

Abrogation of Article 370 of Kashmir: A Comparative Analysis of English Newspaper Editorials

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Abstract

On the 5th of August 2019, the Indian government challenged the semi-autonomous status of disputed region of Jammu & Kashmir through the abolishment of decades-old laws. Abrogation of Article 370 not only triggered controversial reactions throughout the world but it also presented contradicting depiction of the incident. The current study is aimed at exploring the power of words reflecting differences in ideological perspectives of three different countries regarding one of the most crucial issues surrounding Kashmir. The researchers have examined the frames adopted in newspaper editorials of three countries, this is to say, the editorials of Dawn from Pakistan, Times of India from India and The New York Times from United States of America. While portraying the incident, all the articles mirrored ideological perspectives of their respective countries. Pakistani media acknowledged the issue of Kashmir as a grave injustice to the Kashmiri people and portrayed India as an inhumane actor in order to express its rage. On the other hand, the editorials of Times of India regarded the incident of abrogation of Article 370 in the best interest of the people of Kashmir and Indian government as well. Where Indian and Pakistani editorials proved to be predictable, the editorials of USA demonstrated an unbiased attitude by criticizing and scolding India for initiating a one-sided barbaric action of abrogation of article 370 that resulted in the oppression of Kashmiris. This study revealed that media manipulates reality for political and economic gains and prevents the crucial issues from getting resolved.

Keywords: Discourse, Kashmir, Ideology, Framing, Article 370

Introduction

Language constructs and is constructed by social realities (Wang, 2010). This research work originated from the importance of the role of language and language framing in portraying ideological stances of selected countries around the Kashmir issues, specifically in light of the

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abrogation of Article 370 of the Indian constitution that gave a special status to the part of Kashmir under Indian control. The current study was aimed at understanding the power dynamics attached with the employment of words under the façade of the use of language which reflect differences in ideological viewpoints of different countries about the very sensitive issue of Kashmir. On the 5th of August 2019, the Indian government challenged the semi-autonomous status of conflicted Muslim majority region of Jammu & Kashmir through the abolishment of decades-old laws (“Grim reality of IHK,” 2019). Abrogation of Article 370 not only triggered controversial reactions throughout the world but it consequently produced contradicting portrayal of the incident.

In today’s world, millions of people approach the news media daily and thus it is considered as a cornerstone institution in democratic countries (Kent, 2014). Comparative framing analysis of press media of three countries (Pakistan, India and USA) has been carried out by the researchers to examine the discursive strategies used in their discourse and their stance with reference to abrogation of Article 370 ratified by the Indian parliament. For carrying out the comparative study, the researchers analyzed English newspaper editorials of Pakistan, India and the USA. The study has not only explored the media frames used by three countries (Pakistan, India and the USA), but it also created awareness regarding the official ideological stance held by the three countries. Moreover, it uncovered the reasons like political and economic gains for which the media manipulates reality and does not let the issue of Kashmir to come to a resolution.

To unwrap the varying portrayal of the issue and detect the ideological stance, the researchers examined the frames adopted in newspaper editorials of three countries, this is to say, the editorials of Dawn from Pakistan, Times of India from India and The New York Times from United States of America. The researchers focused on how the editorials of these newspapers depicted their ideological stance regarding the abrogation of Article 370 by the Indian authorities. Media discourse plays a leading role in exploring a certain social issue and (re)shaping a public opinion (Van Dijk, 2015). The language used by different media networks reflects the different perception of the decision. For instance, Pakistan calling it as unlawful act condemns the decision; India calls it as a perfect move while the USA is likely to make the government of India responsible for the illegal conduct.

The study aims to examine the role of language and language framing in portraying ideological stance of the print media of the selected countries.

The study helps to investigate how certain framing strategies represent a country's response to the global issue of Kashmir. A comparative framing analysis of print media of the three countries would give an insight into discursive strategies used in their discourse and the stance they take with reference to the abrogation of Article 370.

