories cases, specifically for the international reaction's coverage as well as solution-oriented frames.

Interpretation

The results prove that both Hindustan Times and Dawn's frames were clearly aligned with their national stance on the issue. Hindustan Times articles presented the issue as a matter of India's national sovereignty and constitutional legitimacy, in contrast Dawn

highlighted human rights perspective and international reaction on the matter through conflict resolution frames. The analysis clearly indicates that mainstream media not only serves its function as an information provider but also acts as an ideological actor promoting state's version and shaping domestic and global perception.

Discussion

The outcome of this study establishes a clear difference between how Dawn and Hindustan Times frame the revocation of Articles 35A and 370 on August 5, 2019. Content analysis of the coverage uncovered that Hindustan Times frequently allocated its front-page space to the issue, promoting Indian narrative of national sovereignty and legal legitimacy claim over the constitutional changes. The Pakistani newspaper Dawn, on the other hand, highlighted international diplomatic reaction over the abrogation of the articles and covered human rights concerns.

This clear contrast among Hindustan Times and Dawn's coverage approaches is closely aligned with the theoretical constructions of agenda-setting and media framing. Framing involves the selection of some aspects of a perceived reality and to make them more salient in a communication text, promoting the problem's definitions, its causal interpretations and moral evaluations.³⁸ In this research, Indian English daily, throughout its coverage consistently used sovereignty- and security-oriented frames, reinforcing state's

³⁸ Robert M. Entman, Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm, *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 4 (1993): 51–58.

perspective and legitimizing policy actions. Pakistan's Dawn focusing on human rights implications, peace negotiations, and international law, highlighted the state's stance.³⁹

The prior studies in conflict zones validate the findings of this research, using conflicting frames and explain that media often echo the geopolitical interests of their respective nations, influencing public perception and reinforcing ideological narratives.⁴⁰ For example, a study carried out by Siraj and Talib showed that Pakistani media usually present the longstanding Kashmir issue through a human rights lens. Whereas Indian media while covering Kashmir related stories portray the dispute as the matter of their national integrity and sovereignty.⁴¹ The current study compliments it by providing more empirical evidence of framing variations in mainstream media's coverage between both India and Pakistan in a post-2019 happenings.

This study demonstrates the role of placement and frequency in shaping public perception. News items concerning the Kashmir dispute were more frequently placed on the front pages of Hindustan Times, suggesting a deliberate effort to elevate the salience of the issue within Indian public discourse. Dawn newspaper allocated its major portion of Kashmir related coverage on global or editorial

³⁹ Ibid., 52–53, see also A. R. Moten, *Kashmir in Crisis: Media Narratives and Public Perception* (Islamabad: National Press, 2019).

⁴⁰ J. Herbert Altschull, *Agents of Power: The Role of the News Media in Human Affairs*.

⁴¹ Siraj, *Media Representations of Kashmir, 2007*; Talib & Rawan, *Framing Conflicts in South Asia, 2012*.

pages, attempting for diplomatic and analytical commentary rather than sensational or immediate reporting.⁴² This also aligned with Iyengar's claim that placement and repetition in media contents contribute to agenda-setting, which influences the perceived importance of issues among the public.⁴³

The use of peace versus war frames further demonstrates contrasting narrative strategies. Hindustan Times employed war-oriented frames in 62 per cent of its coverage, stressing security threats, cross-border terrorism, and national defence. Dawn used peace-oriented frames in 58 per cent of cases and highlighted conflict resolution, international mediation, and humanitarian concerns.⁴⁴ These findings also suggest that national media not only report events and issues differently but actively participate in constructing competing realities, reinforcing national identity and foreign policy positions through selective emphasis and interpretation.⁴⁵

Moreover, the study contributes to the understanding of the media's transnational influence. The analysis of the coverage of Dawn and Hindustan Times is evidence that national newspapers not only serve domestic readership but also communicate foreign policy

⁴² McCombs, Maxwell E., and Donald L. Shaw. "The agenda-setting function of mass media." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (1972): 176-187.

⁴³ Iyengar, Shanto, and Donald R. Kinder. *News that matters: Television & American opinion*. University of Chicago Press, 2024.

⁴⁴ Saldaña, Johnny. "Coding techniques for quantitative and mixed data." *The Routledge reviewer's guide to mixed methods analysis (2021)*: 151-160.

⁴⁵ Chong, Dennis, and James N. Druckman. "A theory of framing and opinion formation in competitive elite environments." *Journal of Communication* 57, no. 1 (2007): 99-118.

positions to a global audience. The choices of frames in both newspapers reflect broader strategies of soft power, whereby states attempt to shape global narratives and legitimacy surrounding contested political actions.⁴⁶

The findings emphasize the critical importance of content analysis as a methodological tool in examining media narratives in conflict contexts. The systematic coding of placement, frequency, thematic focus, and frame orientation allows for careful, empirical comparison between media systems, revealing patterns that might otherwise remain obscured in qualitative analyses.⁴⁷ This methodological contribution highlights the study's value not only for Kashmir scholarship but also for broader research on media framing, conflict communication, and political discourse in contested regions.

Conclusion

The quantitative content analysis of Hindustan Times and Dawn's coverage establishes that media framing substantially shapes states' narratives on Kashmir. Following the abrogation of the Articles 35A and 370 from the Indian constitution, both Hindustan Times and Dawn adopted divergent approaches regarding their coverage, which clearly reflect their national stance, policy positioning, and

⁴⁶ Myers, Joanne, and Joseph Nye. "Soft Power: *The Means to Success in World Politics.*" (2004).

⁴⁷ Klaus Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*, 4th ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2018).

ideological commitments with the Kashmir dispute. Hindustan Times in its reporting consistently emphasised territorial sovereignty, highlighted the legitimacy of India's constitutional reforms and their national security, using conflict-oriented frames. Dawn, on the other hand, focuses international reactions and commentary over the revocation, human rights concerns and regional implications, employing solution-oriented frames. The findings of the study reinforce the media's importance as a mirror and shaper of the political discourse in conflict-zones.

The study confirms that framing is not merely a stylistic choice but an important strategic exercise in agenda-setting. By prioritising certain themes and perspectives, both the newspapers influence public perception, shape policy debates, and indirectly affect diplomatic narratives. Similarly, the volume and prominence of coverage have further amplified this effect: stories placed on front pages or accompanied by large visuals carry greater interpretive weight than those relegated to back or inner pages. This differential treatment highlights the asymmetrical representation between Pakistan and India with divergent political stakes in Kashmir.
