

REPORTING KASHMIR

An analysis of the conflict coverage in Indian and
Pakistani newspapers

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ABSTRACT

The news media are considered a significant force in conflict situations, capable of influencing antagonists and their actions. Whether this influence is constructive or destructive is determined by the nature of journalism presented to the warring sides. News content that holds the other side responsible for the strife and focuses on violence is likely to exacerbate the situation. Sustained reportage on the possibilities and need for peace, on the other hand, could contribute to a political climate suited for peace negotiations. This India-centric study examines the Kashmir conflict in this context. While the coverage of more recent conflicts such as the Gulf Wars and the ‘War on Terror’ in Afghanistan has evoked sustained scrutiny from media scholars, there is little empirical work on the news on Kashmir. The objective here is to profile the nature of coverage the Indian and Pakistani press accorded the conflict, which could provide an empirical foundation for future discussions and research on Kashmir. Selected news reportage of 10 major events that appeared in two national Indian newspapers and one Pakistani daily is examined for this purpose. By utilising an original coding scheme that draws on conflict journalism, media effects and agenda-setting theories, this study arrives at an indicative overview of the journalism on Kashmir presented to the two publics over the years. The analysis is more reliant on what appeared in the Indian press, and has been contextualised by data drawn from personal interviews with Indian policymakers. Hence it is largely from an Indian perspective. However, the inquiry provides insights into the Pakistani coverage as well. The conclusion, based on patterns that emerged from the news presented to the two warring societies, is that the coverage was vigorously government-led and intensely ‘negative’.

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Introduction

Why. What. How

KASHMIR¹ IS A reporter's dream.

Of all the statements one can make about the turbulent Indian state bordering Pakistan and China, that is perhaps the most telling from a journalist's perspective. Since 1989 Kashmir has continuously offered the media that crucial ingredient of a 'good' story: conflict. There is the romance and thrill of a youthful 'revolution'; there is the dark glamour of bullets and blood; there is the daily quota of 'human interest' unfolding in the killing, the maiming, the rape, the saga of shattered lives. Juxtapose all these against a startlingly serene landscape, and one realises why many journalists consider it a privilege to report from Kashmir.

I am one of the 'privileged'. My first assignment to Kashmir was in the summer of 1997. As a 24-year-old feature writer for the Mumbai-based *Rediff On The Net*², I flew in to write an experiential piece on what life meant at the India-Pakistan border.

My initial view of the conflict was from a military vehicle in an army convoy, and even by the fleeting glimpses through its bullet-proof windows I could feel the tension: the narrowed eyes of the body-armoured security personnel lining the roads³, the bunkers protecting every bridge, every major centre of activity, the barricaded gates of government establishments, the cold stare of guns poking from windows, body checks of civilians at street corners, the tired gaze of a sullen population perennially on alert for danger. Kashmir was another world altogether.

In the next six years, I spent considerable time there, interviewing civilians, sympathisers, militants, separatists, politicians, and security personnel. And I began to see myself as part of the situation, and wonder about my own role in it. All news sources – bureaucrats and politicians, intelligence and security personnel, Kashmiri civilians, separatists and militants – appeared to see me as an ‘Indian’. I was a non-Kashmiri, from ‘Delhi’, and hence would be supportive of the Indian stand. Many politicians, bureaucrats, and security personnel took me for an ally, someone who they could trust to report ‘sensibly’, protecting the interests of the nation. They demanded it of me. As a Rashtriya Rifles⁴ major told me half in anger, half in wonderment when I turned up in the middle of an unofficial – and undemocratic – army operation and proceeded to ask him a set of naïve and awkward questions (Sreedharan 1998, screen 6), “I am an Indian. Be an Indian.”

The Kashmiris – militants, separatists, and civilians – saw me as an Indian too. While most people I met never fully trusted me, they saw in me an opportunity to make themselves heard. Once the barriers of initial distrust were crossed, they were only happy to talk. Even strangers who knew nothing of me bar that I was a journalist spent hours entertaining my queries. In fact that was all many needed to ‘act up’ (Carruthers 2000, p272). On more than one occasion, the mere presence of my vehicle marked with ‘Press’ stickers was enough to alter the dynamics of the situation and turn a relatively passive protest into an active, slogan-yelling, dangerous mass of separatist humanity. As a news reporter, I lapped it all up unashamedly, filing profusely, revelling in my ringside view of violent history and my own machismo in being there.

But back in the *Rediff* newsroom in Mumbai, I had time to reflect. When I report on a militant attack and the people killed in it, am I fuelling anti-Kashmiri feelings in the rest of India? When I report on the human rights excesses committed by security forces, am I exacerbating the anti-India and separatist feelings many Kashmiris harbour in their hearts? The shrillness with which the media embraced certain incidents was disturbing; even more was the silence it

accorded certain others. I found the coverage in the Indian and Pakistani media mutually antagonistic and negative. It was not only partisan and jingoistic, I felt, but ill-informed as well. Some of it did not add up to the ‘reality’ I had personally witnessed. As an Indian working for an Indian publication, where did my loyalties lie? How true was my impression that much of the media coverage on Kashmir was bitter and antagonistic? It was hard to believe that such coverage would not influence the conflict. So what factors should journalists take into consideration when they report on such situations?

This study was undertaken to examine such questions. If there was one thing my foray into conflict reporting had underlined, it was how uneducated I was about such journalism. I was a ‘doer’, a faithful follower of ritualistic reporting, dutifully filing at the end of the day without much reflection or introspection. And I was not alone in this. Many of the media colleagues I met in the hotel lobbies and press conferences of Srinagar, the many who wrote about Kashmir authoritatively from elsewhere, appeared to see the conflict through a narrow prism. There was an unwillingness to apply our minds to the larger questions. Many of us were frighteningly ill-informed, not only about the media ethics and the bigger geopolitical issues at stake, but about ground realities, even the history of the conflict.

Media, the ‘force-multiplier’

After I began my academic research, I have become more convinced that the media plays an important role in conflict situations. This is not through an uncomplicated, direct ‘effect’ of course, though there may be instances when that occurs as well, but by way of a deeper, difficult-to-quantify influence. My faith in it places me among the upholders of the theory of selective media effects, which Brosius (cited in Hanitzsch 2004, p489) summarises efficiently: “Some media have, at certain times and under certain circumstances, an effect on some recipients.”

We need not look too far down the lanes of Kashmir history to see indications of this. The immediate political events of the 1980s leading to the armed mass movement saw the national media (see chapter 1 for an overview), particularly the government-controlled Doordarshan and All India Radio, playing a significant role – indeed, a section of Kashmir watchers even hold the media culpable of precipitating the crisis, by allowing the Congress government, then in power at the centre, help subvert the regional government in J&K (Akbar 1985, p283). Writes journalist Tavleen Singh (1995), who covered Kashmir in the 1980s, in *Kashmir: A Tragedy of Errors*: “The Congress had an important ally in the national press, and in retrospect I would go so far as to say that the press was the main reason why the alienation of Kashmir began.” While that may be too simplistic an explanation, there are many who believe the media in India and Pakistan, by errors of omission and commission, influenced the Kashmir situation. Mohammad Sayeed Malik, a journalist who has held senior editorial positions in the national media, touches upon this when he says: “The media should have been there to inform the public of *why* it happened – not just what is happening. Even what is happening, it was not reported truthfully.” (Personal interview, July 2007)

Pertinent here also is the *belief* among the antagonists that the media are influential. Both the Kashmiri separatists and policymakers, it appeared, were extremely mindful of the media, at times suiting their actions to feature in the news. This belief in a strong media effect also meant that policymakers, as many acknowledged in personal interviews, deliberately tried to influence the media to promote their political and conflict agenda. Many politicians and bureaucrats saw the media as an important factor affecting their policies; it was a dominant determinant of public opinion on Kashmir and could be ignored ‘only at one’s own peril’. Former Indian prime minister Inder Kumar Gujral seemed to summarise the argument when he spoke of the significance of the

media in the Indian political sphere and the need for public support for the government's Kashmir policy:

No person in politics can be indifferent to the media. You have 20 channels blaring all the time. How can you possibly divorce yourself from it? That doesn't mean one always follows what the media says, but one remains sensitive to it ... On an issue like Kashmir, it is a focal point. It shapes not only our politics, but also our basic thinking and ideas of secularism. That is where it is extremely important in a democratic society, where one has duties. Ultimately, as a policymaker what do I cater for? I cater for what I perceive to be the national interest. And what is the national interest? It is what the public opinion is. (Personal interview, July 2007)

Dr Karan Singh, the titular maharajah of Jammu & Kashmir who is now a mainstream Indian politician with the ruling Congress party, made a similar point, stressing Indian politicians, in the absence of opinion surveys, use news content as an indicator to gauge the public mood:

Media creates public opinion. And public opinion has a role to play in a democracy. The equation is very simple. If the media takes a certain line consistently and effectively, that has an effect on public opinion ... Obviously every politician gets up and reads the newspapers. We don't have polls in this country like you have in America, where everybody is obsessed with polls – so we have to make do with what the papers say, what the channels say. (Personal interview, July 2007)

Girish Chandra Saxena, who served as the executive head⁵ of Jammu & Kashmir, emphasised the significance of media a different way. Here he speaks of his tenure from 1990 to

1993, a critical period when the armed separatist movement peaked and the state was under emergency rule:

Soon after you start handling a situation like the one which I confronted in 1990, the realisation dawns how important are the people. Their mood, the public mood, how are they thinking. There was misinformation, a lot of misinformation afloat. And it was very necessary to correct it ... My major concern then was the people in valley and affected areas. It was very important that they did not continue to be misled by wrong information and rumours. And the media was a good channel to reach out to them. So it was a very vital component of our total security effort. Therefore I hardly refused an interview to any media person – Indian or foreign. (Personal interview, July 2007)

The perception that the media representation of the conflict is crucial is also evident in the way the normally reclusive intelligence community made it a point⁶ to brief journalists on Kashmir, both in New Delhi and Srinagar. An intelligence officer put it this way in a personal interview: “On Kashmir, you are our force-multipliers.”

A national media correspondent, who has reported on Kashmir from Srinagar and the national capital of New Delhi, spoke of this in more detail:

Intelligence officials release information from time to time for three reasons: one, in anticipation of a government policy to see how it would fare; two, to put pressure on the government or sections of political leadership; and, three, to build up a security scenario – infiltration has increased, or whatever – to ease the passage of a particular policy. (Personal interview, July 2007)

This belief of the actors involved that the media are important, it can be argued, places journalists in a position of power, conceding to them an influence over the conflict they might not have had otherwise. Policymakers were ever conscious of the media, seeking to influence it in an effort to win over the public. V P Singh, who was prime minister of India when separatist sentiments in Kashmir snowballed into a crisis situation in 1989, spoke about this in a personal interview (March 2005): “Without public opinion you cannot do anything. The other parties will take advantage ... But public opinion can be changed. We know that.” Against this backdrop, and the general perception voiced by many of the political elite that the media shape public sentiments, it is only logical to believe⁷ that the state machinery at times ‘packaged’ events (Molotch & Lester 1997) to suit news demands, or put out what Boorstin (1992) calls ‘pseudo-events’. At the ground level, as I can attest from personal experience, reportorial presence in Kashmir has influenced events directly, prompting antagonists to ‘act up’. Security personnel on occasions have ‘acted down’ as well, moderating their immediate responses in the face of a camera crew. In the larger scheme of things, it is doubtful if such ground-level ‘acts’ – or the media reportage thereof – on their own have had any perceivable impact on conflict policies. But these can be seen as indicators of a larger media influence, which, coupled with the perception of media importance at the policy level noted earlier, places journalists in a position to sway Kashmir policies.

Objectives

As we can gather from the comments cited in the above section, antagonists attach a great deal of importance to what appears in news, essentially in the belief that this has a strong bearing on how the public views the conflict and their conduct of it, and that the views created thus can support or threaten the policies they have adopted. The question then is: what kind of media

content is ‘out there’? How have the media of India and Pakistan, the two rivals for the border state of J&K, covered the armed separatist violence?

While there is a plethora of discursive journalistic and academic writings about the partisanship of Indian and Pakistani media and incidents of questionable journalism, there has not been much empirical work in this area. A comprehensive analysis of media content would be useful hence. It would produce not only evidence to support or contradict the many impressionistic arguments about the media’s coverage of the Kashmir conflict, but provide an empirical foundation to theorise on its place in conflict politics and related spheres. Such an analysis would indicate the extent to which the actors in the conflict have been successful in their scramble for coverage – in essence it would provide insights into the media’s relations with different antagonists. It could also provide a rough indication of the one factor that is believed to affect all similar conflicts (Carruthers 2000, Wolfsfeld 2004, Bar-Tal 1998): ethnocentrism.

It is in this context that this study is presented. Strategically, the aim is to profile how the Indian and Pakistani media covered the conflict, to arrive at an indicative overview of what appeared as news of Kashmir to the two publics over the years. As the print media are among the significant forces in both countries, news content that appeared in the press is focussed on. By analysing selected content in leading newspapers, it strives to throw empirical light on major trends, and also to provide a comparative measure of the extent to which the antagonists were successful in attracting media attention. Further, since how warring factions perceive each other is quite crucial to the way they would approach opportunities for peace (Wolfsfeld 2004, Bar-Tal 1998, 2000, 2004), it was important to understand how the media portrayed the other side to societal members. These objectives were framed in the form of two broad research questions:

RQ1: *What is the nature of the news coverage accorded to the Kashmir conflict by Indian and Pakistani newspapers?*

RQ2: *How has the other side been represented in Indian and Pakistani newspapers?*

Besides the academic objective of adding to the pool of knowledge about conflict journalism in general and Kashmir conflict in particular, I wish to acknowledge another ‘professional’ motive. I also hope to present before my colleagues in the Indian and Pakistani media a measure of the productive and counter-productive coverage they have produced over the years. In the heat and dust of violence overtaking violence, in the constant race against deadlines, most journalists fail to consider the consequences of what – and how – they report on the many aspects of the conflict. I know I did. Hopefully, this inquiry will encourage reporters and gatekeepers to think about their responsibilities more.

Research strategy

The research method employed for this inquiry is a content analysis. This was a logical choice since the focus was media content, and measuring the major trends within. While the objective of quantification overruled purely qualitative discourse analyses, a pilot study found that a ‘classic’ content analysis aimed at coding frequencies of select keywords or phrases would not be able to capture the nuances of the news constructions presented by the media. A contextual text analysis was needed. In response, a sophisticated coding scheme was developed (indeed, part of the original contribution of this study is this methodological advancement for analysing conflict coverage). It provided for a qualitative, contextual reading of news content, which could then be quantified – or, as Miles & Huberman (1994, p42) put it, a scheme that could ‘quantize’ data. A fuller rationale and detailed description of the coding scheme is provided in chapter 4.

It would, however, be incorrect to say the study is solely based on the content analysis. In the five years that took for this inquiry, I also carried out 30 personal interviews, all with people directly involved in the conflict on the Indian side – politicians, bureaucrats, separatists, security personnel, intelligence officials, and, of course, journalists. The interviews need to be seen as an attempt to add to the literature review, as an effort to produce a clearer and more directly relevant background for the study. Thus, while they are not meant to be part of the final methodology and not presented as such, I wish to acknowledge they gave me a better idea of the context and informed my objectives and analysis (see Appendix 1 for details of the interviews). They also provided me a qualitative component for making sense of the patterns the content analysis highlighted, not to mention an avenue for limited triangulation.

The ‘I’ factor: research biases

It is helpful to state at the outset my own beliefs and political views about the conflict and conflict journalism in order to provide the readers a fuller context in which this study was carried out. This would, I hope, allow them to read this thesis in perspective, aware of my research stance, equipped to look for any faults rooted in my prejudices.

As mentioned earlier, the main impetus for this inquiry was my journalistic experiences in Kashmir. My lengthy interactions with the people on ground had underlined in bold the brutal physical and psychological pressures they all survived under, be it the security personnel, separatists, or civilians. The deplorability of the situation was evident to me. Unfortunately, it was not so to people in other parts of India. For many the conflict was detached violence, a continuing narrative of depersonalised statistics⁸ – but still a matter of national pride whenever it cropped up in the news, as it very often did. It was difficult to convince them of the human face of it. The pall of gloom that shrouded almost every aspect of life in the Kashmir valley, the tragedy of daily

deaths, and the terrible uncertainty of the whole situation was not immediately comprehensible to people who had never looked down the barrel of a Kalashnikov. I found a similar depersonalisation among many policymakers as well, who, informed mainly by way of security briefings and memos passed up the bureaucracy, tended to look at Kashmir strategically. Thus, I entered this research empathising deeply with the day-to-day actors in the conflict and convinced of the need for a speedy reconciliation. I was also convinced that the media had a role to play in this. I believed journalists had an obligation to encourage peace – or at the very least, to ensure they did not encourage war.

A second bias I need to acknowledge is political. I see the conflict as a creation of myopic Indian policies ably supported by equally myopic Pakistani policies (see section 1.5 in chapter 1 for an expansion of this thought). I also believed that the Indian government's crude handling of the ground situation, particularly in the early 1990s, contributed much to the continuance of the conflict. Even as I sympathise with the plight of the ordinary security personnel deployed among a hostile population in Kashmir, I believe like many journalists and Kashmir-watchers that the security regime the civilian population faced alienated them as nothing before.

I should also say that I began my empirical work with the bias that the Indian and Pakistani media were playing an ill-informed and counterproductive role in the conflict. My own readings of news content and my professional interactions had given me the impression that much of the coverage was not only superficial but coloured by heavy partisan sentiments. There also appeared to be an absence of introspection about the news the media routinely presented, a lack of discussion on journalism ethics in a situation like Kashmir. Indeed there appeared to be a worrying nonchalance about the way reporters went about covering the conflict. Even Indian establishment figures who were on the whole appreciative about the coverage on Kashmir pointed

to this. Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, chief minister of Jammu & Kashmir from 2002 to 2006, and Indian home minister in 1989 when armed militancy began⁹ in the valley, put it thus in a personal interview (July 2007): “For the media, it is like any other conflict. It is a big country, India, and they [*the media*] are not focussed. It gets covered when something extraordinary happens. No paper has been persistent and pursued it.” Such an ad hoc approach, I felt, was unlikely to help in reconciliation of any sort.

Organisation of the thesis

This thesis is divided into five chapters and a conclusion.

Chapter 1, *Birth of a conflict*, is an overview of the Kashmir situation. It presents a historical perspective, tracing the genesis of the conflict from 1846, the year J&K came into being. It offers readers unfamiliar with the Kashmir issue a clear idea of its history, and presents the social, economic, and political factors behind the chain of events that snowballed into armed separatism in 1989. The need for such an exploration was felt because most studies focus on the Kashmiris’ more prominent, post-1947 issues, ignoring the historical depth of their grievances. Further, personal interactions with some of the actors involved in the conflict brought to light an insufficient knowledge about the situation. This is a modest attempt to present a succinct analysis – admittedly coloured by my own subjectivities – that could form the foundation for understanding Kashmir better and perhaps encourage a more empathetic approach to the conflict by all concerned. More importantly, the aim is to provide a clear context for the news content analysed in the empirical part of the study.

Chapter 2, *Media at war*, is a review of the literature relevant to this study. It examines conflict journalism and the constraints of reporting violence, focussing on the objectivity-

subjectivity duality and the social and cultural factors that influence news production. It engages with the impact of protracted conflicts on civil societies and with media effects research, looks at the major models for understanding the media-conflict relation, and attempts to link some of these theoretical concepts to the Kashmir situation.

Chapter 3, *Kashmir mediatised*, draws on academic literature, personal interviews, a preliminary analysis of news content, and a decade of personal association with Indian mainstream journalism to look at the media environment in India and Pakistan, with special focus on the press. The objective is to profile the media context in which this study is situated. It offers an overview of the media in India and Pakistan, and provides an impressionistic view of the coverage of Kashmir in the two countries, thus informing the methodological formulations attempted in the next chapter.

Chapter 4, *Analysing Kashmir coverage*, is devoted to methodology. Informed by the theoretical framework outlined in chapter 2 and the news patterns discussed in chapter 3, it first poses the questions this research will aim to answer, and puts forth an original coding scheme that draws on both qualitative and quantitative techniques as a suitable method. By presenting the process through which the scheme was arrived at, including the issues found in the exploratory text analyses attempted in the early stages of this research, it justifies the requirement for this development. The conceptual framework for coding classifications is discussed, and the scheme is presented in full with examples, details of validity tests, and limitations. Further, the chapter puts forth the English press in India and Pakistan as the best sources for this analysis, and sets out its parameters, including the sample for coding.

Chapters 5, *Kashmir in war and peace* presents the findings of the empirical study. Several patterns that support the print media's interest in war and violence at the cost of peace news are

presented. Visible also is evidence of the official state machinery's remarkable influence in propagating government stances in the press. The chapter tries to explain such patterns in light of the theoretical concepts in chapter 2.

The concluding chapter summarises the major findings, relating them to the research questions. The broad argument presented is that the Indian and Pakistani media, by presenting overriding anti-peace coverage and negative portrayal of the other sides, most likely played a destructive role in the Kashmir conflict. The implications of the empirical evidence are discussed, specifically in the Kashmir context and also in the general context of conflict journalism.

A historical perspective

1| Birth of a conflict

MOSTLY NESTLED IN the Himalayan ranges, Jammu & Kashmir is the northernmost state in India. On its north-east lies the Republic of China, across a 2,520-mile border that has come to be known as the Line of Actual Control. The states of Himachal Pradesh and Punjab fall to its south. It shares a 460-mile border with Pakistan to the west and north-west known as the Line of Control, and another smaller stretch of International Border on the south-west. For administrative purposes the state is divided into Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh regions, each comprising several districts. The Kashmir region accounts for 54% of J&K's total population of 10,143,700, while Jammu has 44%, and Ladakh 2%, according to the 2001 India Census.

J&K is only a part of the original pre-Independence state. The first India-Pakistan war had by January 1949 split the kingly state into J&K¹⁰, which is now administered by India, and the smaller 'Azad' Jammu & Kashmir¹¹ (plus the hilly Northern Areas) with a population of perhaps three million, which is now administered by Pakistan (Bose 2003). The *de facto* Line of Control¹² divides the two¹³ territories. Both India and Pakistan, since the days of the Partition, have fought over J&K, essentially the Kashmir valley. This dispute – among the world's longest, alongside the Anglo-Irish, the Greek-Turkish-Cypriot, and the Israeli-Palestinian – has been rejuvenated by the armed separatist violence in J&K, or the 'Kashmir conflict' as it has come to be known.

Though organised violence against the Indian state began only in 1989, its genesis is traceable across some 140 years, over three historic time periods. The first stretches from 1846, when the geopolitical entity of J&K came into being, to 1947, when the Indian subcontinent was partitioned. This period marked the disenchantment of the people of Kashmir valley with the rule

of a monarch from the plains of Jammu. The second dates from 1947 to 1982 and records the events that kept alive the disenchantment with what most Kashmiris saw as a continuing rule from afar – the rule of Jammu had been replaced by the rule of Delhi, they felt, after J&K became part of the Indian union in 1948. The third chronicles the events from 1982 to 1989, the immediate political upsets that increased the Kashmiris' alienation and snowballed into an armed separatist movement.

This chapter presents an overview of the three periods. The aim is to provide a historical backdrop to the Kashmir conflict, setting out the social, economic and political factors that contributed to it, and thus offer a clear context to the media coverage examined in the empirical part of this study.