The study is not limited to exploring the media frames used by the three countries (Pakistan, India and the US); rather it creates awareness regarding the ideology held by the three countries. The study reveals the hidden agenda each country carries regarding the current development in Indian administered Kashmir. It uncovers the ways in which the media manipulates reality for political and economic gains and does not let the Kashmir issue to be resolved. The study also provides some suggestions to tackle the current issue of Kashmir and stop this unending war of words among the three countries.

As the field is not highly enriched with the comparative framing analysis study of three states (i.e. Pakistan, India and the USA), the study would be a considerable addition to the existing research and would provide an insight into how framing and ideology are correlated. The study will also help future researchers to work in this field and examine the discourse patterns followed by national and international media. Besides linguistic researchers, the study would also be beneficial to the researchers of International Relations, Mass Communication, Journalism and Political Science.

Literature Review

In 2002, Bill Clinton (former US President) named Kashmir as the most terrible and unstable place in the world (Mishra, 2011). The partition of British India into Pakistan and India and the two-nation theory formed the basis of the Kashmir issue (Imam, 2002). Both countries have immense advantages for having Kashmir and thus they fight for their national interests without holding any sympathy towards the Kashmiris (Alam et al, 2016). Zaheer (2017) argues, "Indian media presents to its public the picture dictated by the official authorities" (p.23), while Pakistani media is also controlled by its own state and is bound not to portray any anti-nation elements while discussing Kashmir. Pakistan and India are not on the same floor regarding the Kashmir Issue and the studies found that both the states have different ideological worldviews (Tremblay, 2009).

According to Irvine (2009), ideology is "the cultural system of ideas, mainly based on social and linguistic relationships, and is loaded with moral and political interests" (p.12). The origin of framing analysis

is linked with linguistic features in the field of social science philosophy (coined by Gofman in 1974), while its theoretical foundations are based on linguistic pragmatics. Linguistic pragmatics deals with the language as 'language in use' (Blommaert, 2005); that is recognized as having power relation effects beyond the surface level of the text (Parker 2005; Fowler, 2013). Non-linguists' scholars combined the linguistic methods with theories of power and ideology which formed critical discourse analysis (CDA). For CDA scholars' discourse is a social construction and shaping of reality (Fairclough & Wodak, 2013). Framing analysis shares many of the building blocks of CDA; it shares the same principles of meaning-making processes and possesses the belief of affecting action beyond the level of the text (Entman, 2007). Framing provides ways of contextualization of the news that will be recognized as a reality (Benford & Snow, 2000). Similarly, Maher (2001) argues that media shapes our outside world which resultantly guides and constructs (frames) the existing picture/perception in our head regarding a certain incident.

A number of research studies have been conducted on the issue of Kashmir since 1947, analyzing it from different perspectives. The detailed critical review of the selected literature on Kashmir has revealed that majority of the Kashmir-related studies have repeatedly focused on *history, Pak-India relationship, personal accounts, biographies, autobiographies, policy-making, and its global impacts*. In spite of such extensive research conducted on Kashmir, there are few studies that explore the framing analysis of political discourse (specifically the discourse of newspaper editorials) of three different countries including Pakistan, India and US. Similarly, examining the ideological perspectives of these three countries and the stance taken by them with a focus on the Kashmir issue of abrogation of Article 370 has never been explored before. In contradiction to all of the studies conducted over the discourse associated with Kashmir in the past, this study strives to take an anomalous stance by scrutinizing the transnational editorial discourse over the Kashmir issue arising due to revocation of Article 370.

Research Questions

1. While portraying the issue of the abrogation of Article 370 what types of frames are adopted in the newspaper editorials of Pakistan, India and the USA?

2. While portraying the issue of abrogation of Article 370 in the newspaper editorials of Pakistan, India and the USA, how do media depict the national political ideology of each country?
3. What are the similarities and differences found in media frames used to portray the issue of abrogation of Article 370 in the newspaper editorials of Pakistan, India and the USA?