1.1 | The rule of Jammu

In 1846 the plains of Jammu, bordering Kashmir valley, were ruled by Gulab Singh Dogra (Akbar 1985), a vassal of the Sikh ruler Maharajah Dulip Singh. On February 10, the British colonial power in the Indian subcontinent went to war with Dulip Singh. As his vassal, Gulab Singh should have rushed to the Sikh king's aid. He did not. He chose to watch from the sidelines, offering to help his Sikh master but never getting around to it, even as he kept in regular touch with the British. The result was the British forced the Sikhs into the Treaty of Peace — a feat that would not have been possible but for Gulab Singh's timely non-intervention, which action the British felt merited reward. The Treaty of Peace, according to Schofield (2003, p6), “was designed to reward Gulab Singh”. It made Dulip Singh surrender the provinces of Kashmir and Hazara to the British, and recognise Gulab Singh's sovereignty. On March 16, 1846, the British formally offered Gulab Singh his reward: the Kashmir province for a notional Rs 7.5

million¹⁴, and the accompanying title of ‘maharajah’¹⁵. And thus came into being the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir.

Besides Gulab Singh’s native Jammu and the freshly-bought Kashmir valley centred around Srinagar, the new kingdom included Ladakh and Baltistan, earlier conquered on behalf of the Sikhs. It was “a sprawling, polyglot of diverse regions and peoples” (Bose 2003, p15-16), or as Dr Karan Singh, the current titular king of J&K put it in a personal interview (July 2007), “an artificial construct, of units that were different geographically, administratively, ethnically and linguistically”. All through the Dogra regime¹⁶ up till now, the Muslims of Kashmir valley accounted for the majority of population. Then came the Hindus (including the Dogras), and a small population of Sikhs and Buddhists.

The lot of the Kashmiris, which Moorcroft¹⁷ (1841, p293) records as “little better than cattle” under the Sikh rule, did not improve under Gulab Singh. They were a majority population under a Hindu king, made so by virtue of an autocratic exchange. The Dogra kings’ consistent policy of neglect – governance was something they left strictly alone, and the country remained “in the hands of officials neither motivated nor intellectually equipped to undertake any reforms” (Schofield 2003, p9) – only made their situation worse (Sikand 2002, p711-712).

By the time Maharaja Hari Singh, the last of the Dogra kings, came to power, the Kashmiri Muslims were living in virtual enslavement. The gulf between “the privileged Hindu elite centred on the ruling family and their large majority of Muslim subjects was particularly vast” (Bose 2003, p16). The Muslims, barefoot, in rags, were serfs for absentee Hindu landlords, who, though of Kashmiri origin, were identified with the Dogra rule, and staggeringly¹⁸ indebted to them (Bose 2003, Sikand 2002). The disenchantment among the Muslims peaked when the Kashmiri Pandits, the Hindu upper castes of the valley, too, began to improve their lot (Schofield 2003).

Hari Singh was oblivious to such sentiments. “Weak, consumed by self-interest, he symbolised everything that was not acceptable with feudalism,” writes Akbar (1985, p221). “[T]he people sank into utter despair and the anti-Muslim prejudice of the administration acquired its harshest tones.”

Kashmir, thus, was ready for an uprising by the early 1930s. Ironically, the first slogan, ‘Kashmir for Kashmiris’, was raised not by the Muslims, but by educated Hindu Pandits. And they stayed in the forefront with Muslim leaders firmly underlining the agitation for what it was: not a communal upheaval, but a movement against an autocratic rule.

In the next decade, the anti-Hari Singh movement acquired strength. Leading it was Sheikh Abdullah, a schoolteacher-turned-politician. By 1947, when the idea of independent India and Pakistan was as assured as the British withdrawal from the subcontinent, he was the most popular figure in Kashmir politics.

Hari Singh, for his part, was a “helpless figure caught up in a changing world” (Schofield 2003, p25). The Partition Plan of June 3, 1947 visualised carving out Pakistan by grouping geographically contiguous Muslim majority areas. The princely states could accede either to the ‘new’ India or Pakistan; the British left that to the respective rulers. While it was a simple choice for the other 565 rulers who were part of the British Empire in the Indian subcontinent, it was not so for Hari Singh (Singh 1989). He was caught in the “unenviable position of a Hindu ruler in a Muslim majority state” (Tan & Kudaisya 2000, p224). Since J&K shared borders with both India and Pakistan, he could accede to either. But joining Pakistan would leave the Hindus and Buddhists in Jammu and Ladakh a minority in a Muslim state; joining India would go against the numerical majority clause that governed the Partition. Moreover, he still “entertained thoughts of

making his kingdom an independent country in its own right” (Tan & Kudaisya 2000, p224) and an accession meant sacrificing his sovereignty.

The British transferred power to India and Pakistan on August 15, 1947. The exercise was far from efficient or thought-through¹⁹ and marred by much confusion (Pandey 2001; see also Khan 2007). The next few weeks saw Hari Singh’s last-bid attempt to remain independent, sandwiched between two chaotic, newborn nations vigorously seeking his accession. Both India and Pakistan coveted J&K. For India, the Muslim-majority state would underline its secular credentials (Mattoo 2003). It would be its “centrepiece of democratic diversity”, the rose in its bouquet (Bose 2003, p44). And for Pakistan, the state was rightfully its: for one, J&K’s territorial contiguity was more pronounced to Pakistan than India, and two, 77% of its population were Muslim (Bose 2003).

On October 21, 1947, an army of tribesmen, who received arms, ammunition, and logistical support from some officers of Pakistan’s regular army, began an incursion into Hari Singh’s territory. The aim was to ‘liberate’ the Muslims of Kashmir from Hindu ‘enslavement’ (Schofield 2003). But it had the hallmarks of a regular military operation (Bose 2003), beyond the scope of untrained civilians. The irregulars defeated Hari Singh’s army, and swiftly approached Srinagar, the summer capital of J&K (Collins & Lapierre 1975).

Hari Singh, who was still delaying a decision on accession, sent an urgent message to New Delhi²⁰. He wanted military aid against the invaders (Tan & Kudaiysa 2000). India was happy to oblige. But only if he signed the Instrument of Accession. The maharajah agreed.²¹

By the time troops from Delhi landed in Kashmir, the irregulars were on Srinagar outskirts. The Indian forces initially held a defensive operation to prevent the fall of the capital, but later

pushed back the intruders to Uri, an area that is today part of the *de facto* border in the Kashmir valley. Both sides agreed to a truce by the end of 1948, partly in response to a ceasefire resolution adopted by the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan²², but mainly because they were tired out and realised they could achieve no significant territorial gains against each other (Bose 2003).

A ceasefire came into being on January 1, 1949, which left the Indians approximately 63% of the J&K territory (139,000 of 223,000 square kilometres), including the Kashmir valley and most of Jammu and Ladakh region. Pakistan, for its part, “were left with a long strip of land running on a north-south axis in western J&K, mostly Jammu districts bordering Pakistani Punjab and the North West Frontier Province, a slice of Ladakh (Skardu), and the remote mountains of Gilgit and Baltistan” (Bose 2003, p41).

The UN resolution also called for a plebiscite to determine the will of the people of J&K, whether they favoured accession to India or Pakistan. Hari Singh’s decision to accede to India – the second time Kashmiris felt they were being ‘sold’ to a third party – did not go down well with the majority population, particularly in the decades to come. It was at this juncture that Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of India, pledged “not only to the people of Kashmir but to the world” to “hold a referendum under international auspices such as the United Nations” (Bose 2003, p38). A referendum is yet to take place, and the ‘broken’ promise, which has been cited down the decades, forms the basis of the Kashmiris’ demand for self-determination and underpins their disenchantment with India.

1.2 | The Sheikh Abdullah era

The months following the incursion saw Sheikh Abdullah emerging as a formidable political power. He was the man of the masses, the ‘Lion of Kashmir’. Wholeheartedly supported by his friend Nehru, he swiftly became the prime minister²³ of J&K. Within a year, Hari Singh was forced to abdicate, leaving his 18-year-old son Karan Singh as the regent, and Sheikh Abdullah the real power.

For the next 32 years, Sheikh Abdullah dominated Kashmir politics. His own politics oscillated, from accession to secession. Initially he was in the Indian camp. But soon, though he continued advocating integration with India, he kept in mind the ‘third option’ — independence (Schofield 2003). The Instrument of Accession Hari Singh signed gave New Delhi jurisdiction only over three areas — foreign affairs, defence, and communications. This meant a full integration was not possible without a new agreement — and Sheikh Abdullah was, according to Schofield (2003), adamant New Delhi did not extend its jurisdiction.

With Sheikh Abdullah in power, Nehru had hoped for a swift merger of J&K. In July 1952, Sheikh Abdullah and Nehru signed the Delhi Agreement, which accorded Kashmir the status of a country within a country²⁴. A month later Nehru made a historical statement in the Indian Parliament, which Kashmiris quote today to defend their right to self-determination. He wanted “no forced unions”, Nehru said, and if the people of J&K wanted “to part company with us, they can go their way and we shall go our way” (Bose 2003, p38).

Despite the ‘special status’, Sheikh Abdullah was disenchanted with India. He felt Indian officers discriminated against Kashmiri Muslims. He also felt Pakistan might prove viable, at least in terms of employment, and said as such in a speech in Jammu (Schofield 2003). This new

stance festered suspicions about Sheikh Abdullah's commitment in Delhi, and on August 8, 1953, he was charged with conspiracy and imprisoned. Sheikh Abdullah spent the next decade²⁵ in prison, watching Delhi-supported politicians in power in the state.

In 1964, after the Indian media had persistently questioned Sheikh Abdullah's continued detention, he was released. Nehru died soon after and was succeeded by Lal Bahadur Shastri. By then India had distanced itself from its commitment to plebiscite, offering two reasons. One, Pakistani forces had not withdrawn from the part of J&K it had taken over. Two, the 1951 elections, which Sheikh Abdullah had won unopposed, was a referendum in itself and affirmed the state's status as part of India (Schofield 2003). Further, it began initiating measures — presidential and other²⁶ — to extend its hold over J&K in 1965.

A severely re-disenchanted Sheikh Abdullah spoke out against this and was quickly re-imprisoned. He remained in jail while Pakistan, under its first military ruler Ayub Khan, tried an incursion to 'liberate' J&K from 'Hindu' domination (Amin 2000, Ganguly 2001) similar to the tribal intrusion of 1948. The Indian response was swift, opening up different fronts, leading to the second India-Pakistan war of 1965 (Ganguly 2001). A UN intervention saw the two sides signing the Tashkent Agreement and withdrawing their armies to their former positions in January 1966.

Two years later, Sheikh Abdullah was released from prison after Nehru's daughter, Indira Gandhi, became the Indian prime minister at the head of the Indian National Congress party. The next few years saw Sheikh Abdullah encouraging Kashmiri leaders to enter into dialogue with India, even as he stressed the right of self-determination for Kashmiris. Then came India's third war with Pakistan, a direct result of a secessionist uprising in East Pakistan, which was put down militarily. The Pakistani army operation pushed an estimated 10 million refugees across the border into India (Ganguly 2001). At this point, the India-Pakistan relation, deteriorating since the

earlier ceasefire, was at a low. “An eager India,” writes Akbar (1991, p173), “interfered” with the military move, for “humanitarian” reasons, thus doing precisely what it accuses Pakistan of in J&K today: support secession. The difference was, India managed to achieve its military objective decisively, humiliating²⁷ the Pakistani army into a surrender on December 16, 1971 in Dhaka, and ‘liberating’ East Pakistan into an independent nation, Bangladesh. The Simla Accord signed between the two countries saw both agreeing to return prisoners of war, restore diplomatic relations, and name the 1948-established and 1971-confirmed Ceasefire Line in Kashmir the ‘Line of Control’.

The events opened Indira Gandhi’s eye to the possibility that Sheikh Abdullah could head a secessionist movement against her. Her response was to prohibit him from entering the state and ban his²⁸ Plebiscite Front, which by then had emerged a major political force. He was allowed to return only on June 5, 1972 (Akbar 1985).

The Sheikh Abdullah who returned had come to the conclusion that an independent Kashmir was not a possibility. He felt Pakistan had “lost its moorings” and a “solution lay in a bilateral deal with Delhi” (Akbar 1985, p270). He stopped talking about plebiscite, instead stressing greater autonomy for Kashmir within the Indian Union (Schofield 2003). In what Akbar (1991) calls her finest hour, Indira Gandhi capitalised on Sheikh Abdullah’s changed politics. She offered him power. Under the Kashmir Accord, the state retained its special status, but was termed ‘a constituent of the Union of India’ and the Indian government had the power to make laws to prevent, among others, questioning of its sovereignty and territorial integrity or any secessionist ambitions. Sheikh Abdullah had demanded a pre-1953 status, complete with the titles of prime minister and a regent, but in the end he agreed to the accord. And with that, from the Indian point of view, the movement of self-determination was put to rest: here was a popular leader confirming the accession made by an autocratic ruler.

On February 25, 1975, thus, Abdullah came to power a second time. His alliance with the Congress was criticised within and without Kashmir. Pakistan was unhappy. A section of Kashmiris believed Sheikh Abdullah had surrendered to Indira Gandhi the Kashmiris right to self-determination (Schofield 2003).

In retrospect, many see Sheikh Abdullah's now-for-accession-now-for-secession politics as an underlying cause for the Kashmir conflict. His popularity among the masses – he was arguably the most prominent political leader of J&K – made it difficult for them to be unaffected by the many detentions he faced at the hands of successive governments in New Delhi. Coupled with the broken promise of plebiscite, this fuelled their estrangement, cementing in their minds an extremely pessimistic view about India. Still Sheikh Abdullah's political personality calmed the unrest in the state. Though not popular in Jammu and Ladakh regions, and there was dissatisfaction under the surface even in Kashmir, he remained in control till his death.

1.3 | The decade of 'dirty' politics

Dr Farooq Abdullah was Sheikh Abdullah's eldest son. He had spent most of his adult life in England practising medicine, marrying a British nurse and settling down in Southend-On-Sea in Essex. He returned to Kashmir in 1976, at 38, because his father was unwell and needed his help — as he put it in an *Asiaweek* interview (Sarin, screen 4), to become a “bridge between him [Sheikh Abdullah] and the people”.

On August 21, 1981, in a public ceremony in Srinagar that would have done the royalty proud, Sheikh Abdullah anointed him the president of National Conference (Akbar 1985, p276): “This crown that I am placing on your head is made of thorns. You are young, Farooq Abdullah,

young enough to face the challenges of life, and I pray that God gives you the courage to fulfil your responsibility to these people whom I have nurtured with such pride, and to whom I have given the best years of my life.” Dr Abdullah responded: “I will give my life before I play with the honour of this community.” On September 8, 1982, Sheikh Abdullah succumbed to a heart attack, and Dr Abdullah took oath as chief minister.

Dr Abdullah faced his first electoral challenge in June 1983. The Congress leaders of Kashmir had not had a taste of power for long and if Dr Abdullah was allowed to establish himself, they faced the prospect of another five years in political wilderness. But they had no hope of an outright victory. So Indira Gandhi, who was still the prime minister of India, approached Dr Abdullah with an alliance offer. But Dr Abdullah did not agree to the kind of power-sharing she wanted (Akbar 1985).

Indira Gandhi set her mind on winning on her own. She descended on Kashmir with “all the pomp and paraphernalia that accompanies prime ministers on such visits” (Singh 1995, p34). The electioneering that followed, writes her biographer Inder Malhotra (cited in Schofield 2003, p130), was vicious.

But Dr Abdullah won a landslide victory. The Congress, which, “with the help of its control and influence over the media”, had given the impression it would win, now began to say Dr Abdullah’s National Conference party had rigged the election (Akbar 1985, p283; Singh 1995, p38). Dr Abdullah, for his part, said he was not finished with Indira Gandhi. Akbar (1985, p283) quotes him: “I will fight them in the streets and all corners of the country.” And he set about it openly, meeting anti-Congress leaders, preparing to launch an anti-Congress national alliance. This was “anathema” to Indira Gandhi, who, at the best of times, was insecure and “now felt gravely threatened (Bhattacharjea 1994, p245)”.

Indira Gandhi's response, multiple sources write (see Akbar 1985, Schofield 2003, Singh 1995, among others), was to 'subvert' Dr Abdullah's government. First came the propaganda in the national media that Dr Abdullah had lost hold of his administration, was 'soft' towards Pakistan, and, worse, he supported the Sikh extremism raging in the neighbouring state of Punjab. Next, Indira Gandhi replaced J&K governor B K Nehru with an ally, Jagmohan. Then the Congress engineered a 'defection' (Akbar 1983, Schofield 2003, Singh 1995) — some, including Jagmohan (1991), see it as a 'split' — in the National Conference.

The new governor was told Dr Abdullah no longer had the majority to rule on July 2, 1984. In a move that was as swift and well-planned²⁹ as it was unconstitutional and illegal (Akbar 1985, p285-287) Jagmohan³⁰ "carried out his role as Indira Gandhi's 'hatchet-man'" (Schofield 2003, p133): Dr Abdullah was ousted and G M Shah was sworn in as chief minister. The dismissal set off a wave of protest. Kashmiris began to believe wholeheartedly what they had long felt: they had no real 'special status' and no government could survive in Srinagar without Delhi's support (Schofield 2003).

Shah did not last long. On March 7, 1986, in the wake of severe communal riots which he could not control, Shah was dismissed. The state was placed under governor's rule. By then Gandhi had been assassinated and her son Rajiv Gandhi was prime minister. He offered Dr Abdullah the same deal he had spurned five years earlier: a National Conference-Congress alliance. This time, Dr Abdullah agreed. Thus, in November 1986, Dr Abdullah returned as chief minister, heading an interim government, pending election.

Overnight the Kashmiris turned against Dr Abdullah. If the political coup of 1984 had made him their hero, his 'backdoor entry' made him the villain: till then he was Kashmiri; but after the alliance, he became an 'Indian' (Sreedharan 1999).

The election in March 1987 was remarkable by any standards. To take on the new alliance, an amalgam of political parties came together as the Muslim United Front. Though his alliance would have won easily, Dr Abdullah was unduly worried. His response — and here Akbar (1991), Bose (2003), Schofield (2003) and Singh (1995) are in agreement³¹ — was blatant poll rigging. Dr Abdullah got the thumping 'win' he wanted. But in the bargain, he lost the Kashmiris. The election disillusioned the people further, and many turned to Pakistan (Sreedharan 1999). An MUF candidate, the Jamaat-e-Islami's Maulvi Mohammad Yusuf Shah, who was beaten up and jailed (Bose 2003), crossed over to Pakistan-administered Kashmir. So did his polling agent, Muhammad Yasin Malik. Both were to become insurgents soon.

Yusuf Shah — today he is Syed Salahuddin, the self-styled supreme commander of Hizbul Mujahideen, the largest militant organisation in Kashmir — and Malik were not the only ones. As the bitterness of the election sunk in, youths began to cross over to Pakistan, seeking arms and guerrilla training to fight Indian 'occupation' (Singh 1995). In May 1998, Dr Abdullah's motorcade was attacked. Throughout the year and into the next, there were continuing disturbances, including sniper and bomb attacks, political killings, and anti-India demonstrations (Sreedharan 2001). By mid-1989 a number of militant organisations had begun to operate across the valley (Schofield 2003).

In December 1989, Rajiv Gandhi lost the national election. Vishwanath Pratap Singh, the new prime minister, appointed Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, a Kashmiri politician, as Indian home minister. Six days after the swearing-in, on December 8, Sayeed's younger daughter, Rubaiyya,

was kidnapped. Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front — under Yasin Malik, the polling agent jailed in 1988 — claimed responsibility. As ransom, the insurgents demanded the release of five jailed colleagues. On December 13, the Singh government freed the militants. Two hours later Rubaiyya was released (Sreedharan 1999).

The release of the pro-independence insurgents saw great euphoria in Kashmir. Dr Abdullah's administration was near non-existent by now; it failed to control demonstrators, there was chaos and disorder (Schofield 2003). There was also an overwhelming feeling India had been brought to its knees. People felt freedom was around the corner, that violence was the way forward (Sreedharan 1999).

1.4 | Two decades of conflict

The Kashmir conflict has continued into the new millennium, spreading itself across two decades now. The first decade saw the rise of separatism and its fall into atrophy, the second its transformation into a radical Islamist movement and also sustained state-to-state efforts to find a solution.

1.4.1 | *The first decade*

The success of the Rubaiyya Sayeed kidnapping had a mercurial effect in the Kashmir valley. Insurgents of the pro-independence Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Force became instant heroes, and, together with other less organised secessionist groups, mounted a campaign of violence against the Indian state, including assassination of intelligence officials, alleged spies, and other collaborators (Bose 2003). All of a sudden, the “secessionist agenda that a small coterie

of underground organisations had been promoting” evoked widespread popular support (Ganguly 1997, p1).

By January 1990, Srinagar and other towns in Kashmir saw massive demonstrations calling for *azaadi* [freedom], which the Farooq Abdullah administration could not control. The federal government dismissed the incapacitated state government. J&K was placed under emergency rule, under the governorship of Jagmohan, the same administrator who had played a questionable role in the 1980s.

Jagmohan’s second coming witnessed a regime of state violence (see Bose 2003, 1997; Ganguly et al 2003). Under the impression that “a spell of repression is the only language the Kashmiris understand³²” and a “bit of *danda* [stick] would do the trick” (Singh 1995, p131), the government deployed hundreds of troops from the federal paramilitary outfits, the Central Reserve Police Force and the Border Security Force³³. In just three days of mass protests, as Bose (2003, p109) writes, “three hundred excited but unarmed demonstrators were shot dead” by these troopers. Kashmir began to see what was soon to become a norm for several years to come: prolonged curfews, cordon-and-search operations, and large-scale human rights violations in the form of torture, custodial killings, disappearances, and rape.

Jagmohan’s rule also witnessed the mass migration of almost the entire Kashmiri Hindu Pandits from the valley (Puri 1993). The fear psychosis created by the anti-India protests of a Muslim majority that saw Pakistan as an ally and the anarchic situation was compounded by a series of ‘Hindu’ assassinations. Though these were not necessarily communal – the killings are seen by many as political, of Indian collaborators and intelligence officials, many of who happened to be Hindus – “the murders of prominent Pandits in the state administration left the

Pandit community in a state of fear” (Evans 1999, p26). Some 200,000 Hindus fled the valley and are living as refugees in Jammu and elsewhere in India.

Though Jagmohan did not last long as governor, and was replaced by Girish Chandra Saxena, a former head of the Research & Analysis Wing³⁴, on May 26, soon after a particularly violent security excess which saw at least 50 people of a mourning procession being shot dead, the state repression that marked the initial period radicalised the Kashmiri population and pushed thousands of youths to cross over into Pakistan seeking arms and training against Indian occupation. The violence gathered pace (Evans 1999) and the years 1990-1993 was the “boom period of armed struggle in the Valley, a time of immense turmoil and suffering but also of great enthusiasm and optimism about the mass movement” (Bose 2003, p116). This phase was marked by two features. One, the insurgency was led by Kashmiri youths; and two, the violence was limited to the Kashmir region, with the other two regions that formed J&K, Jammu and Ladakh³⁵ unaffected.

By the mid-1990s, however, the situation changed. The insurgency lost many of its “pristine features” and became an “externally supported, religiously orientated extortion racket” (Ganguly et al 2003, p4). The rank of the insurgents now contained “politically shallow people, opportunists, even criminals”, and there was “public disenchantment with the climate of insecurity created by roaming groups of gunmen” (Bose 2003, p127-128). By 1993 the heavily deployed security forces were in control. The year also marked the ascendancy of the pro-Pakistan separatist organisation Hizbul Mujahideen. With many of its cadre and leaders killed or jailed (Badmus 2006), the JKLF was by now a spent force, and HM took over as the dominant group.

By 1996 the separatist movement had lost much of its drive. But the human rights situation continued to be grave. The Kashmiris still wanted *azadi*, but, in the words of a Kashmiri civilian who Bose (2003, p136) interviewed in 1996, “there is a loss of hope because the struggle, after so much violence, suffering and *qurbani* [sacrifice] has not led to our *huq* [rights]”. It was not that violence ceased in the valley, but these were now less visible, mostly confined to the rural areas of the valley and in the new theatres of war that had opened up in the remote areas Doda, Rajouri and Poonch in the Jammu region (Bose 2003).

The Indian government was quick to promote the relative quiet as a return of normalcy. Its strategy was to “supplement continuing repression with reinstatement” of a civilian government (Bose 2003, p137). Thus, in 1996 “electoral politics returned to the valley after a long absence” (Evans 1999, p5). In May the elections to the Indian Parliament took place. This was followed by the elections to the J&K state assembly in September. Both the elections were far from free and fair in the Kashmir valley, marred as they were by low voter turnout, by and large one-sided contests thanks to boycott calls from separatist political parties which had grouped as the All-Parties Hurriyat Conference, violence, coercion by security forces to vote in rural areas, and allegations of other electoral frauds. The state election, however, saw a civilian government in power, again under Dr Farooq Abdullah and the National Conference party.

1.4.2 | *The second decade*

The years from 1998-9 to 2008 chronicled a series of highs and lows in the India-Pakistan relations, which can all be linked to the Kashmir issue. The two nations came to the brink of an all-out war on one occasion, and on another fought out a limited war in the Himalayan heights of Kargil. Yet, this decade also saw a political will and “fresh thinking” (Mattoo 2003, p16) to find a solution, and a series of peace attempts.

The period started with what has come to be termed as South Asia's nuclear summer. Both India and Pakistan tested nuclear weapons. Despite this troubled beginning in February 1999, then Indian prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee made a historic visit to Lahore in Pakistan to meet his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharief and sign what came to be known as the Lahore Declaration. It recognised the “nuclear dimension of the security environment of the two countries adds to the responsibility for avoidance of conflict” and pledged a “composite and integrated dialogue process” to “intensify efforts to resolve all issues, including the issue of Jammu and Kashmir”³⁶.

The agreement, however, did nothing to stop a limited India-Pakistan Kargil war the very same year. It began with a series of incursions by Pakistan across the Line of Control into Indian territory, this time in the Kargil area, part of the Ladakh region of J&K. The effort, put into motion by then Pakistan chief of army staff Pervez Musharraf, who was to seize power from Nawaz Sharief in a bloodless coup shortly after, was to “revive the flagging insurgency and re-focus international attention on Kashmir” (Ganguly et al 2003, p4). Though India failed to detect the incursions early, its response was vigorous and due to “systematic Indian military pressure and American diplomatic intercession” the war came to an end by mid-July 1999 (Ganguly et al 2003, p4).

Even as these events were playing out, violence in Kashmir was undergoing a radical change. Kashmiri underground organisations were being sidelined by ‘guest’ militants from Pakistan and elsewhere, who supplemented the guerrilla tactics employed till now with *fidayeen* [suicide] attacks. Bose (2003, p141) presents a summary:

The first *fidayeen* raid occurred in July 1999, shortly after the end of the Kargil hostilities, when two guerrillas simply barged into a BSF [a federal paramilitary force] camp in Bandipore, a northern Valley town, firing indiscriminately from automatic rifles and lobbing grenades. The Indian army's cantonment area in Srinagar's Badami Bagh locality was penetrated with the same simple but deadly tactic later in 1999. Between mid-1999 and the end of 2002, at least 55 *fidayeen* attacks, usually executed by two-man teams, were targeted against police, paramilitary and army camps, and government installations ... mostly in the Kashmir Valley.

The *fidayeen* attacks were to spill over into other parts of India soon. In the meanwhile, though, the India-Pakistan relations that had deteriorated with the Kargil war saw a major thaw, with Vajpayee inviting Musharraf, who had by now seized power in Islamabad, for peace talks in May 2001. The much-publicised Agra summit took place on July 15 and 16, and though Vajpayee and Musharraf failed to sign a hoped-for joint agreement, the two sides strived to present the attempt as having witnessed, in Pakistan Foreign Minister Abdus Sattar's words, a "meeting of minds"³⁷.

The pessimism created by the 'failed' summit was worsened when the *fidayeen* campaign spread to Delhi. Though Musharraf joined the US-led global war against terror after the September 11 attacks, Pakistan's commitment to Kashmir continued. On December 13, 2001, the Pakistan-based terrorist group Lashkar-e-Toiyba carried out a five-man suicide attack on the Indian Parliament, which saw New Delhi preparing for a "do-or-die battle"³⁸ against terrorism, first cutting diplomatic ties with Islamabad, then moving its military assets to the borders with Pakistan, including the Line of Control in Kashmir. Pakistan reciprocated and the first half of the 2002, thus, saw a military stand-off between the two nations, which ended mid-June after persistent US intervention.

Despite continuing violence, including systematic targeting of politicians, 2002 saw India holding state elections in J&K in September-October 2002. The voter turnout was considerably higher than the 1996 attempt, and most observers considered the election largely free and fair (Ganguly et al 2003). A coalition government headed by Mufti Mohammad Sayeed – the same politician whose daughter Rubaiyya was kidnapped at the start of the insurgency – assumed office in 2002. Since then, the state government has been trying to address the grievances of the people, with some success. The human rights situation has improved, and the summer capital of Srinagar looks less like a city under siege than it ever has since insurgency began (Sreedharan 2007).

The mid-2000s also saw the governments in both countries striving to take forward the ‘beginning’ made in Agra, this time more cautiously, with better preparatory work, including Track II diplomacy and also bureaucratic engagements. In September 2004, Dr Manmohan Singh, who took over Vajpayee as the Indian prime minister, met Musharraf in New York. Next year in April Musharraf travelled to Delhi for talks. This time, the two leaders signed a joint agreement, ‘burying the ghost of Agra’ (as an Indian newspaper put it). In September 2006, the two leaders met again in Cuba.

The *fidayeen* campaign and terror attacks, however, has continued, no more limited to Kashmir. Since the attack on Parliament, there have been several bombings and suicide attacks elsewhere, which Indian officials believe were carried out by Pakistan-based outfits. These include the blasts on the Samjhauta Express from New Delhi to Attari (in Pakistan) that killed 66 in February 2007. The latest is a series of coordinated attacks in Mumbai in November 2008, which killed more than 150 and injured 300.

As can be expected, such attacks have set back the peace attempt severely, clouding the talks with fresh animosity and forcing it along a stop-and-start path that is hardly conducive to

resolution. The ground situation in Kashmir, however, has seen some positive changes under the elected government, with an improved human rights record, a revival of trade and tourism, a semblance of normalcy at least in Srinagar. As pan-Islamist separatist leader Asia Indrabi conceded grudgingly, things are a “bit calm” now (personal interview, July 2007). A better indicator of the changes comes from journalist Shamim Meraj: “For once I have to work hard for my story. I need to go and find them; they stopped dropping into our laps.” (Personal interview, July 2007)

1.5 | Kashmir, in perspective

As many scholars see it, the violence in Kashmir was sired by sullied politics. Paula Newberg puts this across well (1995, p73):

Kashmiris came to insurgency when all politics seemed to fail; the politics of Kashmir’s traditional politicians, politics between Srinagar and Delhi, and politics between India and Pakistan. They view themselves as victims of profound corruptions that sully the meaning of politics.

The Kashmiris’ demand for the right to choose their political future, their call for ‘self determination’ by way of a plebiscite, needs to be seen in this context. As we saw, from the days of the British Empire, their fate was decided for them by ‘rulers from outside’. The politics that prompted the ‘sale’ of Kashmir valley to Gulab Singh, the autocratic politics of the Dogra kings that saw an era of exceptional ill-governance in the valley, and the self-serving politics of Hari Singh that led to the hurried and uneasy accession to India all provide a historical depth to the Kashmiris’ more prominent, post-1947 grievance that they have been persistently denied the right to self-determination. In the recent past, the oscillating politics of Sheikh Abdullah, the

nationalistic politics of Nehru, the questionable politics of Dr Farooq Abdullah and the many others who came and went in New Delhi and Srinagar denied the people free expression of political will. India's reluctance to acknowledge the conflict as a political problem, its initial insistence it was a law-and-order situation that could be put right with "a bit of a *danda* [stick]", can be seen rooted in an insensitivity to this history, not to mention the ill-informed policy decisions and massive misreading of the situation by the men then in power. As Bose (1997, p50) contends:

A colossal and persistent failure of the Indian democracy, justified and rationalised through invocations of the 'interest' and 'integrity' of the Indian 'nation' by power-hungry and self-aggrandising elites, has, thus, engendered the struggle for 'self-determination' in Kashmir today.

A word is in order about the Indian claim that the Kashmir conflict is Pakistan-sponsored, cross-border terrorism. While Islamabad's moral and material support to the cause is indubitable (Hussain 2007), the conflict needs to be seen as fundamentally a product of Indian politics. Pakistan's responsibility is limited to that of an opportunist facilitator, which stepped in at the right moment with arms and encouragement. George Fernandes (cited in Bose 1997, p51), the minister for Kashmir affairs in 1990, summarised this sentiment thus: "I do not believe any foreign hand created the Kashmir problem. The problem was created by us ... others decided to take advantage of it."

In conclusion, a related question needs to be addressed. Kashmiris had witnessed misrule and undemocratic politics for decades, tolerating all of such without recourse to violence for so long. What changed in 1988-1989? Why did they abruptly rise in revolt then – and not before, or after?

International events played a crucial role in the Kashmir uprising. The brimming popular disenchantment of Kashmiris in the late 1980s coincided with the end of the Afghan jihad against the Soviet Union, which the Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence, together with the CIA, had actively supervised. With the withdrawal of Soviet forces in 1987, many Pakistani military and intelligence officers – the handling of the jihad had “indoctrinated” them into radical Islamism (Hussain 2007, p21) – were looking for a new war. Pakistan had always considered Kashmir worthy of ‘liberation’ and it was only natural that after the success of their experience in Afghanistan and the reserves of military resources left over from the Afghan campaign that they would turn their full attention³⁹ to India.

In Kashmir, the youths drew inspiration from the Afghan jihad and also the secessionist fight in Sri Lanka. If *mujahideens* could defeat the mighty Soviet Union and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam could check the vastly superior Indian military, they felt the same could happen in Kashmir. The news of the first Palestinian *intifaada* also served as an important reference point (Ganguly 2000), “steeling insurrectionist resolve” as also the “collapse of repressive one-party regimes in central and eastern Europe” (Bose 2003, p111).

Underlying these tactical factors, which set the stage and acted as the immediate spur for the uprising, were what Ganguly (1996) calls the “two interlinked forces of political mobilisation and institutional decay”. Owing to their low levels of literacy, education and exposure to mass media, the Kashmiris of the Sheikh Abdullah era were politically quiescent, unwilling to challenge the existing order. However, by the 1970s and 80s, thanks mainly to India's heavy subsidies⁴⁰ to win over the Kashmiris, there was an expansion of, among others, educational and media facilities in Kashmir, which created a politically savvy generation, conscious of their rights. The expanded media facilities also meant that the politically aware generation of Kashmiris were made aware of the healthy political order in other parts of India.

Further, by this time the Kashmiri governance had fallen to “institutional decay” (Ganguly 1996). Since independence, the politics of Delhi had stifled the development of an honest political opposition (Ganguly 1996, 2000). All throughout, the politics of Kashmir had revolved around Sheikh Abdullah’s charismatic – and dexterous – personality. But with Sheikh Abdullah gone, and Dr Abdullah turned ‘Indian’ in the 1980s, there was no Kashmiri leader the people could look up to, no opposition worthy of checking the government. The NC-Conference alliance removed the last straw of political opposition in the state, leaving an attractive vacuum for extremism.

It is justifiable, then, to say that the problem in Kashmir is – and has been – politics, not violence. And the politics, as Ganguly and Newberg convincingly argue, has essentially been of India’s making (see also Widmalm 1997). Syed Mir Qasim, chief minister of J&K in the 1960s, put this sentiment across metaphorically in his biography *My Life and Times* (1992, p302-303): “If I dump petrol in my house ... and my opponent sets a match to it, it is largely my fault.”

Review of literature

2|The media at war

THE LAST TWO decades have witnessed an “explosion” of conflicts across the world, with more than 111 cases of militarised violence in places as diverse as Angola, Myanmar, Sudan, Iraq, Russia, Turkey, Bosnia and Kashmir (Bercovitch & DeRouen 2004, p147-148; see Eriksson et al 2003 for a comprehensive listing). The war reportage this has produced attracted much academic interest and a significant investment of resources to investigate the many aspects of conflict coverage. Here the body of literature that arose out of this sustained scholarly scrutiny is surveyed. The effort is to build a theoretical framework for media-conflict relations, to provide a foundation for understanding the role of the Indian and Pakistani media in the Kashmir conflict.

After a brief discussion of conflicts and their impact on civil societies to set the context, this chapter presents two concerns central to this inquiry. First, it engages with the literature on media effects. The potential influences of violence reportage on audiences and to what extent it can shape conflict policies is fundamental to most conflict journalism inquiries (see Morrison & Tumber 1988, Philo & McLaughlin 1995, Seib 1997, Weimann 2000, Robinson 2002 and Wolfsfeld 2004, among others). Indeed, it was this primary concern about my own reportage from Kashmir that prompted me to undertake this inquiry (see the introduction to this thesis, p3). The second focus is ethnocentrism, the “universal syndrome of attitudes and behaviours” that encourages the belief by members that their own group is “virtuous and superior” and the other “contemptible and inferior” (Axelrod & Hammond 2003, p2). Again, this is a recurrent theme in war journalism literature (among others, Wolfsfeld 2004, Bar-Tal 1998, Carruthers 2000), and the influence of this sentiment on conflict policies is generally assumed to be negative. As such, the impact of ethnocentric beliefs on how the media report conflicts is examined here, and the way in

which journalism as a profession tries to negotiate the problems of war reporting by applying the norm of ‘objectivity’ discussed. The argument, based on the works of scholars such as Schudson (1978), Glasser (1992), Bovee (1999), Cutter (1999) and Iggers (1999) and Carruthers (2000), is that objectivity is unrealistic in conflict situations. After considering the normative peace journalism, offered as an explicit alternative to the traditional approach to covering wars that is practiced today, this chapter presents the politics-media-politics cycle put forward by Israeli scholar Gadi Wolfsfeld (2004) as a sophisticated model to explain the media’s dynamic role in conflict situations, and provide a deeper understanding of the challenges that journalism needs to overcome for constructive war reportage.

2.1 | Conflict, its dynamics

Conflict, if one were to follow General Carl Von Clausewitz’s (2004, p17) classic thought on war, is a “real political instrument”, a “continuation of policy by other means”. Mitchell (1981) sees it as a relationship between two or more parties who have, or think they have, incompatible goals, needs and interests. To Cottle (2006), it is a series of struggles between opposing interests and outlooks. Conflict, thus, is a state of opposition.

Conflicts can be classified in a variety of ways, each the subject of significant attention. A section of scholars have focussed on international conflicts; some others, on intractable violence. Both are of special interest, for both fit the conflict this study analyses.

‘International’ is a level of analysis. Here the parties involved are “relatively autonomous political units”, who control separate territories and populations (Haas 1974, p5). In the last two decades, however, the term has been applied “to inter-group conflicts within one country when one group is fighting for independence or increased social, political, or economic power” (Malek,

screen 1). In the international arena, a conflict is a *fundamental* disagreement, long-term and deep-rooted (Costantino & Merchant 1996, and Burton cited in Burgess & Brad 2003). Haas (1974, p6) attributes an additional feature to it: the employment of “active means”, the overt *doing* of something, which could be combat⁴¹, “the engagement in physically destructive activity”.

2.1.1 | *Intractable conflict*

If the ‘active means’ and ‘physically destructive activity’ persist, it could result in an intractable conflict, a situation that stubbornly eludes resolution. Participants see no way out of the conflict, because any solution would require giving up some very important value (Burgess & Brad 2003, screen 1, 2). Such conflicts are destructive and do substantial harm, yet the parties involved are unable to extricate themselves – and this, according to Kreisberg (cited in Burgess & Brad 2003), is because the perceived cost of ‘getting out’ is seen as higher than the cost of ‘staying in’.

Israeli political psychologist Bar-Tal (1998) and Kreisberg (1993) put forward seven⁴² characteristics of an intractable conflict. These are (a) *protracted*: it has lasted at least a generation, causing animosity to build up; (b) *perceived irreconcilable*: parties view their goals as radically opposite and stick to their stands; (c) *vested interest in conflict continuation*: parties have invested heavily – militarily, economically, psychologically – into the conflict, so giving up is not easy; (d) *violent*: the military engagements result in death and injury of not just soldiers but civilians as well; (e) *zero-sum*: parties see loss suffered by other as their gain, and any gains by the other as their loss; (f) *perception of totality*: parties consider needs or values being fought for as absolutely essential for their existence and/or survival; (g) and *central*: the conflict is central on the public agenda and the people are preoccupied with it.

Because intractable conflicts are exhausting, stressful, painful, violent and total, the societal members engaged in it develop certain psychological conditions to withstand it. The conflicting societies psychologically adapt its members by imparting to them certain skills⁴³ (courage, social responsibility, endurance, etc) and, perhaps more importantly, societal beliefs, writes Bar-Tal (1998). He defines societal beliefs as cognitions shared by members of society on important issues that create among them a sense of uniqueness. These often appear on public agenda, are much-discussed by members, serve as relevant references in leaders' decisions, and influence conflict-pursuance. Bar-Tal puts forward eight such beliefs: the justness of one's goal, security, adversary's delegitimisation, positive self-image, own victimisation, patriotism, unity, and own wish for peace.

Bar-Tal (2000) suggests this adaptation leads to the formation of a kind of ideology. He calls this the *conflictive ethos*. The irony is, the same ethos that is created to *endure* the conflict also *perpetuates* it. Thus, it forms a vicious circle. "Years of indoctrination," he writes (1998, p42), "cause the internalisation of the societal beliefs: they are held with great confidence and considered as central."

Peace – and the term is used in a very limited sense here, to connote a cessation of overt hostilities – requires the breaking of this cycle. That, for its part, requires changes in beliefs and perceptions of incompatibilities in at least one of the conflicting parties (Bar-Tal 1998, 2004; Bar-Tal & Bennink 2004; Jeong 1999). Such changes can be brought about by the societal *leaders* and the society *members*. By questioning the beliefs they hold, societal members can bring about changes through their leaders. Likewise, the leaders can change the psychological conditioning of the members by imparting 'positive' beliefs. These changes take time, and needs the support of societal institutions, including channels of communication (Bar-Tal 1998). In this, and also the perpetuation of the conflictive ethos by way of 'indoctrination' over years, media institutions can

be seen to play a significant role. The following section develops this argument by examining the relation between war reportage and conflict policies.

2.2 | The Effects Question

The effect of war news on audiences is believed to be extremely significant today, given we live in an era of “mediatized conflicts” (Cottle, 2006, p74), wherein governments seek to “control the media in order to win the ‘battle for hearts and minds’.” To Miller (1994, p12) this propaganda war, though it attracts “much less attention than its shooting counterpart”, is “arguably the more crucial part of the conflict”. It is in fact a contest for winning public opinion for the cause of war and is common to all conflicts (Tumber 2004) — and as such, it has been part of every conflict. The military and governments has deployed “a combination of mechanisms ... to manage the flow of information in times of war” (Cottle 2006, p74-75). This includes what can be termed as ‘hard’ censorships such as prohibition of journalists from war fronts (as it happened in World War I, when journalists were accommodated in castles, as ‘chateaux warriors’, and thus kept away from the Western front; and more recently in the 1999 India-Pakistan Kargil war, when reporters were contained in base camps) and the requirement all stories be approved by military ‘minders’ before being ‘filed’ (as it happened in the 1991 Gulf War); and ‘soft’ censorship, wherein the media are fed government-issue information at regulated press briefings and absorbed as ‘embeds’ into fighting forces.

The emphasis democratic governments place on media management — on ‘mediapolitiking’ (Edwards 2001) or ‘performance politics’ (McNair 1995) — is in line with Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky’s propaganda model (1988; see also Lippmann 1922), which sees media as a tool in the hands of the dominant elite. The elite wields this tool to “manufacture consent” for activities that will serve its interest by using power and money to influence news decisions. The

model is based on five mutually supporting media ‘filters’ which come together to propagate the views and values of the political and economic elite. These filter news “fit to print, marginalize dissent, and allow government and dominant private interests to get their message across to the public”, thus fixing “the premises of discourse and interpretation, and the definition of what is newsworthy” (Herman & Chomsky 1988, p1-2). In this operation the media, owned as it is by profit-oriented business forces which are part of the dominant elite, is seen to participate quite willingly, depending “heavily and uncritically on elite information sources” (Herman 1996).

While this model can be used to explain media actions to an extent, it is criticised for being simplistic and “short-circuiting the complexities” involved in news production and news reception (Cottle 2006, p19-20). However, the media strategies governments invariably adopt underlines how significant a factor they take the Fourth Estate to be in harnessing public support for the cause of war⁴⁴. This, in turn, points to a remarkable faith on the part of policymakers on media effects – a point underlined by the comments of senior Indian politicians earlier in this thesis (p5-6).

2.2.1 | Agenda-setting, priming, framing

A good way to begin the discussion on media influences on audiences is by considering the agenda-setting paradigm. This underpins war journalism and effects studies, and with its stress on language and ‘defining the conflict accurately’ and ‘creatively’, peace journalism draws heavily from this extensive body of literature. So does Bar-Tal’s thesis of societal beliefs, though to a lesser extent.

Agenda-setting – mostly associated with Maxwell McCombs & Donald Shaw (1972), Bernard Cohen (1963), and Harold D Lasswell, and underpinned by the ideas of Walter

Lippmann on public opinion and Robert E Park on media gatekeeping – refers to the media’s ability to tell “its readers what to think *about*” (Cohen 1963, p13). It is the way in which news items are hierarchically presented to the audiences, the way individual reports are prioritised for reader-consumption. Dearing & Rogers (1996, p1) see it as an “ongoing competition among issue proponents to gain the attention of media professionals, the public, and policy elites”.

The agenda-setting process comprises three agendas – the media agenda (issues discussed in the media), the public agenda (issues discussed in the public sphere) and policy agenda (issues discussed by policymakers) – and the interactions among these three. The hierarchy of importance the media accords an array of issues influences its audience to decide what is worthy of consideration and what is not. Agenda-setting theory thus holds, and with considerable empirical justification, that the media can transfer ‘salience’, or the degree of importance attached to an issue, to the public. That is, the media agenda sets the public agenda (McCombs & Shaw 1972; Graber 1980; Iyengar, Peters & Kinder 1982).

An extension of agenda-setting is priming, defined as the effects of a prior context on the interpretation and retrieval of information (Fiske & Taylor, 1984, p231 cited in Dearing & Rogers 1996). Iyengar & Kinder (1987, p63) see it as “changes in the standards that people use to make political evaluations”. By focussing on one issue at the expense of others (in other words, setting the public agenda), the media influences the ‘filter’ through which a political person or issue is seen. Like agenda-setting model, priming assumes that people form attitudes and beliefs based on considerations that are most salient when they make decisions (Hastie & Park 1986 cited in Scheufele & Tewksbury 2007). By lavishing attention on a particular issue, the media makes it salient in the people’s mind. The audiences, thus, are primed they ought to use specific benchmarks for evaluating a person, a political issue, a conflict.