Research Methodology

The current study followed the interpretivist research paradigm that allows researchers to observe the world through perceptions and experiences. In order to analyze how different countries differently frame the same issue of Kashmir, a content analysis of newspaper articles published on ‘abrogation of Article 370’ in English newspapers of the three countries has been conducted. The researchers have adopted the qualitative method for content analysis to get an in-depth view of the issue of Kashmir (i.e. Abrogation of Article 370). Stemler (2015) argues that “content analysis is a mechanism to draw inferences about the meaning or infer from the communication to its context” (p.27-28). The researchers inferred the ideological meaning from the contextual discourse used by different countries’ media. Dominick and Wimmer (1997) state that content analysis is used “to identify what exists”, “to study societal change”, or “to identify trends occurring over a long period of time” (p.113).

A total of 56 editorials have been analyzed through the lens of framing theory with the proposed framing typology proposed by Semetko and Valkenburg, (2000); deductive approach of content analysis has been utilized, and the proposed specific generic frames i.e. human interest, attribution of responsibility, conflict, morality and economic consequences were identified and measured. Frames in each paragraph were interpreted identifying keywords and phrases, portraying the ideological stance taken by different media networks regarding the current incident of Kashmir.

To measure different types of frames used by the editor, the researchers has given close reading to the text and examined each paragraph which helped him to identify keywords and phrases that related to a specific frame. The researchers used Chu’s (2015) frame-depiction technique to identify and measure the pre-fixed frames.

Theoretical Framework

Framing process consists of frame building, frameset, and individual and cultural level consequences of adopted framing strategies (de Vreese, 2005). The current study is based on the Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) framing model who propose five generic news frames i.e. conflict frame, human interest frame, attribution of responsibility frame, morality frame and economic consequences frame. This model provides a lens through which frame building, and cultural level consequences of framing are scrutinized with meaningful results. "Framing refers to the ways in which mass media organize and portray issues and events, in terms of patterns of presentation, the emphasis of selection, and exclusion" (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000, p.5). Through framing, researchers critically analyzed the media discourse and observed how through utilizing a certain frame gives the story a spin. Media always espouse frames through which a certain issue is given greater emphasis by portraying a few aspects of perceived reality.

The current study has adopted generic framing as a tool to examine different framing strategies used in three different contexts to make opinions regarding the abrogation of Article 370 incident. The generic frames proposed by Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) are conflict frame, human interest frame, attribution of responsibility frame, morality frame and economic consequences frame. These were comparatively interpreted in the current study.

Data Collection

The editorials were retrieved in electronic form from the main websites of Dawn (Pakistan), "The Times of India" (India) and "The New York Times" (U.S) which are available for public reading. English newspapers; Dawn (Pakistan), The Times of India (India), and The New York Times (U.S), due to their reach to diverse audience and circulation rate, are considered as the elite newspapers, so the editorials published in these elite newspapers were chosen as data. Furthermore, each newspaper of the three different countries is given different code i.e. "PK" for Pakistani DAWN, "IND" for The Times of India and "US" for The New York Times.

Sample Size

A total number of 56 newspaper editorials have been collected as a sample size from the three newspapers which have presented the issue of Kashmir as a response towards the abrogation of Article 370 decision taken by the Indian government. The 56 newspaper editorials were

published in the selected time period (two months i.e. August 5, 2019 to October 4, 2019).

Findings and Discussion

The researchers have analyzed 30 editorials of DAWN, 24 editorials of the Times of India, and 02 editorials of The New York Times to identify the pre-fixed five frames proposed by Semetko and Valkenburg, (2000), which reflect the ideological stance of Pakistani, Indian and the American media. All the five frames i.e. human-interest frame, responsibility frame, conflict frame, morality frame and economic consequences frame, were identified and measured

The researchers have focused on the keywords and phrases that measure and identify the frames at sentence and paragraph level. After an intensive and thorough reading of all the 30 editorials taken from DAWN, the researchers observed that 11 editorials reflect the human-interest frame. For instance, the following last sentence of the editorial PK-15 depicts the position of Pakistan in granting basic human interests and rights to the people of Kashmir:

Pakistan will work towards regional stability even as it stands by the Kashmiris.