Framing is another vital concept in the agenda-setting paradigm. Seen as second-level agenda-setting (McCombs 1994; McCombs & Bell 1996), it refers to the “process of organising a news story thematically, stylistically and factually to convey a specific story line” (Maslog et al 2006). McCombs et al (1997) argue that the concepts of agenda-setting and framing are not diverse – rather, framing is an extension of agenda-setting. Accordingly, if agenda-setting tells us *what* to think about, framing tells us *how* to think about it. Entman (1993) defines framing as the selection of “some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, casual interpretation, more evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described.” Tankard et al (1991, p3) see a media frame as “the central organising idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration”. Frames package key ideas, stock phrases, and stereotypical images to bolster a particular interpretation. Through repetition, placement and reinforcement, the texts and images that constitute the frame provide a dominant interpretation more readily perceivable, acceptable, and memorable than other interpretations (Entman 1991).

Since the 1980s, scholars have invested considerable energy into studying the forces of agenda-setting, priming and framing. More than one study shows that not only does the media set the public agenda, but it has the capacity to direct how individuals will evaluate issues (Entman 1989; Iyengar 1991; Eichhorn 1993 cited in Dearing & Rogers 1996). This has provided insights into the relation between the mass media and the society it serves, contributing to the media effects research significantly.

2.2.2 | *Conflict, the public, and conflict politics*

The idea that the masses would decide political action by expressing their opinion (Lippmann 1922), and the media provides a ‘public sphere’ — an arena where the public can exchange thoughts and opinions, engage in debates to battle political power, and thus help constitute civil societies — for such an expression is well established (Habermas 1989; see also Allan 1997 for a discussion).

As discussed above, during conflicts this space for societal discourse is turned into a battlefield, as governments use it to legitimise claims, ‘demonise’ the enemy, marginalise counterviews, and generally create societal beliefs that support war (Bar-Tal 1998, 2000, 2004). In this they are successful, more so in the case of ‘external’ wars. An impressive number of scholars point to this in their writings on the 1991 Gulf War (among others, MacArthur 1993, Kellner 1992, Philo & MacLaughlin 1995, Taylor 1998, MacLaughlin 2002). McNair’s study of the British television coverage of Soviet news in the 1980s, which showed how the USSR was portrayed as “a threat, or an enemy” (1988, p47), and Vilanilam’s (1989, p120, 146-157) analysis of the 1979 Iranian Revolution in the *New York Times*, which presented Khomeini as “an irrational, stubborn fanatic who was anti-West and anti-progress”, are two other instances when media reports were consistent with the government line.

There is literature on this elsewhere as well: Northern Ireland (Miller 1994, 1995), Kosovo (Hammond & Herman 2000), the Israeli-Palestine conflict (Bar-Tal 1998; Wolfsfeld 1997, 2001), Falklands War (GUMG 1985, Morrison & Tumber 1988), the India-Pakistan Kargil (Thussu 2002) and Kashmir (Hickman & Barlett 2007) conflicts, and the post-September 11 wars on ‘terror’ (Allan & Zelizer 2004, Finney 2003, Stromback 2005, Spencer 2005).

2.2.3 | *Chinks in the 'effects' armour*

While the studies stress the significance of media in conflicts, the conflicting parties' scramble for coverage may not be all that well-justified. They seem to believe the press "lost the Vietnam War by demoralizing the public with unpleasant news", which MacArthur dismisses in no uncertain terms (1993, p112-113). He does not see the media as capable of such influences⁴⁵. "The press," he notes, "has never prevented a war from starting and has never forced the government to terminate one."

This sits well with the belief of scholars such as Joseph Clapper, Guy Cumberbatch, Robert Hodge and David Tripp who have argued that traditional effects research is misguided and capable of producing seriously flawed results. David Gauntlett (2005, p14), a strident voice in this school, appears to summarise the foundational argument of many when he says that most effects research insult or patronise audiences by treating them as "passive, ignorant and undiscerning sponges", who absorb media content with "little thought or understanding, and even less a critical or ironic eye". Many such studies divide news content into two very simplistic categories, 'antisocial' and 'prosocial', with no consideration for the context of actions (Gauntlett 2005, p56):

This rigid content-analysis type of view means that the TV hero who risks everything but ultimately manages to knock out the villain who was about to kill 200 people, would only be counted as 'antisocial' (since he hit someone) but not all 'prosocial' (since he didn't hug anyone or give them a present). The content analysis approach and method is severely flawed by its inability to recognise the content or meaning of acts, and because of this is liable to give an exaggerated impression of levels of screen violence, which is easy to count but not always antisocial, whilst undercounting prosocial acts, which may be more subtle.

Gauntlett (2005) argues that a combination of biased research assumptions (for instance, that audiences are passive recipients, unaffected by other social factors) and poorly designed experiments (exaggerated ‘counts’, artificial laboratory tests as opposed to ‘found’ studies in natural surroundings, etc) mean that the results of most traditional research are severely flawed. Since 60 years of research has found no empirical evidence of direct media effects on audience behaviour, Gauntlett concludes, then “they are simply not there to be found” (1998, screen 1). A more productive way, he suggests, is to stop looking for *direct* effects and focus on the more subtle *influences*. The media, as Clapper suggested in 1960 (Gauntlett 2005, p5), should be seen as “influences, working among other influences, in a total situation”.

This thesis of ‘indirect effects’ chimes with the conclusions of scholars such as Robinson (2002, 2004) and Morrison & Tumber (1988). Robinson believes the ‘CNN effect’ — the challenges to foreign policy aims created by instantaneous reporting of conflicts and diplomatic crises (Gowing 1994 cited in Spencer 2005, p24) — is less robust and certainly more impure than it is made out to be⁴⁶. Putting forth a policy-media interaction model, he argues the crucial determinant in changes of foreign policy, whether it is war or humanitarian intervention, is politics, not media. Media can influence policy changes only when policy is uncertain. At other times, the best it can do is enable policymakers who had decided to act for “non-media-related reasons” to proceed by “building domestic support”. Media coverage cannot “drive or compel policymakers into action where they would have otherwise not” (Robinson 2002, p71).

Morrison & Tumber (1988), too, counter the idea of ‘direct’ news effect, after an in-depth study of the Falklands War. News on its own, however tragic or horrific, does not “possess the power of social disruption” (p349). What will cause an outcry is if the validity of the policy that led to that news is seen as askew. If that happens, news is perceived differently — suddenly

battlefield deaths become “senseless slaughter”. Hence “it is not the control of information ... that is the problem for the government, but the control of opinion” (p350).

2.2.4 | *Cultivation analysis*

Such criticisms notwithstanding, there is a consensus that the media do influence its audience (Kellner 1992, Philo 1995, Philo & McLaughlin 1995, Seib 1997, Morrison & Tumber 1988, Naveh 2002, Spencer 2004, Wolfsfeld 2004), and ‘feeds back’ into the conflict⁴⁷ (Allan 1999, McNulty 1999). This belief is supported by the work of the cultivation theorists, which, even the anti-effects school acknowledge, is “promising” (Gauntlett 2005, p118).

Developed by George Gerbner, and primarily focussed on television programmes, cultivation analysis holds that exposure to news will, over time, have a cumulative effect on the audience perception of the world (Gerbner & Gross 1976, Griffin 1996, Weimann 2000). The effects are gradual and long-term, but significant; and they are on the *attitudes* of the viewer rather than on their *behaviour*. Thus, while the media content might not lead to direct, imitative responses to violence, heavy exposure could cultivate attitudes more consistent with what is presented in the news. Morgan & Signorielli summarises it thus:

Cultivation analysis looks at [television] messages as an environment within which people live, define themselves and others, and develop and maintain their beliefs and assumptions about social reality ... Cultivation does not imply any sort of simple, linear “stimulus-response” model of relations between media content and audiences. Rather, it implies long-term, cumulative consequences of exposure to an essentially repetitive and stable system of messages, not immediate short-term responses or individual interpretations of content. It is

concerned with continuity, stabilization, and gradual shifts rather than outright change.

(1990, p18)

Working on the same premises, Douglas Kellner (1995) argues that audience perception is dependent on the ‘media culture’ it lives in. To him media are an integral part of modern existence, the driving force behind a culture, a “contested terrain across which key social groups and competing political ideologies struggle for dominance”. He holds the media “produces the fabric of everyday life, dominating leisure time, sharing political views and social behaviour, and providing the materials out of which people forge their very identities” (p1). Like Gerbner and Morgan & Signorielli, Kellner sees news messages as providing an “environment” in which people construct their social reality. As such, media messages are not consumed in isolation, or in originality, but are interpreted by the receiver on the basis of own values, commitments, sense of belonging, etc. Audience immersion in this environment could result in an internalisation of the ‘reality’ presented over and over (Morgan & Signorielli 1990).

As noted earlier, important in this context is the rather naive but strong belief held by many antagonists that news has the power to directly sway the public. This strengthens the centrality of media in conflict situations, and has arguably led to a situation where “warring factions are increasingly sophisticated at manipulating” reportage (Allan 1999, p38). Together, these make the media a hotly contested territory, at the centre of every conflict – every political event – that requires public support.

2.3 | Ethnocentrism

This centrality of media in conflict situations is further accentuated by the significance reporters themselves attach to such scenarios. In journalistic circles, the ‘glamour’ of war

correspondence is much coveted and assignments to trouble spots much fought over. Many reporters who do get the opportunity to cover conflicts see themselves as extraordinary individuals, “soldiers without the means of self-defence”, who function in “hell” (Pedelty 1995, p29) to bear witness to history.

While there is truth in that claim, conflict coverage is not so idealistic or selfless as it is made out to be. Sullyng the pristine image that many reporters carry in their heads is a plethora of factors – the most overlying being, correspondents belong to “larger news organisation which discipline their work”, “determining not only which stories are covered but how they are framed” (Van Ginneken 1998, cited in Carruthers 2000, p15). Though the nature of news is “partially unpredictable” (Palmer 2002a, p432), much of the news production is routine, subject to much bureaucracy (Sigal 1973, Schlesinger 1987). ‘Bureaucrats’ in news organisations – read news managers or editors – determine which wars should be covered, and which not, which reporter to send ‘out there’, for how long (Carruthers 2000). They decide if a conflict merits ‘first-hand’ reportage, or if ‘agency copy’ will suffice (as Van Ginneken 1998 notes, most war reports are the work of second-hand sources and ‘stringers’ in trouble spots; cited in Carruthers 2000); how the reporter is ‘briefed’ and what type of stories are demanded of him/her, how it is edited, headlined, and displayed.

Underpinning such decisions is a subjective factor: a sense of ‘we-ness’ that encourages journalists to favour the ‘home’ side over the ‘other’ side. Sumner (2002, p13), writing in a different context in the early 1900s, coined the term ‘ethnocentrism’ for this solidarity, defining it thus:

Ethnocentrism is the technical name for this view of things in which one’s own group is the center of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it ... Each group

nourishes its own pride and vanity, boasts itself superior, exalts its own divinities, and looks with contempt on outsiders.

Though Sumner's thesis was expressly to describe the dynamics of a primitive society and its very hostile interactions with 'outsiders', scholars since have used it – or more precisely, the twin concepts of “in-group” and “out-group” (Sumner 2002, p12) underlying his coinage – to explain societal interactions in the era of 'nations' and 'states'. Thus, Smith writes of 'nationalism' (see also Gellner 1964, Kedourie 1966, Brubaker 1996), the “love of the ethnic nation” (2002, p55), a “core of ethnicity” transmitted across generations by way of myths, memories, values and symbols (1991, p19-20); Viroli (1997) painstakingly distinguishes between 'patriotism', the love of country, and nationalism, the loyalty to nation; and Hobsbawm (1992) talks about 'state patriotism', 'proto-nationalism' and 'modern patriotism' to make similar and finer distinctions (see Kedouri 1966, Dietz 1989, Calhoun 1993, Lukacs 1994, Roshwald 2001, Karasawa 2003, Conversi 2004, Kohn & Calhoun 2005 and Parekh 2008 for related discussion). Anderson (1991, p6), like Gellner (1964) before, presents nations as 'inventions', an “imagined political community”, and nationalism as the human consciousness that makes such an 'imagining' of a “deep, horizontal comradeship” (p7) possible. Guibernau (1999) and Billig (1995, 1996), both building on Anderson's work, present nationalism as a force that binds together a political community: the former holds it extends to not just nation-states but to “nations without states”⁴⁸ as well (Guibernau 1999, p1), while the latter attempts to explain its remarkable influence by looking at the hidden ways – what he terms 'banal nationalism' – in which a nation-wide solidarity is forged by “daily” indicating or “flagging” certain ideological habits “in the lives of its citizenry” (Billig 1995, p6).

Recurrent in this discourse on ethnocentrism – for the purpose of this study, I use it as cover term for the many concepts founded on the 'in-group-out-group' relation, treating, perhaps

simplistically, the many varieties of nationalism and patriotism as variants of Sumner's original coinage – is the strong opposing sense of 'other'. As Billig (1995) and Hall (1991) point out, 'us' cannot be imagined in a vacuum: without a 'foreign other', there can be no 'national we'. Social psychologists Tajfel (1981; see also Tajfel *et al* 1971) and Eiser (1986), studying the cognitive basis for social categorisation, make the same point in a more fundamental way: the formation of in-group identity involves the imagining of an out-group.

This 'imagining', however, is not value-neutral. The identification with 'us', the ethnocentric affirmation, is achieved through negation (Bhabha 1990) of the 'other'. In other words, the identification with the in-group is also an identification *against* the out-group. 'They' are taken to possess the negative characteristics which 'we' deny 'we' possess. 'We' believe 'ourselves' to be tolerant and reasonable, while the 'other' is imagined as unreasonable by comparison (Billig 1996, p189). Thus, identity formation is not just an innocent differentiation. It is both an affirmation and a negation (Billig 1996), for, as Wetherell & Potter (1992) write, in imaging 'us', the members of the in-group also imagine a contrasting 'other'.

2.3.2 / War, media, and the 'other'

Journalists are part of a citizenry, members of a nation. As such, they are conscious of the ethnocentric 'we-ness' – and by extension the 'otherness'. As Kempf (2002) summarised, since most journalists are integrated into the given society, they face the same constraints and temptations as other individuals of the society. Thus, news reporters are societal members first, affected by banal nationalism, susceptible to the 'hidden' but constant 'flagging' up of everyday symbolisms capable of awakening 'nationhood' (Billig 1995), and news organisations part of a political, cultural and economic structure. Neither is independent of this constraint, and what

passes as news, what is deemed 'newsworthy' about it, is determined by the values, beliefs, attitudes and prejudices of their society (Schudson 1995, Bar-Tal 1998). Allan (1999) puts it thus:

The complex ways in which the news media project a sense of 'us', a collective 'we' which is explicitly or tacitly mobilised in opposition to a 'them', find daily expression in news accounts concerned with the 'nation'. (p172)

This corruption of the professional journalistic values produces what Sonwalkar (2005), borrowing from Billig (1995), terms 'banal journalism', a hegemonic catering "to 'us'" that "presents one view as the worldview of an entire society or nation" (p263). Media organisation, claiming to speak to and for 'our' fraternity, diffuse such journalism as a matter of common sense – so widely and routinely that it is pervasive enough to be termed banal (Billig 1995). But banal does not mean benign, Billig (1995) is quick to point, and the effectiveness of these everyday representation is deadly (Allan 1999, p172), particularly when journalists are covering 'own' wars and reporters "expect and are expected to contribute to the objective of winning the war" (Sanders 2003, p84).

In such times, the 'we-ness' of journalists becomes pronounced (Sonwalkar 2005; see also Allan 1999), and this "invisible influence" (Carruthers 2000, p15) of excited ethnocentrism lead many to openly identify with their 'biases', in the form of country, religion, ethnicity, or other values (Wolfsfeld 2004, Elliot 1986, Adie 1998, Morrison & Tumber 1988, Bar-Tal 1998, Hammond & Herman 2000, Sreberny 2002, Jamieson & Waldman 2003, Tumber 2004). The media then reproduces the shared myths, symbols and traditions that are likely to increase loyalty to the state (Edelman 1988). In times of crises, Billig writes (1995, p4), "the moral aura of nationalism is invoked; heads will be nodded, flags waved and tanks will roll". This continuing – and strengthened – 'banality' of nationalism in the media is capable of influencing (Gerbner &

Gross 1976, Morrison & Tumber 1988, Kellner 1992, Philo & McLaughlin 1995, Bar-Tal 1998, Spencer 2004, Wolfsfeld 2004) members, helping to strengthen their “deep, horizontal friendship” and encouraging them to “willingly die” for their ‘imagined’ fraternity (Anderson 1991, p7).

Besides the ethnocentrism of journalists, another factor contributes to the intensified ‘negative’ rendering of the ‘other’: war coverage mostly depends on domestic and elite sources within the government and the military (Carruthers 2000) – in other words, the ‘drivers’ of the conflict. A case in point is the Gulf War I, where much of the coverage in the American media was traceable to the ‘golden triangle’ of Pentagon, White House and State Department, rather than from the front line (Cook 1994). Even when there is sustained reportage from the warfront, as it happened during the Gulf War II, it was mostly in the form of embedded reportage (Tumber & Palmer 2004) – which, as this excerpt from a pooled dispatch of UK journalist Keith Harrison (2003) makes clear, showed not only heavy reliance on the military but an indoctrination into its mindset:

In our combat kit, we look and sound like soldiers, which is a tribute to the Army's embedding system, in which journalists are trained and attached to military units for the duration of a campaign.

We answer to the Commanding Officer, we follow orders, we share the rations, we eat where the soldiers eat and we sleep where they sleep. The Royal Logistic Corps – where they go, we go.

The military language that first seemed like talk from another world is now our mother tongue. Terms like "sitrep" (situation report) and "be advised" have not so much crept into

our language as carried out a military coup. Place is now location. Car is always vehicle.

Pardon has become "say again".

...

Hours earlier, when we left our US base, we were given lengthy and frankly disconcerting farewells from those staying behind in reserve. As our vehicle was being prepared, TV pictures showed an Iraqi bunker being blown to smithereens at close range by a US tank and I found myself cheering along like a bloodthirsty Dallas cowboy.

The “socialization process” (Tumber 2004, p194; also see Tumber & Palmer 2004, p54) involved in embedment, as Harrison acknowledges in his war diary, encourages the reporter to identify himself as part of the military, as a co-combatant, and cheer “like a bloodthirsty Dallas cowboy” when an Iraqi bunker is blown up by ‘our’ tank. Such a state of affairs, whether deliberately cultivated by the military as it happens in the case of embeds, or in a less explicit way as occurs in the case of journalists at ‘home’, encourages news personnel to see the conflict in black-and-white terms, as an us-against-them affair; the ethnocentrism of journalists becomes pronounced⁴⁹. The ‘other’, the ‘enemy’, is of interest to ‘us’ only as threats, so most “news stories focus almost exclusively on the level of danger posed by the other side” (Wolfsfeld 2004, p22).

The resultant media content is likely to strengthen the ethnocentrism of the warring societies even further. For one, as Guibernau (1999, p15) warns, a discourse “based upon the rejection, dehumanization, and portrayal of those who do not belong to the nation as ‘enemies’ and as a ‘threat’ will feed xenophobia and ethnic hatred”. Secondly, it throttles critical voices, thus removing a possible mode of containment. Any opposition is seen as “unpatriotic, if not traitorous” and war is fought in what Ponsonby (2005, p26) calls a “fog of falsehood”. The ‘other’ is portrayed as responsible for the violence, ‘a menacing, murderous aggressor’ (as Harold

Lasswell wrote in his 1927 analysis of the First World War). News stories provide “graphic descriptions of the other side’s brutality and our people’s suffering ... Claims about our own acts of aggression and the other’s suffering are either ignored, underplayed or discounted. We are always the victims, they are always the aggressors (Wolfsfeld 2004, p23).”

Such demonisation of the enemy is characteristic of all conflicts and the media are most often “a willing participants in, if not always an initiator of the process” (Carruthers 2000, p9). Interesting to note here is the alacrity of many ethnocentric journalists to silence the dissident voices of their own colleagues, at times actively, not only by explicitly condemning their actions, but by other ‘subtler’ means such as deliberate unhelpfulness, miscommunication, and discrediting. An example is the attempts by a section of journalists⁵⁰ on the Indian side during the India-Pakistan Kargil war to isolate and ‘block’ an American correspondent, who was portrayed as a CIA agent working for Pakistan.

All this contributes to creating highly resilient “fantastic stories” (Ponsonby 2005, p26) about the other. Wolfsfeld (2004) calls this a “one-dimensional image of the enemy”, who is presented in the media sans a social life or other human aspects – as a threat, a demon, capable of extreme barbarity. The end result is a journalism that portrays the conflict as an arena that groups participants into two starkly opposing war camps, a representation of it as an ‘us-versus-them’ issue, which ironically has the potential to – and often does, as the discussions in section 2.2 suggests – exacerbate the conflict. Before progressing further, it is beneficial to look at how journalism as a profession has approached war and violence, and the ways in which it has tried to negotiate the hurdles thrown up by such difficult situations.

2.4 | Going to the ‘hostilities’

In 1854, around the time the seeds of the Kashmir conflict were being planted in far-off Asia, another British enterprise in a Crimean theatre of war was siring a new breed of professionals: war correspondents. Among them were two Irishmen, William Howard Russell of *The Times* from London, “the miserable parent⁵¹ of a luckless tribe” as he was to describe himself later (McLaughlin 2002, p6), and Edwin Lawrence Godkin of the *London Daily News*, who had been persuaded “to go to Turkey for the hostilities” (Knightley 1989, p7).

In their individualistic ways, both produced remarkable journalism. Russell, riding up and down behind the action and interviewing every soldier he could stop, concentrated on an overview of how a battle was won or lost. This is his description of a French attack:

At five minutes before twelve o’ clock the French, like a swarm of bees, issued forth from their trenches close to the doomed Malakoff, scrambled up its faces and were through the embrasures in the twinkling of an eye. They crossed the seven metres of ground which separated them from the enemy in a few bounds, and in a minute or two after the head of their column issued from the ditch, the Tri-colour was floating over Korniloff Bastion. (Knightley 1989, p10)

Godkin, on the other hand, focussed on the ‘micro’ picture, the human element. Here he reports from the same battlefield, as a French soldier — “beardless, slender, hardly able to trot under his musket, fitter to be by his mother’s side than amidst the horrors of a heady fight” — is stopped by a general from panicked flight:

The general rushed towards him, tore one of his cotton epaulettes off his shoulder and shouted in his ear, “*Comment? Vous n’etes pas Francais, donc!*” The reproach stung the poor boy to the quick: all his fiery, chivalrous French blood rose up to him to repel it; his face flushed up, and constantly repeating, “*Je ne suis pas Francais,*” he ran back, mounted the top parapet, whirled his musket about his head in a fury of excitement, and at last fell into the ditch, riddled with balls. (Knightley 1989, p10)

Despite the differences in approach, these accounts have a commonality. Both can be interpreted as subjective. Russell makes it clear which side he is on through his description of the effortless way the Russians were defeated. In the latter writing, the journalist’s sympathy for the ‘boy soldier’ is evident, and in the way he chronicles his death, Godkin’s own anti-war stance — his “hatred for war” (Knightley 1989, p10) — comes through. Both stories also display a sense of ‘us’ and ‘them’ (Elliot 1986). In Russell’s piece this is overt in the way he defines the Russians as the “enemy”. In Godkin’s this is rather covert, and is mainly a product of his point of view — his positioning with the French — and his choices of focus and language, and is an example of the ‘we-ness’ influencing journalistic output from “the primary stage of selection, encoding and transmission” (Sonwalkar 2005, p267).

2.5 | The subjectivity of objectivity

Though the stories appeared before journalism was theorised, and objectivity⁵² began to emerge as a core value of the profession in the late 19th century America (Allan 1997, 1999), such partisanship can be seen to pervade the works of all war correspondents since Russell and Godkin, from Archibald Forbes, Januarius Aloysius MacGahan and Edgar Wallace to Max Hastings, Christiane Amanpour, Kate Adie, John Simpson and Robert Fisk through Ernest Hemingway, Martha Gellhorn, George Orwell, Ernie Pyle, Michael Herr and Martin Bell. This is

only expected. Since the 1920s, many scholars have convincingly argued that representations of the world are not the reality ‘out there’, but particular *ways* of understanding those (Schudson 1978, 1995; Hall 1982, Burr 1995, Gergen, 1999, 2001).

2.5.1 | *News, a social construct*

Reality, according to these theorists, is not a pre-given. It is accessed through language, discursively, and what we thus ‘create’ by way of it is not a “mere reflection of pre-existing reality”, but a construct – our social construct (see Jorgensen & Phillips 2002, p8-12). Berger & Luckmann (1967) explain this as a product of human consciousness. There are “multiple realities” out there, of which one is a “reality par excellence”, “our everyday reality”, which, by way of the “language of everyday life”, presents itself as such to the human consciousness (p21-22). Foucault (1972), who built on these premises, makes the similar point that there is no universal truth, only ‘truth effects’, as truth is a creation of the social structures and discourse – and so a variable.

Scholars since have debated the universality of this belief (Searle 1995, Hacking 1999). Searle argues against it, putting forth his classifications of reality into “institutional” and “brute” facts (p2). Institutional facts require human institutions for their existence (money, citizenship), while brute facts do not (mountain, trees). As such, all realities are not socially constructed; there exist ‘truths’ independent⁵³ of language, he contends.

Despite these two schools of thought, and what can be termed the ‘strong’ and ‘weak’ models of constructionism they promote, most scholars agree that reality is subjective, open to interpretation. Hence ‘objective’ reporting of the reality – read news – is impossible: “news is what newspapermen make it” (Gieber 1964, p173), a product “manufactured by journalists”

(Cohen & Young 1973, p97). Berkowitz (1997, p xi) put it this way, suggesting not only what a journalist records is subject to his/her vantage point, but the reality thus recorded is at best only partial⁵⁴:

The study of news is much like viewing a hologram. A person can get closer or further away. A person can stand in different places. Each new perspective will reveal different aspect of the same holographic picture. There is no way, though, that a person can find a single vantage point where the entire hologram can be viewed all at once.

2.5.2 | *News, a strategic ritual*

Here scholars such as Tuchman (1972) and Meyer (1995) join the debate, suggesting objective reporting should be seen as a process — a *strategic ritual*⁵⁵ to the former, a *method* to the latter — that follows systematic procedures and provides for verification, transparency, and replicability. Tuchman’s argument is that reporters, by drawing on “certain procedures discernible to the news consumers” (p661) – verifying facts, presenting conflicting possibilities and supporting evidence, judiciously using quotation marks, and structuring information in an appropriate sequence – can come across as objective. Meyer (1995) echoes this sentiment, promoting “objectivity of method”, which requires applying “scientific standards of replicability” to reportage and encouraging the “discipline of method” (screen 4). In essence, this involves informing “investigations with theories about the underlying causes of events”, developing “operational tests of these theories”, and “documenting the steps in executing” such steps so that “other investigators could find and follow” them. Both, however, are quick to note such reporting, though useful in defending the profession, does not guarantee objectivity. Such journalism would at best protect “the newspaperman from the risks of his trade” (Tuchman 1972, p661) but may not achieve “objectivity of result” (Meyer 1995, screen 6).

These ongoing discussions in academia have had some impact on the practice of journalism. Since the 1960s it is not so self-assured about 'facticity', and there is more tolerance to subjective reportage (Hackett & Zhao 1996, 1998). But a significant section of journalists and journalism organisations are still true to the ideology of objectivity. Hackett (1996, p5) attests this with his comment on how the ideal is "part of the defining ethos of North American Journalism". Keeble (2005), presenting the example of the National Union of Journalists in UK, which promotes separating 'established fact' from 'comment and conjecture' to its members, points to this "stubborn" commitment. Hackett & Zhao (1998, p54), citing from two US surveys and a "range of other evidence", speaks of how many journalists equate ethics with objectivity. Personal interviews with Indian journalists undertaken during the course of this study suggested a similar uncomplicated belief: most appeared to see objectivity as not only desirable, but achievable by presenting "both sides of the story".

2.5.3 | *Objectivity, an ideal*

Many scholars, among them Lippmann (1992), make a more informed argument, removing objectivity from the harsh confines its initial proponents had placed it in, and calling for more than mere reporting of "both sides" of the story or verification of claims. It is an ideal worth pursuing, they hold, even though, as Hackett⁵⁶ & Zhao (1998, p83) write, it can "never be perfectly achieved". The two scholars, who situate themselves firmly as critical realists, appear to capture the view of this group broadly when they say:

We can recognize that all knowledge is constructed and nevertheless affirm the possibility of distinguishing between 'truer' and 'falsier' depictions of reality – in the sense of identifying more or less coherent and comprehensive accounts. (p130)

This ‘operational view of objectivity’ (Tumber & Prentoulis 2003), though it acknowledges the contribution of the social constructionists and also considers the canon in a far more liberal light than originally propounded, cannot be seen as unproblematic (Glasser 1992, GUMG 1976, Parenti 1993). Glasser offers a philosophical perspective, a foundational critique that arguably undercuts any attempt at objectivity – or even at distinguishing between “‘truer’ and ‘falsar’ depictions of reality”. In essence, the contention is that the ideology of objectivity – even operational objectivity – paradoxically promotes its own biases and thus negates that very goal.

2.5.4 | *Objectivity, its biases*

Glasser (1992) sees objectivity as promoting three biases. First, it is biased against one of the media’s fundamental roles in democracy – that of a ‘watchdog’. The rituality involved in the news process brings with it a great preoccupation with ‘reliability’, which overshadows the *validity* of the realities the reporter presents. In other words, what is more important is that news needs to be *seen* as reliable, as originating from respectable “sources with impeccable credentials” (p178). In practice such sources are most often the prominent and the elite – government officials, community leaders, and other such ‘men in power’. Thus, the pursuit of objectivity jeopardises one of the foundational principles of journalism, not only promoting the views of the elite over the voice of the ‘common man’, but pushing the reporter into presenting truth-claims as “facts” regardless of their validity.

Secondly, objectivity is biased against critical thinking. The pursuit of objectivity “emasculates the intellect by treating it as a disinterested spectator” (p176), as it discourages a critical perspective by requiring the journalist to remain impartial. Without the need to be critical,

the objective reporter “tends to function as a translator – translating the specialized language of the sources into a language intelligible to a lay audience” (p181).

Further, Glasser argues the ideology is against “the very idea of responsibility” because objectivity requires only that reporters be accountable for *how* they report, not *what* they report. News “is treated as something journalists are compelled to report, not something they are responsible for creating” (p176).

2.5.5 | *Desirability of objectivity*

Some of Glasser’s concerns are answered – at least in principle, at least in part – by Hackett & Zhao’s (1998) ‘critical realist’ version of objectivity. Defining journalism as public communication for sustaining democratic social orders, or democratic journalism, they argue that a ‘better’ objectivity is possible – one that allows the reporter to think critically, be responsible, and be the voice of the public – through “better research, more investigation, and analysis into the deep causes underlying surface appearances” (p135). They speak against any monolithic model, instead advocating “different types of journalism for different purposes” (p233), which requires far-reaching media reforms⁵⁷, including institutionalising journalism as a self-reflexive occupation. But such changes will encounter massive resistance, as the authors acknowledge, and as things stand today it is only an idealistic goal – and a distant one at that – to pursue.

It is not such practical complexities alone that encourage a section of scholars (Bovee 1999, Cutter 1999, Iggers 1999, McLaughlin 2002) to increasingly question the desirability of objectivity. Many believe its very pursuit – its very ‘exalted’, not-achievable-but-worthy-of-achieving status – limits the quality of journalism. It is in this context that Igger (1999) says journalism is dead, but not dead enough. To him it remains “one of the greatest obstacles” to

journalists “playing a more responsible and constructive role in public life” (p91). Not only that, because of its preoccupation with facts and figures, objective reporting “devalues ideas and fragments experience, thus making complex social phenomena more difficult to understand” (p107). Pedelty (1995, p9) is of a similar sentiment, contending that the practice of objectivity often skews news by reproducing views of dominant groups and passing those on as ‘balanced’. Hence, these scholars believe openly declaring subjectivity would be more honest than making explicit judgements on competing truth-claims.

2.5.6 | *Objectivity and reporting conflicts*

If such is the complexity involved in achieving objectivity in ‘normal’ news reportage, the ideal becomes more unattainable in conflict situations. Since the days of Russell and Godkin, war journalism has been subsumed under the broader title of conflict reportage, which has received significant scholarly attention, particularly in the last decade. The sizeable body of literature on overt and covert wars, internal strife, and other forms of ‘extra-normal’ violence that has arisen out of this sustained interest clearly acknowledges the partisanship that plagues most conflict reportage today (Elliot 1986, Morrison & Tumber 1988, Bar-Tal 1998, Hammond & Herman 2000, Sreberny 2002, Jamieson & Waldman 2003, Tumber 2004, Tumber & Palmer 2004, Sonwalkar 2005). Carruthers (2000, p17) summarises this most efficiently when she writes conflict coverage is not a reflection of the world as it is, “as the journalists are wont to claim”, but “a map of the broad preoccupations, interests and values their particular society (or at least of its dominant groups)”.

Simply put, in conflict situations journalists need to negotiate a plethora of hurdles – patriotism, national interest, anger, censorship and propaganda, among others – that actively “conspire to prevent objective, factual even-handed reporting” (Maslog et al 2006, p22; see also

Carruthers 2000, Iggers 1998, Knightley 1989). In war correspondent Kate Adie's words, "The principles of reporting are put to a severe test when your nation goes to war ... the very nature of war confuses the role of the journalist, that objective, independent, detached person of theory and media study courses" (cited in Allan & Zelizer 2004, p3). Kalb (1994, p3), speaking in the US context, put it more brazenly: "When America goes to war, so too does the press, wrapped in the flag no less proudly than the troops themselves." More recently, a study by Susan D Moeller (2004) of the Center for International and Security Studies at the University of Maryland, which scrutinised the coverage of Gulf War II, gave a 'failing grade' to the UK and US⁵⁸ media for, among other factors, their "pattern of imprecision" (p6) and allowing the White House to set the agenda.

2.6 | Peace journalism

In view of the criticisms presented in the above section, it can be argued that conventional journalism, with its stress on objectivity, has not quite met the 'special' demands of conflict situations. The normative concept of peace journalism is possibly the most obvious alternative to it. Traceable to the peace research of the prolific Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung in the 1970s (McGoldrick & Lynch 2000, Hanitzsch 2004, Lynch & McGoldrick 2005, Maslog et al 2006, Cottle 2006), it can be seen as rooted in the rather expansive woods of New Journalism, which rejects objectivity and embraces subjectivity, to provide deeper insights into the issue at hand (Wolfe & Johnson 1990). Offered as an antidote to the ailments of conventional conflict coverage, it can be seen as a "special mode of socially responsible journalism" which contributes to the process of making and keeping peace" (Hanitzsch 2004, p484).

It advocates that journalists highlight peace initiatives, tone down ethnic and religious differences, prevent further conflict, and promote conflict resolution, reconstruction and

reconciliation (Galtung 1986, 2000, 2002). To make his point, Galtung likens war journalism to sports journalism and peace journalism to health journalism. Sports journalism, Galtung argues, is a zero-sum game. Winning is everything. In health journalism, however, the plight of the patient would be described – but so too would be the possible causes. Further, the factors that contributed to the diseases, the possible remedies, and preventive measures would be presented.

Galtung classifies conflict coverage into ‘war’ journalism and ‘peace’ journalism. This is based on four broad practice and linguistic orientations (Lynch & McGoldrick 2005). War journalism would focus on the conflict (visible effects of the conflict is reported), be propaganda-orientated (expose ‘their’ untruths, conceal ‘ours’), present elite voices, and portray victory over the enemy as the end goal. Peace journalism, for its part, would be peace-orientated (explore conflict formation, aim to prevent conflict), be truth-orientated (expose untruths on all sides), people-orientated (focus on suffering all over, focus on peacemakers as people), and solution-orientated (highlight peace initiatives, present solutions rather than ways to victory).

Apart from the content of reportage, Galtung’s classification considers an assessment of the language used. Words that demonise, victimise or are emotive, accordingly, are against the grain of peace journalism. Galtung’s other prescriptions for covering conflicts include “taking a preventive advocacy stance” by writing editorials and columns “urging reconciliation and focussing on common ground rather than on vengeance, retaliation, and differences, and emphasizing the invisible effects of violence” (Maslog et al 2006, p23)

Building on Galtung’s work, and drawing on conflict analysis and transformation literature, Lynch & McGoldrick present peace journalism as a broader, fairer, and more accurate way of covering conflicts (Maslog et al 2006). Their view “is premised on the importance of journalists understanding conflict and violence, because what they report will contribute to the momentum

towards war or peace” (p26). Peace journalism, in Lynch & McGoldrick’s words, occurs “when editors and reporters make choices – of what stories to report and about how to report them – that create opportunities for society at large to consider and value non-violent responses to conflict”. They see it as a set of tools, “both conceptual and practical intended to equip journalists to offer a better public service” (Lynch & McGoldrick 2005, p5).

Lynch & McGoldrick expanded Galtung’s classification of war journalism and peace journalism into 17 good practices, which include (a) focussing on presenting solutions (b) reporting on long-term effects (c) orientating the news on people and the grassroots (d) searching for common ground (e) reporting on and naming wrong-doers on all sides (f) disaggregating the ‘us’ and ‘them’ into smaller groups, (h) avoiding victimising language such as ‘devastated’, ‘defenceless’ and ‘pathetic’, (i) avoiding imprecise use of emotive words such as ‘tragedy’, ‘massacre’ etc (j) avoiding demonising adjectives and labels such as ‘brutal’, ‘barbaric’, ‘terrorist’ and ‘fanatic’, and (k) avoid making an opinion or claim seen as an established fact.

The literature on peace journalism, as we can see, is mostly prescriptive – and, compared to the literature on traditional war reportage, very limited. Besides Galtung, McGoldrick & Lynch, other contributors⁵⁹ to the peace journalism include Maslog (1990), who offers a manual based on the conflict in Philippines. Another notable scholar of this school is Robert Karl Manoff (1998, 2000), who, based on conflict transformation theory, identifies 12 roles for the media in reporting violence constructively. Quite similar to Lynch & McGoldrick’s version, these are: (1) channelling communication between parties (2) educating (3) building (4) counteracting misperceptions (5) analysing conflict (6) de-objectifying the protagonists for each other (7) identifying the interests underlying the issues (8) providing an emotional outlet (9) encouraging a balance of power (10) framing and defining the conflict (11) face-saving and consensus building and (12) solution building.

In recent years, frontline correspondents such as Martin Bell, Tom Geltjen and Michael Nicholson have spoken out against conventional war reporting, advocating a journalism that fits in well under peace journalism. Bell (1997) coined⁶⁰ the phrase ‘journalism of attachment’ for this brand of reporting, summarising it thus in an article in the *Guardian* newspaper:

In place of the dispassionate practices of the past I now believe in what I call the journalism of attachment. By this I mean a journalism that cares as well as knows; that is aware of its responsibilities; and will not stand neutral between good and evil, right and wrong, victim and oppressor.

While the idea has been much talked about since, and is considered something new, the practice has been in vogue for years. Reports by Martha Gellhorn, John Pilger and Robert Fiske, for instance, do not stand “neutral between good and evil”. Though passionately argued, Bell’s proposal does not find favour with a large section of journalists, as also scholars. Stephen Jukes, former global head of news at Reuters known for his insistence the agency would use the objective term ‘militants’ and not ‘terrorists’ in the wake of the September 11 attacks, touched on the issue in a related discussion in a personal interview (November 2006): “I believe journalists can serve their society best by being objective. You can deliver better journalism by asking questions ... by practising standard journalism properly.” The strident among this school not only uphold the time-honoured journalistic principle of objectivity more vociferously, but also hold Bell’s and similar ‘something must be done’ journalism is not only simplistic but “self-righteous” and “repressive” (Hume 1997, p4). Indeed this critique can be seen to extend to the whole of peace journalism. Though this group concedes objectivity is unachievable, it argues an effort should be made. There can be no greater betrayal of journalistic standards if reporters stray from this path (Weaver 1998), as it is objectivity that gives the practice of journalism its undoubted nobility. This approach, then, warns against mixing facts and emotions and believes

the challenge for journalists remains the same as ever: “to report a conflict as objectively and accurately as possible without undue risk to self and without compromise to professional integrity” (MacLaughlin 2002, p207). The media should not in any way try to prevent or influence conflicts (Weaver 1998), because once journalists do, “it is a short step to accepting that any means to achieve that end is justified”. It then becomes possible to use what is ‘good’ and lies become more important than truth. The journalist’s job is to produce fair and accurate reports that inform the audience, nothing more.

Though seemingly at odds, these views share a common ground. Perhaps the latter school’s criticism may even be misplaced. Peace journalism and the subjectivity it brings with it means taking a stand, but that need not involve mixing facts and emotions, or suppressing facts — which forms the foundation for Hume’s criticism. While that danger does exist, both approaches agree there is “nothing wrong with taking sides in conflicts”. As Hume elaborates (1997, p5): “There is a difference between taking sides and taking liberties with the facts ... There is a difference between expressing an opinion and presenting your personal passions and prejudices as objective reporting.”

Laudable as it is, peace journalism demands that the established media ‘war genre’ be reconfigured and repopulated with “different voices, views and values” – which is wishful thinking, given the political, cultural and economic “logics that drive its performance” (Cottle 2006, p103). A more foundational critique comes from Hanitzsch (2004), who argues that peace journalism epistemologically draws from naïve realism. Accordingly, Galtung’s position that media distorts the truths about the conflict – it distorts *reality* – assumes “the observer and the observed are two distinct categories” and that reality “can be perceived and described ‘as it is’” (p488). Cottle (2006) makes the same case when he points out that peace journalists appear to “presume that ‘truths’ and ‘untruths’ are self-evident” (p103). This, as we have seen in the earlier

discussion on news as a social construct in section 2.2.1 (Schudson 1995; Gieber 1964, Cohen & Young 1973, Berkowitz 1997), is highly doubtful, particularly in the case of conflicts when parties have placed themselves in extreme ‘us’ versus ‘them’ war camps (Carruthers 2000, Wolfsfeld 2004).

Implicit in the realist stance of peace journalism scholars is also an assumption of powerful, causal, and linear media effects (Hanitzsch 2004), which, on its own, has come under severe criticism. While there exists a robust belief in the power of the media in political, economic and military circles, which today is well catered for by expensive media strategies, the theory of powerful media effects has not gained much empirical evidence (Gauntlett 1998, 2005). More acceptable in the academia is the theory of selective media effects, which Brosius (2003 cited in Hanitzsch 2004, p489) summarises thus: “Some media have, at certain times and under certain circumstances, an effect on some recipients.” Peace journalism, however, overestimates the power of the media (Hanitzsch 2004), assuming a linear relation between how it presents a conflict (whether it is solution-orientated, for instance) and how the presentation is perceived by the public. In doing this, it overlooks other factors – interpersonal communication, social structures etc (Rogers 1962) – that impact audiences.

2.7 | Effects of conflict coverage: a composite model

The discussions till now has brought to fore the complexities of studying conflict reportage. While the normative concept of peace journalism is laudable for its idealistic ambitions, the propaganda model explains media behaviour to an extent, and cultivation analysis provide deeper insights into how news influences the way the audience perceive conflict situations, these on their own offer only a rudimentary understanding of the interactions among media, conflict politics and conflict-pursuance. Israeli scholar Gadi Wolfsfeld’s politics-media-politics (PMP) model, which

builds on all these bodies of literature, is a more sophisticated attempt at explaining this complex equation.

Not dissimilar to the views of MacArthur (1993), Robinson (2002), and Morrison & Tumber (1988), Wolfsfeld believes (2004) media coverage may not be able to start or stop a war on its own, but it could facilitate either (Wolfsfeld 2004). Conflict, as we know, is “quintessentially newsworthy” (Cottle 2006, p76), brimming with ‘news values’ (Galtung & Ruge 1965; see also Brighton & Foy 2007) such as violence, and deviance. Wolfsfeld (2004, p18), presenting a revised⁶¹ set of news values, argues that underlying the media’s fascination with conflicts is a search for drama. This “need for excitement” leads to a situation where “every act of violence, every crisis, and every sign of conflict is considered news... extremism is exciting while moderation is dull”. The reporters, thus, have a professional interest in making all confrontations appear dramatic and extreme. “Drama,” writes Wolfsfeld (2004, p18), “is the quintessential element of any ‘good’ news story.” This “obsessive search for drama” can exacerbate situations (see also Clutterbuck 1981 and Hammond & Herman 2000). On the other hand, in a peace process (which is regarded as less newsworthy than violence), it has the power to promote resolution as well by helping set up an encouraging political environment.

2.7.1 | *Four media influences*

Wolfsfeld backgrounds his PMP model with four types of media influences. First, and most importantly, he argues it can define the political atmosphere, by “providing citizens with important clues about the political climate” (2004, p11). Such definitions are important as peace attempts need a conducive political atmosphere – one in which the overall hostility is declining and the other is presented as less of a threat and as honouring its commitments – to take roots.

Wolfsfeld, building on the works of scholars such as Bar-Tal (1998, 2000) and Galtung (1969, 1985, 1986), uses the analogy of a financial investment to make his point:

“People are less likely to invest in the stock market when there is a recession. A general mood of economic optimism, on the other hand, inevitably leads to increased investment. The same can be said about investing in peace: people are more likely to support a peace process when the general mood appears to be upbeat and optimistic.” (p11-12)

The second influence of the media is its capability to define the nature of public debate. As the news media are the central arena for political debate, the actors in a conflict have few alternative channels to promote their ideas to the public. Wolfsfeld compares the media debate on a conflict to a courtroom drama. As legal arguments have a prescribed language and demeanour, “so do arguments carried out on television, radio and in newspaper. It is a procrustean bed in which ideologies and positions are often reduced to slogans and sound bites (2004, p12).”

A third influence is on the behaviour and strategies of the actors in the conflict. Because they consider the media a crucial factor, most actors adapt⁶² their plans and actions in accordance with media needs⁶³. This impact is greater on the weaker actors, who find the surest way to get the media’s attention is do something extreme. “Groups who chose to ignore the media may be excluded from the debate,” contends Wolfsfeld (2004, p13).

Further, the media influences the strategies and behaviour of the policy-makers. Wolfsfeld speaks of how leaders come under pressure to “do something” when violence breaks out. The media, in such situations, accentuates the sense of urgency by dramatically increasing the public anxiety, forcing further changes in the policies regarding a conflict.