On the other hand, 07 out of 24 editorials of the Times of India represented the human-interest frame. The following sentence in editorial IND-04 states that all the hindrances in the way of Kashmiris to sustain human life will be removed by Indian authorities keeping in view the best interest of the common citizens.

Kashmir is in lockdown today, but restrictions on everyday activity will need to be removed soon.

As far as the American media is concerned, the editorial US-01 represented the human-interest frame in the following way.

The United Nations recommended holding a referendum to let Kashmiris decide their fate, but that never happened.

Similarly, while deducing the conflict frame the researchers became able to conclude that in 11 editorials, this frame is most obvious. For instance, the following sentence in PK-03 shows that abrogation of the article has not ushered in the conflict between India and Pakistan but also has led to the high critical and sensitive situation across the region.

The atmosphere in South Asia at the moment is highly tense and volatile.

Comparatively, the conflict frame is most obvious in five of the editorials of the Times of India. IND-05 represented in terms of Indian government action of abrogation of Kashmir article.

By revoking the special status of the mountainous territory, India is courting conflict with Pakistan.

While the American media has utilized the conflict frame in terms of Indian internal conflict which has been caused due to the action of abrogation of Kashmir article.

The issue of nullification of Article 370 of the Constitution has exposed divides within Congress.

The analysis of the responsibility frame revealed that Pakistani media depicts the responsibilities of India authorities to come on the table for issue resolution. As the PK-27 states:

India needs to stand down and talk to the Kashmiris as well as Pakistan to resolve this imbroglio and shun the current repressive course it has adopted.

The responsibility frame is most obvious in 11 out of 26 editorials of Times of India. The following title of editorial IND-07 shows the responsibility of India to face any challenge from its counterpart Pakistan.

Pakistan's Kashmir retaliation: New Delhi must prepare to meet any challenges thrown by Islamabad.

While the editorial US-02 shows the responsibility of United Nation Security Council to make it clear that is not in favor of the Indian government's decision of abrogation of Kashmir article.

The Security Council should make clear that it opposes Mr. Modi's brutal tightening of India's control on Kashmir.

After a detailed analysis and understanding of all the editorials of the three distinct newspapers (Pakistan, India and the USA), the researchers then compared these editorials with one another for further clarity and deep analysis. The researchers found that there are some differences along with some similarities in the depiction of the issue of action of the Indian government to abrogate Kashmir article.

All the selected newspapers utilized all five frames, this is to say, human-interest frame, conflict frame, economic frame, morality frame and responsibility frame on the issue. While investigating the conflict frame in the editorials, it is found that Pakistani and Indian newspapers utilized the frame in order to represent the conflict between Pakistan and India emanated from the action of the later. However, in the Times of India that it also represented conflict among Indian parliament members caused by the action. While analyzing the responsibility frame, it is found that both the newspapers used this frame in assigning certain responsibilities to both Pakistan and India. The most frequent frame utilized by Pakistani and Indian newspapers is the responsibility frame occurring 12 times in Dawn while 11 times in Times of India.

Ideological Stance of Pakistani Newspaper

The researchers found that all the pre-fixed genre frames (already mentioned earlier) were adopted in the editorials of Dawn while portraying the issue of Kashmir resulting from Indian government one-sided action and decision. When the paragraph-by-paragraph analysis was done, it showed that the most frequent frame in Dawn editorials was the responsibility frame, followed by the conflict frame, the human-interest frame the morality frame and then economic frame. It was concluded from the analysis of all the editorials that the editor showed a sympathetic attitude towards Kashmiris while targeted the actors of the incidents showing them as inhuman to readers. This finding is strongly supported by (Zaheer, 2017) who argues that Pakistan strongly believes in two-nation-theory and therefore, considers Kashmir as their integral part.