2.7.2 | *The politics-media-politics cycle*

The PMP model sees the media as a dynamic enterprise, in which political antagonists compete for political control (Wolfsfeld 1997, 2001, 2004). It is not a passive mouthpiece with a set ideology to protect dominant interests, as with Herman & Chomsky, but an arena capable of presenting different opportunities (1997, p5) — metaphorically, a modern sports facility that can be converted into several structures, each designed for a different type of event — and capable of change over time, as the power balance between the antagonists shifts.

The model can be summarised thus: changes in the political environment lead to changes in media performance that often lead to further changes in the political environment. Wolfsfeld thus sees politics as the more crucial determinant in the media-politics equation (he is in line with Robinson 2002 here). It is changes in the political context – Wolfsfeld terms it “political wave” – that initiates “changes in media performance” (p31-32). However, the changed media performance could initiate fresh changes in the politics governing conflicts. This the media brings about by increasing the impact of the changed political environment – or political cycle – by *amplifying*⁶⁴ them. Which, in turn, is dependent on the *quantity* and *quality* of the media coverage. In other words, the *amount* of news space and the *way* the issue is presented – whether it carries “exaggerated, emotional” (p64) overtones or is sans sensation – will determine its degree of political impact. Once a political wave has begun, no journalist wants to be left behind (Lawrence & Bennett 2000 cited in Wolfsfeld 2004), and it is this precisely that will result in further changes in the political environment. Wolfsfeld explains it thus:

The topic dominates the news on television, radio, talk shows, and phone-in programs.

These are stories people talk about and there is a predictable spike in news consumption.

The story is everywhere and political actors are expected to respond to it; it is the type of story that is almost impossible to ignore. (2004, p32)

Besides amplification, the PMP cycle highlights two other media contributions in conflict situations. One, it decides when a political wave should end by making a deliberate editorial decision. While this is dependent on the size of the particular political wave and what happens on ground, Wolfsfeld argues that the media “not only signals the fact that the climate has changed”, but plays “a part in producing that shift” (p33).

Secondly, the media gives the false impression that there has been a rise in the occurrences that has contributed to the political wave: once engulfed, “the media turns into a massive search engine frantically looking for information and events” that are consistent; “after key events, journalists go out looking for related stories” (p33). This turn of event can become particularly important when such political waves can provide advantage to one side and disadvantage to another.

2.7.3 | *The Principle of Unintended Consequences*

The PMP model portrays journalists as professionals who thrive on negative news, people who actively seek out the tragedy of war at the expense of ‘peace’ news. This, however, does not fit with what many journalists are in real life. Most, it can argued, are liberal beings, who covet peace, have a “moral objection to violence” (Wolfsfeld 2004, p23), and “are often among the first to support efforts towards peace and reconciliation”. Why then this discrepancy between what they are in person and how they behave professionally? Wolfsfeld explains this with what he calls the Principle of Unintended Consequences, using this analogy:

Think if you will, of a set of parents with two children. One child is extremely well behaved and successful. The other is a problem child: difficult to discipline and always getting into fights at school. The parents get nothing but joy from the first and mostly aggravation from the second. Although they may be reluctant to admit it, they have much more trouble loving the difficult child than their angel. It turns out, however, that they end up devoting much more time, energy, and attention to the difficult child. In doing so, some might argue, they may in fact be reinforcing the exact behaviour they are attempting to prevent. This would certainly be the case if a need for attention were one of the reasons for the disruptive behaviour. The better-behaved child might justifiably feel neglected. The parents certainly had no intention of rewarding bad behaviour, but may inadvertently be doing just that.

(2004, p24)

The news media behave in a similar fashion as the set of parents. Though it prefers peace, it ends up acting as if it values conflict, devoting almost all its attention to violence, in the process encouraging the very acts it abhors. “Peace-loving journalists” thus become “inadvertent mechanisms in the promotion of war. These are the unintended consequences that are rooted in the standard norms and routines for the construction of news” (Wolfsfeld 2004, p24).

Though differing in focus, the propaganda model, Kellner’s work on media culture, and the PMP model can supplement each other. As Cottle (2006, p18-188) suggests after a thorough discussion of these models, “though we cannot simply collapse them into one another ... each helps to sharpen sights on particular objects of enquiry and sometimes on different dimensions of the same”. Noteworthy in this context are the significant similarities among these approaches. Both Wolfsfeld and Kellner agree that media attention is contested for, while Herman & Chomsky (1988, 1999), though glad to leave the elite in control, do not rule out non-elite challenges. Again, Wolfsfeld is one with Herman & Chomsky in their assessment that political

decision-making is more likely to influence the media than the other way round (though he doesn't see the media as a passive tool). He also concurs with the two in that "the authorities" have an advantage over the "challengers" in the quality and quantity of media control they receive.

2.8 | Realigning conflict journalism

The media, it can hence be argued, is a significant force in any conflict, shaping its pursuance and conduct. Such 'power' brings with it – or should⁶⁵ bring with it – heightened responsibility. It requires journalists to exercise an even more acute sense of ethics and responsibility in war zones. Unfortunately, this is lacking (Clutterbuck 1981, Guru 2003, Schechter 2003, Stromback 2005); in the fog of war it is exceptionally difficult to apply the traditional principles of reporting. One reason for this could be that the canons of journalism were developed for 'normal' news, hence not suitable for an 'abnormal' situation⁶⁶. "War reporting," write Allan & Zelizer (2004, p4), "demands that notions of what constitutes good journalistic practice be realigned on the basis of different criteria than would typically seem appropriate...."

The suggestion is well supported by Wolfsfeld's findings. Given the constraints in which conflict news is constructed, he concludes, the media generally plays "a negative role in attempts to bring peace" (Wolfsfeld 2004, p220). The many practical, political and ethnocentric forces bearing down on news organisations in conflict situations, including the Principle of Unintended Consequences, ensure that journalists mostly 'play up' war at the cost of peace news. Continuous immersion of audience in such news, of violence perpetrated against 'us' by 'them', will shape their reality and societal beliefs, contributing to a conflictive ethos – which would render reconciliation difficult, if not impossible. 'Positive' coverage, on the other hand, could help

negate this, promoting a peace ethos among societal members (Bar-Tal 1998) and a political atmosphere conducive of making peace (Wolfsfeld 2004).

It is safe then to say that persisting with the conventional ways of covering wars as practiced today is not constructive. As we have seen, objectivity as an ideal for conflict journalism is riddled with constraints of extreme severity. Even discounting the economic, political and practical constraints on news organisations in war situations, it is unlikely that reporters on the ground can rise above their ethnocentric sentiments or remain unaffected by the violence they witness. The disassociation of the personal from the professional in such situations, even by way of a strategic ritual, is impossible – and most attempts at that, it can be argued, produce self-conscious, rigid, ‘unnatural’ reportage, a sliver of an artificially constructed reality that is passed on as untarnished ‘truth’. The normative peace journalism, while commendable for its idealism, suffers from many of the same foundational ailments: good and bad, and truth and untruth are not objective facts but matters of interpretation – and prescription pills, particularly ones based on interpretations blurred by a plethora of social and cultural factors, are impossible to swallow in the heat and dust of violence (Bell 1997, Adie 1998). Moreover, it is easy for ‘attached’ journalists to lose sight of their professional obligations (Weaver 1998) on the slippery slope of subjectivity and turn crusaders dealing in less than the ‘whole truth’ to serve a ‘bigger’ obligation.

2.8 | Intractable Kashmir

The Kashmir dispute is one of the most protracted conflicts in the world, exhibiting many of the features that Bar-Tal (1998) and Kriesberg (1993) use to identify intractability. Rooted in a history of ill-governance and political grievances spread across two centuries, and fanned by a high-handed state policy that treated a chronic political malaise with symptomatic cures (as discussed in chapter 1), it has evaded a resolution for nearly two decades now, affecting at least

one whole generation, and consuming tens of thousands of lives. For much of this period both India and Pakistan viewed their goals as radically opposite, refusing to consider compromise solutions. Both sides had invested heavily in the conflict – militarily, economically and psychologically – so that ‘backing down’ was not easy. Kashmir thus has remained a protracted, violent, zero-sum conflict for all antagonists, an issue threatening their very survival, a persistent preoccupation on their public agendas – an intractable situation from which it was difficult to disengage.

The media, as we have seen, are a significant player in such situations, influencing strategic conflict-pursuance. While this influence – going by the arguments of scholars such as Carruthers (2000), Moeller (2004), Manoff (1997, 1998), Bar-Tal (2000) and Wolfsfeld (2004) – is mostly destructive, the media are also *capable* of positive influence. For instance, news coverage can help create an environment in which solutions can be explored. How did the Indian and Pakistani media behave in the Kashmir situation? The next chapter presents an impressionistic overview.

Overview of Indian, Pakistani news coverage

3 | Kashmir mediatised

OF THE MANY conflicts independent India has witnessed in its rather short history – the insurgency in the north-eastern states, the Punjab separatism, and the Maoist rebellion in central India, to name just three – none has received such widespread and sustained media attention as Kashmir. Besides the ‘quintessential’ news values (Cottle 2006, p76) inherent in every violent conflict, several other factors strengthen its newsworthiness for the Indian – and also the Pakistani – public.

At the core of the media fascination lies the significance India and Pakistan attach to Kashmir. Both see the state as central to their national identities, underpinning, as it were, India’s ‘secular nationalism’ and Pakistan’s ‘Muslim nationalism’ (Bose 1999). As the only Muslim-majority state in the Indian Union, Kashmir is the “centrepiece of democratic diversity” (Bose 2003, p44; see also Mattoo 2003), an “assurance that a Muslim-majority province can thrive in a Hindu-majority India” (Sonwalkar 2004, p214). Pakistan, for its part, see the state as rightfully its: following the logic of Partition, “with a Muslim population outnumbering the Hindu three to one” (Tan & Kudaisya 2000, p224), and a relatively more pronounced geographical contiguity favouring it, it feels the princely state should naturally have come to it. In essence, this state of affairs means the conflict involves two of South Asia’s largest ‘imagined’ communities (Anderson 1991), two of its most significant ‘in-groups’, divided along the lines of not just an imagining of nationhood – or, as Khan (2007, p10) puts it, the pull of “two opposing nationalisms” – but by the strong bonds of religious identity as well (see also Pandey 2006, p33-38). Owing to their intertwined history and territorial proximity, both the ‘in-group’ – and here I extend the argument made in section 2.3 of chapter 2 based on the work of Tajfel (1981), Eiser

(1986), Bhabha (1990), Hall (1991) and Sumner (2002) – view the other as its most significant ‘out-group’. To both, the neighbour is the ‘foreign other’, on which their identity, the ‘national we’, is based. Both, in line with the argument of scholars such as Billig (1996) and Wetherell & Potter (1992), identify *against* the neighbour to affirm own identity (as Billig 1996, Wetherell & Potter 1992). Tan & Kudaisya (2000, p226) capture the essence of this ‘othering’ when they write that “the antipathy between India and Pakistan is exacerbated by the sharply contrasting self-images of both countries”, wherein the former “proudly affirms the secular nature of its polity” while the latter “sees itself as the homeland for all Muslims in South Asia”. In such a scenario, as a conflict founded on a concern contested with the significant ‘other’, Kashmir acquires all the more relevance to the media in both the nations.

Adding to this is another synergistic factor that accentuates the state’s importance, particularly to India: Kashmir’s exit would “set off a powerful centrifugal forces in other parts of the country”, strengthening similar separatist claims, and so the “question of control of Kashmir goes to the very basis of the state-building enterprise in South Asia” (Ganguly 1996, p79-80). Again, as Sonwalkar (2004, p216) points out, Kashmir has “an evocative resonance in the mists and myths of early Hinduism”, inspiring “much poetry and Bollywood themes over the years”, and thus has underlined its place in mainstream discourse in a more pronounced way compared to other continuing conflicts in India, such as the violence in its north-eastern states. Kashmir’s proximity to the Indian capital of New Delhi – which is also the capital of Indian political journalism – has contributed further to the extra media attention, cementing not just its strong links with mainstream India as symbolised by that city, but also facilitating easier newsgathering, including reporting forays to the valley by senior Delhi-based journalists.

The Indian and Pakistani media have hence lavished attention on the Kashmir conflict, providing it the persistent prominence and centrality reserved for intractable conflicts. Given the

significance of journalism in such situations discussed in the last chapter, it is beneficial to consider the media context in which these bodies of coverage are situated. This chapter presents an overview. It profiles the mediascape in India and Pakistan and suggests that newspapers, particularly English publications, are a defining force in both nations as English remains the principal language for acquiring power (Rahman 2004, 2005), the *lingua franca* of the educated and elite (discussed in section 3.3). Further, drawing on literature, pilot examinations of news content on Kashmir⁶⁷, personal interviews, and personal association with the Indian mainstream journalism, it discusses the major trends in the coverage visible at the outset. While the main idea is to produce a discursive profile that would inform the methodological demands of this study and help arrive at a suitable research design, an attempt is also made towards the end (in sections 3.6 and 3.7) to provide some insights into the trends by examining data from personal interviews.

3.1 | The mediascape of India and Pakistan

The Indian mediascape is vast. A sprawling communication network across 3.2 million sq km, 28 states and seven union territories, it supports a democracy of 1.14 billion people. It has 22 major languages (some 105 in all), besides English (Ananthamurthy 2000). A panoramic profile of it could read like this: some 62,000 print publications, 562 television and 312 radio stations, 383 million television viewers, 190 million radio listeners, 42 million Internet users, 300 million print readers.

It is remarkably vibrant. Buoyed by neo-liberal, market-oriented economic policies (Thussu 1999, 2000) in the 1990s and thereafter consumed by the hunger of a burgeoning TV-owning, radio-listening, newspaper-reading middle class of roughly 250 million, it has grown exponentially in the last two decades (Sonwalkar 2002, Rao & Johal 2006). This trend, which is expected to continue (Dolnick 2007), has not limited itself to the electronic media. The Indian

newspapers, as Jefferey (1987, 1993, 2000) points out, have grown 500 per cent in the 20 years since the late 1970s, owing to improved technology that enables quality production and distribution, steadily expanding literacy, increased purchasing power, an aggressive and highly competitive publishing industry, and political excitement. The logic of capitalism, Jefferey (1993, p207) writes, has driven the newspaper industry “as strongly as a thirsty potential readership”.

And the trend is set to carry on. In fact, even at a time when the outlook for the ‘old’ media is bleak in many western countries, the Indian print media recorded significant expansion. According to the Office of the Registrar of Newspapers for India, the 1956-founded governmental body that maintains particulars of all print publications in the country, 2,070 new publications were registered in 2005-2006, taking the total up from 60,413 of the previous year to 62,483. And the total circulation rose 12.93%, from 156 million to 180 million⁶⁸.

Besides the impressive numbers, another factor helps cement the centrality of print media to this study. Television – as also the Internet⁶⁹ – is a latecomer to Kashmir coverage. While TV played a crucial role in the late 90s and thereafter, particularly during the 1999 Kargil war, it produced limited coverage for a limited audience in the initial phases of the conflict. Adding to this was the fact that stations of the state-owned television⁷⁰ and radio – Doordarshan and All India Radio, respectively – in Kashmir were shut down as they were targeted by militants, prompting the electronic journalists to mostly broadcast from far, with fewer forays into the conflict zone.

The print media, however, produced a sustained coverage. National newspapers such as *The Times of India*, *Hindustan Times* and *Indian Express* had a longer and more continuous reportorial presence in Kashmir than their electronic counterparts, and supplemented by the efforts of ‘parachute’ journalists – visiting correspondents – from Delhi, these publications

produced a more complete and consistent coverage. This was particularly true of the times when militants ‘banned’ national media reporters from Kashmir: unencumbered by crew and cameras and the more taxing demands of sound and visual, print journalists – news agency journalists included – kept the public updated on the happenings in the Kashmir valley. True 24-hour channels have emerged as “a preferred medium of much of the political discourse” (Sonwalkar 2001, p514) in recent years, but print media – as attested by its growing circulation and extended penetration – continue to be an influential force.

An examination of the Indian media will be incompletely contextualised without a look at the Pakistani mediascape. Given their history and proximity, both are inexorably intertwined, perhaps more so now than before, often serving as a platform for political leaders to engage in a war of words. Scholars such as Barraclough (2001) and Thussu (2002) have touched upon this trend, as has Sonwalkar (2001, p506) with his comment in the larger south Asian context: “[T]he media content of one country routinely impacts on society and politics of another, often in a serious way.”

In comparison to the Indian scenario, the Pakistani mediascape is considerably smaller. But it is dynamic, a strong political force despite working in an Islamic republic that has seen military regimes replacing elected governments for more than half its existence – an ‘autocratic kleptocracy’, as a former US ambassador to Pakistan (cited in Nadadur 2007) terms it – and the media statistics involved are quite impressive.

Less than one-fourth of India’s geographical area (803, 940 sq km), and with one-seventh its population (169 million), Pakistan is served by some 1,800 print publications (Press Reference) with a circulation of 6 million (Nadadur 2007). It has 40-odd television stations (BBC 2008) and, according to the Economic Survey of Pakistan 2006-07, 68 radio stations. It has five million

Internet users (ISPAK 2008), and at least 13.5 million radio listeners (Press Reference). The ESP 2000-2001 placed terrestrial television viewership at 39 million adults and satellite viewership at an estimated five million (cited in Sarwar 2003), both of which are likely to have grown considerably.

As in the Indian context, the press has played a vital role in presenting the Kashmir conflict to the Pakistani public, for similar reasons. The state-owned Pakistan Television had a virtual monopoly over channels till about 2001 (Sarwar 2003) and was not a particularly vibrant organisation, serving a limited audience in the earlier phases of the conflict in comparison to the print. The radio, too, though with a larger audience base, was – and is – a government-controlled monopoly, plagued with all the ills associated with state control and single-ownership. The print media, on the other hand, has functioned more freely. As Nadadur (2007, p45) puts it, it has a “tradition of fierce autonomy as an independent and viable institution ... unlike the television (TV) and broadcast media, which have only recently begun to emerge from the shadows of the government’s monopoly, print media has always played an important role in Pakistani society”.

Here a summary of media freedom in both countries would be in order. Neither India nor Pakistan makes the first 100 on the Reporters Sans Frontiers Worldwide Press Freedom Index 2007. Among the 169 countries ranked, India is 120th and Pakistan 152nd. In India through laws such as Official Secrets Act and Prevention of Terrorism Act, and a mix of politico-economic pressures, the state can limit media freedom – which it has done on occasions. Despite this Indian media are considered free (Mitton 2000 cited in Sonwalkar 2002, Rao & Johal 2006, Ravindranath 2004), and Freedom House, in its 2008 Survey of Global Political Rights and Civil Liberties, records it literally so. But perhaps a more accurate description is captured in Sonwalkar’s observation (2002, p825) that the press is “largely” free of government control, its record “unique in the developing world”.

The Pakistan media, for its part, are “not free” (Freedom House 2008). Besides the direct control the government exercises on radio and television, the state uses a variety of other means to limit free flow of information – among these, laws such as the Official Secrets Act, the Security of Pakistan Act, and the Maintenance of Public Order Ordinance (for a comprehensive summary see Sarwar 2003). Pakistan’s history of military regimes and the control its military exercised from behind the scenes even in times of elected governments helped contain the media considerably. Nadadur (2007) writes of self-censorship in the media as well, brought about by a mix of factors: the oligopolistic nature of press ownership which leads to exploitation of individual journalists and impedes free market competition, the legal system that bestows on the government supreme regulatory powers, and the threat to personal safety the journalists work under, among others. Many Pakistani journalists acknowledge these limitations. Writes Sarwar (2003): “While the relative freedom they are allowed is crucial to the struggle for democracy in the country and to peace in the region, it also operates as a sort of window dressing, to show the world how tolerant of dissent the government is.” The positive factor here is that the press has survived – indeed grown – despite these conditions.

3.2 | The press in India and Pakistan

The history of the English press – indeed the press – in the Indian subcontinent began with an English paper. First published from Calcutta in 1780 by an Irish man of unsound finances named James Augustus Hickey (Quennell 1960), the *Hickey's Bengal Gazette or the Original Calcutta General Advertiser* was a weekly newspaper with an unassuming circulation of 200 (Johar 2000). It was “lively, irreverent, probing, scandalous and irresponsible, telling all that the honourable East India Company and the genteel society of Calcutta wished to hide” (Verghese 2000, p303). In the years that followed, the number of publications grew, the press grew in

stature, moving away from the tabloid tone of the *Bengal Gazette*, and becoming a serious, significant, mainstream force. As Verghese (2000, p303) puts it, “Things changed” and “the Indian press never looked back”.

The Indian independence struggle proved to be its watershed. The press was closely associated with the movement, which, as Ram (2000) writes, largely accounts for its seriousness, relevance, agenda-setting role and public-spirited journalism. It “consolidated ideas of modernity, and contributed to the evolution of a national identity, despite low literacy and strict press laws introduced by the colonial administration” (Sonwalkar 2002, p823). Chandra *et al* (1988, p15) expand: “...from the beginning, the nationalists fought against attacks by the State on the freedom of the Press, expression and association, and made the struggle for these freedoms an integral part of the national movement.” Thus, the press fought against “repressive anti-press legal measures” and “colonial action against free speech and expression such as the sedition trials of Bal Gangadhar Tilak in 1887 and 1908 and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi in 1922” (Ram 2000, p243). And it continued to grow rapidly: by 1830 there were 33 English and 16 vernacular publications, by 1870 140-odd newspapers, and by 1941 some 4,000 newspapers and magazines across 17 languages, all-colonial in their stance (Desai 1976; see also Sonwalkar 2002).

By the time India became independent in 1947, the subcontinent had already acquired “a sophisticated press, experienced in agitation, but also knowledgeable in the arts of the government” (Smith 1980, p159). In the decades since, newspapers have grown exponentially, playing a significant role in civil life⁷¹, particularly in India, particularly after the late 1970s (Jeffrey 1987, 1993) – so much so that today India has the most complex and highly developed newspaper industry in the world (Jeffrey 2000). At the turn of the 21st century, the print media was offering “a product line that is dizzying in its diverse array of languages, ownership structures, and topics” (Viswanath & Karan 2000, p92). It is not surprising then that there are

currently 62,483 registered print publications in India. Of this 8,000-odd can be termed ‘major’ players, accounting for most of the circulation. A summary of this core group – and here we include just the major categories of publications – could read like this (RNI figures of 2005-06): 2,130 dailies with a total circulation of 88.9 million, 3,428 weeklies (50.5 million), 955 fortnightlies (12.3 million), and 1,471 monthlies (21.1 million).

A similar sketch of the Pakistan print media shows there are some 150 major publications, which, using Sarwar’s figures (2003), can be broken down into this conservative estimate: 49 dailies, 8 weeklies, 3 fortnightlies, and 63 monthlies. The grand total of newspaper readers in the country is 30.53 million, 14.5 of them regulars; and magazine readers number approximately 9 million (Pakistan Economic Survey 2001 cited in Sarwar 2003).

In both countries the vernacular press is way ahead of the English publications in circulation and reach. There are only 204 English dailies in India, against some 942 newspapers in Hindi alone, not to mention other leading languages such as Urdu (191 dailies), Telugu (147), Marathi (130) and Gujarati (100). Circulation-wise English newspapers print 34.1 million copies every day (RNI 2006), second only to Hindi (77 million), but this pales when contrasted with the circulation of the language press as a whole. And the case is same in Pakistan, where the 57-odd vernacular dailies, with Urdu newspapers leading the way, exceedingly out-circulate the 23-odd English papers.

3.3 | Centrality of the English press

Despite this unquestionable domination of the language publications, English dailies occupy a position of privilege in the Indian and Pakistani press industries. Jefferson (2000, pxii) touches on this trend when he writes about how English has become an Indian language and the English

language press has been at the centre of the Indian newspaper revolution, significant in a subtler way, much like the Sherlockian dog that didn't bark. Thomas (2000), Sarwar (2003) and Haque & Narag (1983) express this more concretely: though significantly smaller than the language press, the English press is disproportionately powerful in both India and Pakistan.

Scholars trace this significance to the colonial era, when the British used English in the domains of power in the subcontinent, as the language to rule. Indian and Pakistan rulers have continued this trend, ensuring it remains the principal language for acquiring power (Rahman 2004, 2005). English, hence, remains coveted in this part of the world, the *lingua franca* of the educated and elite, the link language of a multilingual subcontinent (Sonwalkar 2002). The result is that in India, with its diverse array of regional languages, the English press has stood in for the national press (Joseph & Sharma 1994). It is in this context that Windmiller (1954, p315) observed that the "Indian press is the only national press and it is paramount in the world of Indian journalism". The case has been similar in Pakistan as well, for much the same reasons. Thus, in both countries, the English press has knit together an elite – and powerful – public sphere. Though made in the Indian context, Thomas's observation (2000, p189) can be seen as a fair summarisation of this: "The English language media have a nation-wide readership, with regional editions, all of which links the elite and middle classes speaking a variety of regional languages into a common national public audience."

Since the solitary *Bengal Gazette* of 1780 with its 200-odd copies, the English press has grown exponentially, into a powerhouse of publications. The major among the English general news dailies in India are *The Times of India* from Bennett and Coleman Ltd, *The Hindustan Times* from HT Media Group, and *The Indian Express* from the Indian Express Group, all headquartered in the north Indian capital city of Delhi, with its bulk of circulation in north and central India; *The Hindu* from the The Hindu Group, headquartered in the south Indian city of

Chennai, dominant in the southern regions; and *Telegraph* from the Anand Bazar Patrika Group, based in Kolkatta and the largest circulated in the eastern regions. All are published from multiple locations and bar *The Hindu* are multi-editioned. Other notable dailies and their main centres of publication are *The Statesman* (Delhi, Calcutta), *The Pioneer* (New Delhi, Lucknow), *Deccan Herald* (Bangalore), *The Tribune* (Chandigarh, New Delhi), *The Daily News & Analysis* (Mumbai), *The Assam Tribune* (Guwahati), *Deccan Chronicle* (Hyderabad) and *The Hitavada* (Nagpur).

Among these, *The Times of India*, *Hindustan Times*, *The Hindu*, and *The Indian Express* are seen as extremely influential with the ruling elite (Kaushal 1997, Viswanath & Karan 2000) – or as Singh (1992, cited in Sonwalkar 2002, p830) puts it, among “the prime moulders of policy”. To a significant extent this is a product of their readership in the corridors of power in Delhi, the political capital. According to the Indian Readership Survey 2008 (Round 2), the *ToI*, with a circulation of 2.1 million, is the leading English newspaper in Delhi, a position it had coveted for years. The dethroned *Hindustan Times* now ranks second, with 1.9 million readers, followed by *The Hindu* (79,000) and *The Indian Express* (66,000).

The Pakistani media are oligopolistic (Nadadur 2007) dominated by three groups: the Pakistan Herald Publications, with its flagship newspaper *Dawn*; Jang, which publishes *The News International*; and Nawa-i-Waqt, owners of *The Nation*. The other notable among the dailies and their major centres of publications are the *Business Recorder* (Karachi), *Daily Pakistan* (Lahore), *Daily Times* (Lahore), *The Frontier Post* (Peshawar), and *The Herald* (Karachi; from the Dawn group). *The News* and *Dawn* are the two largest circulated English dailies, the main contenders for the number one slot, which has changed hands more than once. As per the 2004 Audit Bureau of Circulation figures, *The News* is ahead marginally, with 140,000 copies to *Dawn*'s 138,000.

Both are multi-edition publications, with a sizeable readership in Islamabad and also Lahore and Karachi, the other major centres of power.

3.4 | The press and Kashmir

As the conflict that has received the most sustained media attention, for reasons discussed earlier in this chapter, Kashmir has figured persistently in the Indian press. Tens of thousands of column inches have been dedicated to it, not just in the national English press, but in the many regional dailies across the country, including, of course, the publications from Kashmir. Two broad and diverging streams can be seen to emerge from this extended coverage: an anti-state, militancy-supporting, separatist variety of journalism, practiced by the Kashmiri papers (also by the Pakistani press); and a state-supporting, anti-militant, nationalistic variety, practised exclusively by the non-Kashmir publications.

3.4.1 | *Press in Kashmir*

Given the conditions it survives under, the press in Kashmir – and Kashmir is used not as an umbrella term for J&K state here, but for the valley of Kashmir, the main region of insurgency – has been an exceptionally vociferous institution, publishing prolifically, in Urdu and English (Parekh 1995). Since the conflict took roots in 1989, the valley has seen a remarkable growth in journalism and journalists. Many new publications surfaced, and scores of Kashmiris became reporters and photographers, working for not just local publications but as stringers for the national and international media. As an institution, however, the local press was anti-government – bar the pro-government *Kashmir Times* and *Excelsior*, both published from Jammu but with a significant readership in the Kashmir valley – and demonstrated a clear pro-militant stance, particularly in the first decade. Reports were often uncorroborated and exaggerated. Pakistan was

the ally and India the occupying force, the deceiver who had backed down on the promised right to self-determination. Human rights violations by security forces were focussed on, and the language was unapologetically shrill and partisan. Here is an example from the Srinagar-based *Kashmir Observer*:

Eyewitnesses said that people urged the army men to release them [*two civilians*] but instead they pumped bullets into their bodies killing them instantly. After killing them in cold blood, the fleeing jawans [*soldiers*] fired several rounds into the air to disperse the angry mob. The bodies lied [*sic*] at the spot for several hours.

Another from *The Greater Kashmir*:

People are terrified and an eerie silence prevails and most of the youth have left the village Dharmunah in district Budgam as what the residents said [*sic*], the security forces have unleashed a reign of terror. On Friday, they brutally tortured one Syed Aashiq Hussain to death and rendered several others critically injured. One of them Mohammed Yousef is battling for life in the Institute of Medical Soura.

This is the second killing in the past 15 days in the village. Earlier a militant of *Hizbul Mujahideen*, Nazir Ahmad Wani was shot at after he was arrested and he was led [*sic*] to bleed. Due to the loss of blood he succumbed in the Institute of Medical Sciences Soura.

Many such reports were not without truth. Violations by security forces have been well chronicled by the media and rights organisations (see Raman 2008 for a select compilation), but the one-sided views the Kashmir press mostly presented undermined its credibility severely. Many have highlighted this fault of the Kashmir press, including journalists of the national media, who look on local reportage with professional disdain; and the tendency among policymakers – federal politicians, state administrators, and security force officers – is to dismiss the local media

as mouthpieces of militancy. Such criticism, and journalism, needs to be read in light of the constraints local newspapers labour under, however.

Not only do the Kashmiri journalists lack the infrastructure and resources that their national counterparts have (Ahmad, undated), many are self-made journalists who switched to the profession almost overnight. The Indian establishment looked upon them with suspicion, seeing them as members of a secessionist society. Their access to information was by and large limited to government press handouts, even as ‘parachute’ reporters were entertained and cultivated. Economically, too, the press was disadvantaged, as, in the absence of a private sector, it was dependent on government advertisements or similar paid notices from the secessionist side for sustenance. Added to this is the fact they function in one of the most dangerous conflict zones in the world, facing the very real threat of the gun every day, from the militants (and also the military). As a Kashmiri journalist put it very succinctly:

You write a story and take the next plane home. But we live here. First we need to live to write the story. And after we write the story, we need to still live. (Personal interview, July 2007)

Another reporter, who also spoke of government coercion, added to this:

Many times I have got stories, good stories, about militants. But I knew if I filed, I would get killed. I have also had trouble with some stories I filed. I have had many sleepless nights. You need to weigh every bit of information you get and think how it would be read by different people very consciously. You need to keep that always in your mind. (Personal interview, July 2007)

Dr Farooq Abdullah, the former chief minister of J&K, appears to capture the essence of these issues with his rather bitter comment:

You have the money, you can purchase the media. And they will write the stories ... When the militancy was at its peak no paper would write anything other than what they [militants] gave them. They gave a written thing and said you write this, and you will not write that, otherwise we will eliminate you. So gun became the decider as to what the paper will say. (Personal interview, July 2007)

The economic dependence coupled with the threat perception, thus, made the local newspapers extremely vulnerable to coercion. Adding to this was the ethical vacuum they worked in, occasioned by the situation and accentuated by the lack of professional training. Further, reporters also pointed to the social pressures they worked under. A Kashmiri correspondent who works for the national media from Srinagar talked about this at length:

When I go to a family gathering or a party, I feel like a social outcast. They expect me to always write against the government. They blame everything on the government of India. Suppose there is a bad harvest of apples this year. They will say it is the government of India's fault. How? Oh, because the government of India supplied contaminated pesticide. Their mindset is like that ... Every time I write a story I get phone calls from family, friends, relatives. What have you done? What have you written? Don't you know it would be misread by this section or that section? It is a very difficult situation.

(Personal interview, July 2007)

One way to deal with this pressure, at least to an extent, as well as the pressure of physical danger, was to avoid analytical or explanatory pieces and stick to routine stories, journalists said. Also, even in routine news to make sure the report is "balanced by getting both sides of the story". This was something gatekeepers also encouraged. A news editor said in a

personal interview (2007) that he insisted on his reporters getting the security version as well if they cited a militant source. “That way we are not seen deliberately favouring one side,” he said.

Though the situation has improved in the last five years (Sreedharan 2007), and the press is under less duress, the cumulative effect is a weakened media. In its way it shaped the conflict, influencing the local populace and adding to the coverage. But for most of its existence, it had little influence elsewhere, not with the national public or intelligentsia or policymakers. In the larger scheme, perhaps its more lasting contribution is that individual Kashmiri journalists helped the national and international media document the conflict for the benefit of a wider audience.

3.4.2 | *Press in Pakistan*

On many issues, the press in Pakistan has been highly critical of government policies. But on Kashmir it has supported the establishment, maybe with occasional murmurings but overall rather wholeheartedly. While the language press has been more strident in its support, the English press is not too far behind in mirroring Pakistan’s official position: that Kashmir should be settled in the light of the UN resolutions; and it is the core dispute between India and Pakistan, without resolving which state-to-state relations cannot improve.

So it is not surprising the narrative across the border is strikingly similar to that in the Kashmir papers – only bolder, shorn as they are of the constraints that shackle the valley press. The dominant news frame is of state terrorism in Kashmir. News of violence and unrest in the valley was routine and recorded painstakingly (‘12 more die in Kashmir battles’, ‘6 killed in Kashmir violence’, ‘18 killed in held Kashmir’, ‘Massive protests rock held Kashmir’, ‘50 injured, hundreds held in occupied Kashmir’). The main focus, again, was rights violations, with emphasis on details, projecting Indian security forces as carrying out “massacres of civilians” and perpetrators of “widespread torture, involving cruel and sadistic methods like mass rape,

summary executions of thousands of Kashmiri youth suspected of being militants. Reports of events like random killings of bystanders and defenceless people in their homes by the Indian military, border security forces and paramilitary forces are also picked up to highlight the nature of torture experienced by the people in the valley” (Sultan 2000, p6).

Headlines such as ‘Indian army set houses ablaze in valley’, ‘3 Kashmiris recount torture at the hands of Indian forces’, and ‘Indians kill one, injure 21 in held Kashmir’, ‘Gang-rape of Kashmiri girl condemned’, ‘Indian troops murder five more Kashmiris’, and ‘Indian troops martyr two more innocent Kashmiris’ were frequent. Headlines also mentioned ‘state terrorism’ directly (for instance: ‘State terrorism in Kashmir criticised’, ‘State terrorism in Kashmir must end for promoting peace’). An eagerness to play up human rights reports on Kashmir with dramatic headlines could also be noticed (‘HR abuses widespread in held Kashmir: Amnesty’, ‘Indian forces using brutal force: says Amnesty’). The Indian-administered Kashmir was referred to as ‘occupied Kashmir’ or ‘held Kashmir’ mostly, while the segment under Pakistani rule was Azad (Free) Kashmir. Militants were ‘mujahideens’ or freedom fighters and their deaths were often referred to as martyrdom (‘Indian troops martyr 5 freedom fighters’).

Such portrayals can be seen in the text of the reports as well. While Pakistani correspondents filed their stories using this standardised terminology, international wire service reports were edited to follow suit. A case in point is this ‘lead’ of an AFP report carried in *Dawn* on May 31, 2002 titled ‘Three cops killed in Mujahideen attack’ (emphasis added):

JAMMU, May 30: **Mujahideen** attacked a police post in **occupied** Kashmir on Wednesday night, sparking a 17-hour gunfight which left three Indian policemen and two of the **freedom fighters** dead.

AFP, AP and Reuters, which many Pakistani newspapers subscribe to, are famously shy of 'coloured' descriptors, choosing instead to use the more neutral 'rebel', 'militant', 'Indian Kashmir', 'Indian-administered Kashmir', or other such. But in the version of the report that appeared in *Dawn* there were seven mentions of 'mujahideen' and three of 'occupied' Kashmir. Also noteworthy is the rakish air the press bestows on the militant attack. The same report continues:

The Mujahideen had stormed the post at Doda, 172kms north of occupied Jammu, and killed three policemen on duty.

Five more policemen were injured after the Mujahideen barricaded themselves inside a two-storey building with 250 rooms and exchanged fire with Indian soldiers, a police spokesman said.

Other fighters in nearby forests and mountains gave cover to their colleagues and then managed to escape.

After the marathon gunbattle two Mujahideen were finally shot dead by soldiers and paramilitaries, the spokesman said.

The background in the story is framed similarly, presenting the militants as brave and adventurous.

The raid came two weeks after three Mujahideen attacked an Indian army camp in the held state, killing 32 soldiers and their families, before they themselves were shot dead.

The matter-of-fact deeds of the militants are in stark contrast to the way Indian forces are presented. This report in *Dawn* headlined ‘7 Indian soldiers killed in Kashmir’ (October 10, 2002) is a good example:

SRINAGAR, Oct 29: Mujahideen shot dead seven Indian soldiers on Tuesday and Monday night in occupied Kashmir, where troops claimed killing seven of the freedom fighters.

While ‘mujahideen’ successes are presented as the truth, the ‘occupying’ troops are shown as only making ‘claims’. And ‘mujahideen’ were mostly killed after ‘fierce gunbattles’, whereas Indian forces were simply ‘gunned down’. Unflattering descriptions of Indian political leaders were fairly common, especially the J&K head of government who is routinely referred to as the ‘puppet chief minister’. It is interesting to note that such terms are used irrespective of the nature of the news, even on the rare occasions when the Indian leader’s call is the same as that of Pakistan, as it happens in the second of the three excerpts below (emphasis added):

Security has also been upgraded around all major installations including Secretariat, **puppet** Assembly, **puppet** Chief Minister's house and railway station.

(‘Kashmir to observe Indian Republic Day as ‘Black Day’, *Pakistan Times*, January 25, 2004)

In occupied Kashmir, former **puppet** Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah has urged India to launch court martial proceedings against the soldiers who have committed human rights abuses in past 18 years in the valley, reports Kashmir Media Service.

(‘Abdullah demands court martial for Indian troops’, *Dawn*, November 23, 2007)

Faced with rapidly deteriorating security, the state's **puppet** chief minister issued an appeal for calm and vowed no accommodation for Hindu yatrees would be built until further notice. ('Two dead as riots escalate in Held Kashmir', *The Nation*, July 22, 2008)

Such profiling of the other side was not limited to the Pakistan press. It was a practice the Indian media partook with equal abandon.

3.4.3 | *Press in India*

As in Pakistan, on Kashmir the national press has stood firmly behind the government. The official position is that Kashmir's accession to India is final, it is an integral part of India – so there is no dispute to settle. The armed violence in Kashmir is a law and order problem, and Pakistan's support to militants is cross-border terrorism. This, the press reflects faithfully. As Joseph (2000, p42) writes:

The dominant discourse on Kashmir characterises it as a dispute between India and Pakistan, and a matter of national prestige. Consequently, the situation inside the Vale, or Valley of Kashmir is viewed strictly in terms of Indian State vs Pakistani-sponsored terrorism. Those who do not subscribe to the dominant discourse are portrayed as anti-national.

The initial phase of the conflict is seen as an indigenous movement (Sultan 2000), supported by Pakistan but stopping short of terrorism. Then it was 'insurgency' and the armed separatists were 'militants', 'extremists' or 'guerrillas'. As in these headlines: 'Extremists kidnap Mufti's daughter in Srinagar' (*Hindustan Times*, December 9, 1989) and 'Militants gun down 4 air force men' (*Times of India*, January 26, 1990). But thereafter, as the nature of militancy

changed with the arrival of non-Indian fighters, the references in the press changed as well. After passing through a brief phase of ‘mercenaries’ and ‘foreign militants’ (‘Mercenaries burn down Charar shrine’: *HT*, May 12, 1995), the press began to present violence in Kashmir as a proxy war “aided and abetted” by Pakistan. In this it was directed by the comments of the Indian political and military leaders. The conflict was not a freedom struggle or resistance but “Pakistan-sponsored” militancy, and press reports made frequent references to this in so many words, at times quoting government sources, at times not.

This phase, however, took on a sharper edge soon. Arguably led by statements from policymakers, particularly after the Kargil conflict of 1999, the media began to frame the conflict as cross-border terrorism. The post 9/11 period reinforced this frame. Some examples: ‘Nation committed to end Pak-backed terrorism’ (*The Tribune*, May 18, 2002), ‘Pak must abandon terrorism: Advani’ (*The Hindu*, August 22, 2002), ‘Pak-sponsored terrorism in Kashmir continues: US state department’ (*Indian Express*, April 30, 2003). The thawing India-Pakistan relations appear to have softened media representations in the last few years, but ‘cross-border terrorism’ and ‘Pakistan-sponsored militancy’ still prevail.

These aside, a longitudinal scan of the coverage shows a lack of substantive discussions. Reports on violence easily outnumbered discursive articles and features and were presented with heavy and unquestioning reliance on official sources, as in the following excerpts (emphasis added):

5 ultras, ASI⁷² killed in J&K

JAMMU: The security forces today killed two **Pakistan-trained** militants in Domana, about 5 km west of the city.

According to the police, on receipt of information from people of the area, who had spotted militants having gone into hiding in a field, a police party was rushed to the area. When the militants tried to flee soldiers, who had cordoned off the area, opened fire killing both of them on the spot. Some weapons and explosives were seized from the spot. (*The Tribune*, December 30, 2002)

Pak militant held

A Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HuM) ultra who had infiltrated into Indian territory **from Pakistan** was arrested by BSF near the Line of Control (LoC) in Tangdhar sector of Jammu and Kashmir, a BSF spokesman said on Monday.

Abdul Assam, a resident of Zhob district of Balochistan, was arrested in Tangdhar sector of North Kashmir's Kupwara district after a brief chase on Sunday, he said.

The militant, who was part of a large group of militants, sneaked **into the valley from across the border** during the intervening night of July 11-12.

However, nine of his associates fled back to **Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir** after they came under fire from BSF and army troops along the LoC, the spokesman said.

(*Hindustan Times*, July 21, 2008)

Both are single-source stories, faithful reproductions of statements by security officials, with no corroboration or additional reportage. The attempt, it would appear, is to present it as 'straight' news, an incident report, nothing more – but primed as cross-border terrorism, and coloured by references to Pakistan the reports are more likely than not received in that context –

as yet another violation in a continuing conflict fuelled by Pakistan. Joseph (2000), after an analysis of *The Hindu*, *Times of India* and *Indian Express*, provides empirical evidence to support this. Of the 423 reports on Kashmir violence she examined over a three-month period, 346 pieces – that is 82% – were news reports without any analysis. She also found a heavy reliance on government sources:

More significantly, a survey of the sources of these reports revealed that 230 of them were based on official statements/press releases. Of these an overwhelming 78% had as their sources Indian Government officials and leaders of the mainstream Indian politics. (Joseph 2000, p44)

It goes without saying such ‘handout’ stories – and the descriptors used therein – had institutional approval. Gatekeepers and senior editors, who in other cases would demand ‘balance’, were happy to lower the standards on Kashmir. Indeed many discouraged any other form of reportage; most Delhi-based newspapers, by the mid-90s, refused to provide space for any non-establishment views. A news editor spoke of this:

We are a main national newspaper. So we have to reflect the views of the Indians, the majority of the Indians. That has to be. I am an Indian, my newspaper is Indian by nature... not originating from Kashmir or Pakistan. Pakistan may call that portion Indian-occupied Kashmir, but for us it is Kashmir. Kashmir is part of Indian union. And it won't be Azad Kashmir [*for the portion of Kashmir in Pakistan*] in our news pages, come what may. It will be Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, not anything else. That is very clear. (Personal interview July 2007)

Unsurprising, then, is the grudging way most national newspapers approach the human rights situation in Kashmir. Despite the many reports by international organisations blaming security forces for rape, torture and custodial killings, the mainstream publications fail to chronicle such incidents adequately. And on the infrequent occasions those are reported, “the rationalization is laid on the logic that India is combating terrorism inspired by outside actors”, holding Pakistan “primarily responsible for sponsoring mercenaries” (Sultan 2000, p6). The official position is that such allegations are a deliberate attempt to discredit security forces – which view the national press promotes diligently. Besides editorials and opinion pieces advocating the need for countering such Pakistan propaganda (Joseph 2000), contributors in Srinagar said any alternatives to this were discouraged. “After a point you get to know what they want,” a journalist said in a personal interview (July 2007). “And you give them what they want.”

However, violations by militants, mostly against the minority Hindus and Sikhs, received prominent coverage. These were projected as “ethnic cleansing” by Islamist terrorists. Follows an excerpt from a report in *The Indian Express* (July 29, 1998) titled ‘16 more fall to ultras' bullets in Doda’. In contrast to the troubling silence on security excesses, this 732-word report – roughly double the length of an average news report from the valley – documents the killings in detail, with plenty of human interest quotes and information gathered ostensibly from interviews:

“We were having dinner when four to five men came in Army uniform enquiring if some government employee had come to our house,” recalled a traumatized 12-year-old Pushpa who is being treated at the Government Medical College in Jammu for a bullet injury in her shoulder. “My aunt, Shakuntala Devi, mistook them for Army men who probably wanted to enquire about her husband, Munshi Ram, a Lance Naik, on a two-month leave from Nagaland,” she said. “As my uncle came out, they sprayed bullets on him. He died on the spot. Then they killed my aunt.”

Such killings shook awake drowsing opinion writers and analysts on Kashmir, who were quick to cast the cross-border terrorism frame around it. This write-up came in the wake of the Wandhama killings, in which 23 Hindus were gunned down:

Sunday night's killings reveal that the forces of terrorism are as potent as ever in the state, with fundamentalist groups proliferating across the border. The Pakistan magazine, Herald, recently investigated into the affairs of one such group which went by the name of Lashkar-i-Taiba, or the Army of the Pure. Its leader admitted the loss of 350 guerillas in covert operations in J&K. Organisations like the Lashkar-i-Taiba often target vulnerable groups in the most despicable and cowardly fashion. It is only by local communities coming together, jointly resisting them and exposing them for what they are, can the state hope for peace. (*The Indian Express*, January 28, 1998)

Thus, approach of the Indian newspapers to rights coverage in Kashmir is dependent on whose rights are violated, by whom. Observes Sultan (2000, p6):

If Hindu population is the victim then the coverage is more extensive and linked to the concept of cross border terrorism and if Muslim population is the victim than the coverage is limited and conveyed with some Pakistan angle.