In a nutshell, the data analysis of all the editorials of Dawn showed that the portrayal of an issue unconditionally depended on how a journalist wanted it to present while emphasizing certain aspects and de-emphasizing the others according to his/her aim and purpose. The analysis of all the editorials showed that the writer had portrayed the issue of Kashmir with a negative tone, disfavoring the decision which is different from journalists of the two states i.e. India and the United States of America.

Ideological Stance of Indian Newspaper

It was found that almost all the editorials reflected the incident in a positive manner and tone. As already explored by Pildat (2016), the Indian media network portrays the Kashmir issue in the form of their national interest. The researchers found from the analysis of Indian

newspaper editorials that instead of recording their response towards their decision regarding Kashmir issue, their discourse was more based on a strict and harsh attitude towards Pakistan by making it responsible for the conflicts and insurgencies in Kashmir. This finding has confirmed Lieven's (2012) blame who argues, "Kashmir strategy reflected the long-standing Pakistani strategy of promoting Kashmiri accession to Pakistan and not Kashmiri independence" (p.77). Similarly, studies reveal that media's responsibility is to defuse tensions, provide peaceful situations, and portray issues as our own (Kuypers, 2010), but the results of this study found that response recorded by Indian media network had completely violated the norms of a media institution.

It was concluded from the analysis of all the editorials that the editor showed a strict and harsh attitude towards Pakistan by making it responsible for the conflicts and insurgencies in Kashmir. To cut the story short, the data analysis of all the editorials of Times of India showed the portrayal of Kashmir issue in the form of their national interest and in the best interest of the people of Kashmir.

Ideological Stance of Newspaper of the United States

It was observed by the researchers that the editorials of the New York Times portrayed the current incident of abrogation of Article 370 in terms of India's unilateral action which caused serious devastating implications. The analysis has also confirmed that "The issue of Kashmir is not important for the U.S. but rather due to the fact that it involves two nations that have a strategic interest for the U.S" (Ejaz, 2016, p.19). The overall tone of the editorials of the New York Times Newspaper was negative. The editorials of this newspaper criticized and scolded India for one-sided action to abrogate Kashmir article of 370.

Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the role of language and language framing in portraying the ideological stance at countries level. The study assisted the researchers in investigating the impact of certain framing strategies on a country's reflection on the global issue of Kashmir. A comparative framing analysis of press media of three countries gave the researchers an insight into the discursive strategies used in their discourse and the stance they took with reference to abrogation of Article 370. The study was not limited to explore the media frames used by three countries; rather it created awareness regarding the ideology held by the three countries. The study also revealed the hidden agenda carried by each

country regarding the current incident of Kashmir. Moreover, the study helped the researchers in uncovering the ways through which the media manipulates the reality for economic and political gains and prevents the resolution of crucial social issues such as the Kashmir issue in this case. The study also enabled the researchers to provide some helpful recommendations through which the Kashmir issue can be handled and control can be gained over the hateful media discourse between Pakistan, India and the USA.

It is suggested that for the sake of regional stability the Kashmir issue must be portrayed with all the grave concerns and positive presentation, so that international peace-building actors may come up with an inclusive effort according to the true image of the depth of these crises and resolve the issue for greater regional gains. It is also strongly pleaded that access to journalists from the Western and neutral press should be given by both India and Pakistan, so that true picture of situation in IJK should come to light, which may help UN and humanitarian organizations to provide much needed help to hundreds of thousands of widows, orphans, incapacitated and disabled persons in Indian held Kashmir. The coverage of the Kashmir issue is dominated by war journalism, where Pakistani and Indian media play destructive role. Hence, print media should play productive role for peaceful resolution of Kashmir dispute. It is observed that media of both the countries sold negative stories in order to capture public attention. The media organizations must modify notions of news values for reporting conflict.

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