Another interesting – but less-discussed trend – in all this is that over the years political comments and media reports have together parented a glossary for Kashmir reportage. Most journalists appear to employ this mechanically. News reports speak of how ‘terrorists’ opened ‘indiscriminate’ fire or ‘fired indiscriminately’ in ‘militancy-infested Kashmir’, ‘barged’ into houses, and ‘sneaked across the border under cover of darkness’; how the army ‘rushed to the spot’, ‘cordoned off the entire area’, and a ‘massive combing operation was on’ (or recovered a ‘huge cache of arms and ammunition’). While these chronicle the news broadly – curious indeed

are the many reports that read similar – the accuracy of such descriptions can be questioned in many cases. Damning descriptors like ‘Pakistan-occupied Kashmir’, ‘Pak-sponsored militancy’, ‘Islamabad’s proxy war’, and ‘cross-border terrorism’ are also part of this lexicology. This ‘language for Kashmir’ is not limited to just news of the conflict anymore. Journalists use such terms when referring to Kashmir or Pakistan even in other contexts. Thus, it is not uncommon to see unrelated reports by unrelated journalists featuring phrases such as “atrocities sponsored by our neighbours”. This is equally true of the Pakistani press, which has its own terminology for the situation.

3.5 | One story, two narratives

Some striking similarities can be seen to emerge from the highly polarised Indian and Pakistani media narratives on Kashmir. The coverage on both sides was dominated by news of violence and death, with little space for discussions of substance. The respective government positions were taken for granted. To journalists on both sides, Kashmir is a national cause, not to be challenged, but supported loyally. Both label the majority of violence in Kashmir as terrorism – for one it is terrorism propagated by the state, for the other terrorism from across the border. By way of selective coverage, the Indian and Pakistan press use rights violations as a weapon against each other.

In recent years a certain softening in the media coverage is noticeable. Two indicators: we now see stories on improved relations (for instance, ‘Peace, not ceasefire’, *Indian Express*, July 5, 2008); also, where there was only news of violence once, there are now reports that chronicle other aspects of the Kashmir, from tourism to local politics and more. Further, the ‘language of Kashmir’ appears to have diluted, with fewer accusatory statements and descriptors in daily news – as per the PMP cycle (Wolfsfeld 2004) discussed in section 2.6.3 in chapter 2, possibly the result of the improved state-to-state relations and ongoing peace efforts.

On the whole, thus, Indian and Pakistani press have been state-led to a disturbing degree. A reason for this could be that media ethics is not something routinely discussed in the newsrooms here, and there exists no framework to guide newspapers through this grey zone of national interests and professional values (see Rao & Johal 2006 for a good discussion on the Indian situation). Also, the mindset with which many journalists approach the issue – more as a societal member, as an Indian or Pakistani, less as a professional journalist – has not helped matters much. This has led to an alarming degree of self-censorship in the field. I state this not only in the light of personal interviews, but as a reporter who has spent time in Kashmir and witnessed the refusal of more than one mainstream journalist to report what would hurt – as Sonwalkar (2004) would put it – “us”. It is not surprising then that the narratives find favour in the Indian and Pakistani establishments. Political leaders, otherwise critical of the media on a variety of fronts, say it has by and large behaved in “a mature” and “responsible” manner on Kashmir. Vishwanath Pratap Singh, Indian prime minister when armed militancy began in the valley and a national leader of stature all throughout, summarises this outlook with his observation that the Indian press has been true to “reality”, nothing more:

The media has reported what is happening. Of course, in every crisis there is little bit difference in emphasis. But I think it has done fairly well. There is nothing neutral about the real world. Reality is much more stronger than reporting. This has been a prolonged thing. Wrong reporting would not have survived long. (Personal interview, March 2005)

3.6 | Media performance in India: a critique

While there was a general appreciation of the way the national media covered Kashmir among Indian establishment figures, there also appeared to be a consensus that journalists did not stretch themselves in covering the conflict – or, as one respondent put it, the media had “other

fish to fry". Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, chief minister of Jammu & Kashmir from 2002 to 2006, and Indian home minister in 1989 when armed militancy began⁷³ in the valley, spoke of this:

Kashmir has been the bone of contention between the two countries. Wars have been fought on it. Free trade, free movement of goods between India and Pakistan, as in the European Union, it has not happened. It has not happened because of Indo-Pak conflict. And Indo-Pak conflict is because of Kashmir. But for the media, it is like any other conflict. It is a big country, India, and they [*the media*] are not focussed. I have not seen any paper take it up as a mission. It gets covered when something extraordinary happens. No paper has been persistent and pursued it. (Personal interview, July 2007)

Jagmohan, who took over as the governor – executive head – of J&K when the state administration collapsed in 1990, felt the media did not make an effort to arrive at what was really happening, but just reported what was said:

The point is, you can blame the communal politicians or you can blame the Indian press. The press reported what the communal forces said ... It was quite irresponsible in that it did not come to a judgement on its own and say this is not correct, this man says so, this man says so, and this is our opinion of it. They went on quoting these people and people got the wrong impression. (Personal interview, July 2007)

Another criticism was that the media provided reportage from afar, without understanding the ground realities. A government official concerned with public relations commented on this:

The [*media*'s] approach has been one of reporting-from-a-distance, analysis that often is driven by patriotism or 'human rights' concerns or 'peaceniks' without sufficient effort to understand the ground realities. It is also one of detached appreciation towards the efforts of the security forces. There is by and large an absence of dedication. While there is reporting – however indifferent – analysis, particularly focused at finding a solution or suggesting options, is absent. (Online interview, January 2007)

Lt General (retired) Vinayak Gopal Patankar, who commanded the Indian army operations in the Kashmir valley in the early 2000s, expanded on the idea, speaking specifically of daily reportage:

There tends to be this huge pressure of time limit and therefore, more often than not, it [*reporting*] scratches the surface, doesn't go deep enough. A typical news-getter, he can't reach the spot if it is in the remote areas. So he tries to gather information from the local sources, who by now have seen a lot of this game. So they know exactly what your requirement is. They know what is it that you want to hear. That is where both sides seem to satisfy each other's requirements, but without necessarily touching the truth, or the whole truth. So what you get is a reportage based on a sort of fixed segment of the society. (Personal interview, July 2007)

While the 'lack-of-depth' critique from the Indian politicians and security officials mostly related to what they labelled as the media's unwillingness to write about the 'good' the government was doing in Kashmir, a similar strand can be seen in the separatist dissatisfaction as well, specifically their belief that visiting correspondents "rarely went beyond Ahdoos". The reference was to the practice of out-station correspondents to base themselves in Srinagar, in Hotel Ahdoos, one of the few hotels to remain open throughout the conflict. The allegation that

many mainstream media personnel were reluctant to leave the relative safety of the capital city – that they knew “only the truth of Srinagar”, as an army officer phrased it – and unwilling to explore beyond the obvious was a theme that was repeated by Indian establishment *and* separatist respondents. Mirwaiz Omar Farooq, a separatist politician of prominence, was a lot more cutting about the Indian mainstream media:

The fact is that the Indian media has never gone beyond its national interest. They might have reported human rights violations, they might have reported disappearances, but whatever has been said, it has been said within the ambit of national interest. They never gave the common man a line... apart from the bomb blasts, apart from the violence, what were his feelings? It was all in the ambit of national interest. The Indian media has not done justice to the aspirations of the Kashmiris. (Personal interview, July 2007)

Syed Ali Shah Geelani, another separatist leader, was more critical, saying the Indian media are not carrying out its journalistic obligations to Kashmir, by not only supporting government “atrocities” but by ignoring the “real background” of the conflict:

This is not since just 1989 but since 1947. Sixty years’ experience we have. The Indian media is not reporting the real picture, what is happening in Jammu & Kashmir. The atrocities the occupying forces are perpetrating against the people of Jammu & Kashmir, they say they are very much right, the occupying forces are doing their duty. Not just human rights situation, but the real background. Jammu & Kashmir is a political problem, the people are demanding their basic birth right – self-determination. The historical facts [about this] ... they are not willing to accept. The hard realities, they don’t talk about. (Personal interview, July 2007)

While correspondents and editors interviewed showed a tendency to defend against this criticism with the argument that the conflict received extensive attention – including discussions on the human rights situation – over the years, they also appeared to admit that reportage could have been better. A journalist acknowledged this:

There is very little independent reportage. You will see very few reports on ground realities, hardly any effort to present a balanced coverage or see for themselves what is really happening. Telephone interviews and press conferences will only take you so far. You don't get an idea of what has changed, or not changed, what the people think, what their preferences are. You read more or less what you have been reading all these years – infiltration is up, infiltration is down, so many killed, there was human rights violation. (Personal interview, July 2007)

3.6.1 | *The human element in reportage*

Journalists, government officials and security personnel dealing with the media in Kashmir offered more than one explanation for the way the press covered the conflict. Many spoke about the non-availability of “good people” to report from Kashmir. Though almost everyone mentioned there were “honourable exceptions”, the majority appeared dissatisfied with the correspondents who reported from the valley. They cited lack of subject knowledge, indifference, and personal prejudices and politics as the main reasons, besides also remarking on the fear of personal safety associated with conflict zones. Here it is beneficial to quote an intelligence officer⁷⁴, who met out-station journalists on a fairly regular basis. The idea behind such meetings, he said, was to ensure the government did not “lose our say by default”.

The journalists who came from outside, I would always categorise them into two distinctive groups. One was the people who kind of – for them it was a job. For them, they would take a little from here, a little from there, and would give it their own spin. There wasn't much of commitment. They just took whatever you said. And what they wrote, it was a mishmash of everything that didn't convey much. Whereas some people were *interested* in what was happening. And more, I would say, informed. There was substance in their writing. (Personal interview, July 2007)

A news editor, who managed outstation correspondents including those posted to Kashmir since the early 90s, made a similar point when he spoke of the difficulty in finding the right talent. To begin with, there was a dearth of reporters with experience in conflict coverage. Also, very few journalists wanted a 'hardship' posting to Srinagar, he said, and it was difficult to find people willing to be based in the valley till as late as 2000. The result was that many newspapers relied on local stringers, whose reportage wasn't always "up to the mark" because of a combination of lack of training, bias, and fear for personal safety.

Asha Khosa, one of the few reporters to cover the initial years of the conflict from Srinagar, was more vocal in her criticism of news managers, pointing to her own inexperience at the time when she was posted in the valley:

Editors will appoint anybody who is willing to work from there. They don't want to see his qualifications. Kashmir is a place where the Indian media should have sent their best people. I have not seen that happen... I was a young reporter there, it was my first major assignment on which I worked on my own. I wasn't there because I was the best. It just happened. (Personal interview, July 2007)

Behind this tendency, according to Khosa, was an “unwillingness to spend money”. The news editor agreed with this observation, adding that one of the reasons why a permanent posting to Srinagar was not coveted was because there were no attractive monetary incentives to make up for the hardship and risk. Besides, newsgathering expenses are significantly higher in Kashmir, with logistical requirements costing roughly double than in many other states. Another editor touched on this budgetary issue when he spoke about his organisation’s policy of sending a reporter down to Kashmir:

When does a correspondent get flown down? Only when something 'major' happens. The era of sending someone down, to just sense the mood of the place or check out if infiltration has increased/decreased, if there is any lessening in the separatist fervour in the region, I guess that is over in these times of limited budgets and limited talent to handle the reportage. (Online interview, September 2008)

Correspondents, including visiting journalists, spoke of this aspect, saying they lacked the kind of resources that “BBC and other foreign news agencies” provided. Most editors wanted stories when “something happened”, “spot⁷⁵ stories”, and were largely unwilling to allow reporters to invest the required time and energy into producing informed pieces. More to the point, they were unwilling to support the reporter in the face of the risks and pressures associated with such reportage. A Srinagar-based correspondent of a national newspaper spoke of this:

I have never felt my establishment is behind me wholeheartedly. If I face threats, it is my problem. They don’t want to be involved. They expect me to solve it. If I am killed, the best my establishment will do is pay homage to me. (Personal interview, July 2007)

3.6.2 *The Delhi-Srinagar relation*

Another possible reason was the unhealthy professional relation between the Delhi-based journalists – editors and visiting correspondents – and the local personnel hired by their publications as correspondents and stringers in the valley. There was an amount of suspicion between the two, a mutual mistrust that divided them into ‘Indians’ and ‘Kashmiris’ and debilitated efficient collaboration. While news managers at national publications profusely make use of Kashmiri reporters, they were reluctant to trust them. One reason, as interviews indicated, was that they felt many local reporters lacked quality. As an editor put it bluntly, “Most of them leave much to be desired even by the poor standards of Indian journalism.” Further, editors felt local journalists were “influenced by the situation” and prone to be “biased towards separatists”. This comment from an editor is indicative – and typical – of this sentiment:

The worry from the newsroom will always be, heck, has this guy compromised, crossed over, is he filing this without being under any duress, etc ... The media would worry about the journalist’s independence under the gun of the terrorist. (Online interview, September 2008)

Kashmiri reporters in Srinagar, for their part, appeared to see the editors in Delhi as ‘Indians’, as bosses bound by nationalism. Many felt unappreciated and ill-supported in their efforts, and a common refrain was that editors elsewhere did not understand the ground realities of covering Kashmir. Their unhappiness with Delhi journalists also spilled on to visiting correspondents. Some of them, many local reporters felt, were ill-suited for the job – a sentiment reciprocated by many outstation correspondents, who considered the locals as amateurs or semi-professionals – as they didn’t “understand Kashmir” and its undercurrents, and were easily led by

government and intelligence officials. Zafar Meraj, a senior journalist in Srinagar, appeared to capture this resentment when he commented:

As long as you people come here as professionals, fellow journalists, you are welcome. But when you become so-called experts within just one night and start lecturing *us* about the values, about the traditions, about the ethics of journalism, then it is... Then I will not listen to you. There are some people. They think they are Kashmir experts and they can write on it with authority. And their stories are all plants – some planted by the army, some planted by the IB [*Intelligence Bureau, India's internal intelligence agency*], some planted by the RAW [*Research and Analysis Wing, India's external intelligence agency*]. (Personal interview, July 2007)

Arguably, the uneasy relation between the two groups had a negative effect on the quality of reportage from Kashmir. For one, against such a backdrop, news editors are unlikely to have got the best out of Kashmiri correspondents. Also, it is unlikely that local reporters – the lifeline of outstation correspondents on many occasions – collaborated with the visitors wholeheartedly.

Respondents – mainly politicians and bureaucrats – also spoke of “personal politics” of the journalists concerned. Valley-based Kashmiri reporters were mostly seen as separatist-supporters, and anti-government, while many outstation correspondents were seen as writing to suit the politician they favoured. Though they spoke about such writing quite bitterly when the issue came up, there seemed to be an acceptance that this was part of the media ‘game’. Dr Farooq Abdullah, former chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir, put it this way:

I never had anything much to do with them. Whenever they met me, I met them ... If you look at the Srinagar papers to the *Kashmir Times* in Jammu, they write everything

negative about me. Never will they write anything positive. I've become a hard nut to bother what they write. (Personal interview, July 2007)

3.7 | 'Journalists compromised'

The limited number of information sources was another reason for lack of quality journalism. In the initial years of the conflict, when militancy was at its peak and Indian journalists were banned by the militants from the valley, journalists reported from Delhi or Jammu, which made them heavily dependent on official channels. This situation did not change in later years. Even when it became relatively safe to visit Kashmir, because of the security scenario and the large number of military personnel on ground, reporters found themselves still dependent on the public relations machinery of the government and government forces. All throughout, however, political leaders were easily accessible; most national politicians were interested in Kashmir and available in New Delhi. A senior journalist and media observer put it this way: "They were easier to cultivate – and they always had something to say."

A national correspondent added another dimension to this. Because of the ground situation, he said, tactical information about the conflict when needed was available only through the security apparatus – the police and paramilitary forces, intelligence agencies, and the military. The police, paramilitary and intelligence agencies came under the federal home ministry, while the military reported to the defence ministry. These ministries – considered two highly-prized 'patches' or 'beats' by journalists – were generally assigned to two (or more) independent correspondents, who had a wider, more general mandate, of which Kashmir was only a part. More to the point, the two ministries were "difficult to break into", which made the home ministry and defence correspondents exceptionally protective of not only their sources but also

their relation with the public relations machinery. The result, the journalist said, was that “journalists compromised⁷⁶ when it came to Kashmir”:

They would not do anti-governmental stories, because they fear that if they did, it would upset their relation with the PRO, with the army liaison cell. So the journalists are working in a way that would safeguard their sources. This made them susceptible to the kind of information that the government wanted to pass on... All this comes down to lack of resources, of course. Indian journalists are not given the time or resources to cultivate sources. And this – and I think this is the biggest factor – forces them to be dependent on the public relations system and stops them from taking a really critical view of government policies. (Personal interview, July 2007)

The discussion facilitated two other observations from the journalist, both offering insights into the lack of depth in the Kashmir reportage mentioned earlier. The first was that there was limited focus on Kashmir in the home and defence ministry reportage; certainly there were few dedicated correspondents who combined the two key ‘patches’ intimately involved with the conflict to understand it. Second was the recurrent theme that news managers were not really sympathetic to the requirements of covering Kashmir. The combined result arguably was a reportage that was less robust than it could have been – divided, also susceptible to government control.

Another reason for the reliance on government sources, as it emerged from the interviews, was the belief among a section of journalists – particularly, news managers – that in the Kashmir scenario, government officials were relatively *more* “trustworthy” than separatists. An editor captured this sentiment with these words:

Yes, you are right, the preferred stories are based on government and army sources. But I don't think that is out of any patriotic zeal. Why do publications resort to this? Because of the special situation in Kashmir. There is no media censorship there from the government side, no, but there is clearly the long shadow of the separatist falling on typewriters. Can the journalists operating out of the valley put out anti-separatist reports even if they are true? No, they cannot. So if the situation is skewed in favour of one side, it's natural to wonder how much veracity is there in a report that presents the separatists' side. (Online interview, September 2008)

Implicit here – and in similar responses from two other news managers – is the idea that the only ‘shadow’ journalists functioned under in Kashmir was that of the separatists. The government was seen as far less threatening to journalism, certainly not into coercing reporters, and hence more dependable. While a good case can be made that the reality of the situation was somewhere between these two black-and-white portrayal of the Indian and separatist sides, this feeling appears to have influenced news judgement, including how a reporter was briefed and also how a story was edited. The editor appears to acknowledge this in so many words.

Here it is also beneficial to note the comment of another editor, which appears to pull together two strands that emerged in the above discussion. Mohammad Sayeed Malik spoke of the relation between the ‘personal politics’ of journalists and the efforts of the government machinery:

Media is full of people with ideologically-injected minds. I have very good friends in key positions in the media who are members of the RSS [*Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, part of the BJP, a nationalist political party*]. Their mindset is particularly receptive to the

manipulation of the government agencies, who invoke national interest. I don't expect them to cover Kashmir fairly. (Personal interview, July 2007)

3.8 | Media content and the public

It is hardly surprising then that the majority of Indian and Pakistani public have no friendly feelings for each other. A 2006 Gallup Poll, which surveyed 1,200 respondents across Pakistan, found that 53% considered India as 'enemy' and a further 28% as 'rival'. An earlier poll, commissioned by the Kroc Institute Survey in 1994, indicated a similar perception on the Indian side: nearly 50% of the Indian elite queried identified Pakistan as the main 'threat' to their security. A 2009 survey conducted by the Delhi-based Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, coming as it did in the wake of 2008 Mumbai terror attack for which India blamed Pakistani elements, highlighted that 42% of respondents believed Pakistan was responsible for terrorism and "must be taught a lesson"⁷⁷. Twenty-four per cent also wanted to go to war with Pakistan.

As Kashmir is generally considered the root cause of the Indo-Pak standoff, it is possible to relate these perceptions to how the media covered the conflict. Though far from conclusive, in a converse manner the polls can be taken as lending some empirical credibility to the reading that the news content in the two media is antagonistic, as an *indication* of partisan journalism that portrayed the other side as a violent, evil enemy threatening 'our' survival: going by the theses of Wolfsfeld (2004) and Bar-Tal (1998, 2000), one cause for such a mindset is media encouragement (see sections 2.3.1 and 2.6.1 in Chapter 2).

More direct evidence of the media's role, of course, is seen in the news patterns discussed earlier in the chapter. The discursive examination of press content and analysis of personal

interviews above highlighted the same patterns indicated in the literature review in chapter 2: an ethnocentric coverage, much of it guided by members of the political elite, focussing on violence for which the other side was held responsible without reservation and capable of creating a situation that did not encourage a resolution to the conflict. As this was not unexpected, the more interesting question was, to what *extent* was the coverage counterproductive? And what is the best way to measure the patterns within the coverage? Chapter 4 explores these questions.

Methodology

4 | Analysing Kashmir coverage

IT WAS OBVIOUS from the outset that this study required some form of textual analysis. The primary focus was how the Indian and Pakistani media presented the Kashmir conflict to their respective publics. While the media profiles and the discursive analysis attempted in the last chapter indicated the nature of this coverage, and the trends that could be expected, it provided only an impressionistic overview. Hence, a more thorough examination that could arrive at a clear profile was required.

It was decided the inquiry would be limited to the national press – specifically, to English daily newspapers. The press was favoured over television, radio and the Internet because, as noted in chapter 3 (section 3.1), it was the medium that produced a more sustained coverage of the conflict. While television has emerged as the “preferred medium” (Sonwalkar 2001, p514) since the advent of private channels in the late 90s, and the influence of the internet⁷⁸ is significant, these were latecomers to the conflict coverage. Moreover, the print media, particularly in India, is a robust institution, recording considerable growth in readership, and arguably a major influencer of public opinion.

Here a word is in order justifying the focus on the English language press. The sheer number and diversity of publications in regional languages – there are some 62,000 registered publications across 22 regional languages in India alone – made it impossible to arrive at a representative sample. Added to this was the impracticality of coding content across diverse languages. More importantly, as Kashmir was a national issue, affecting bilateral relations

between India and Pakistan, its coverage in the national media was of strategic significance. In both countries, as noted in chapter 3, section 3.2, the English press stood in as the national press (Windmiller 1954, Joseph & Sharma 1994), acting as a link across societies divided by an array of regional languages, servicing an ‘elite’ public sphere.

This chapter puts forth a suitable method for analysing press content. Informed by the theoretical framework outlined in chapter 2 and the patterns discussed in chapter 3, it first poses the research questions. After examining potential samples of news reports in light of the RQs, an original content analysis that draws on both qualitative and quantitative techniques is argued for, and an appropriate coding scheme presented. In the latter part, the sampling parameters are set out, the two-stage process by which the coding was undertaken explained, and coder agreement results presented.

4.1 | Preliminary research questions

The media, as noted in chapter 2, have the power to influence strategic conflict-pursuance, which is dependent on the kind of news content presented to the public. Essential, hence, was to profile the nature of the news coverage that Indian and Pakistani press accorded the Kashmir conflict. Further, as the literature examined indicated, important also was to know how it covered the other antagonists involved, as the way they were presented to own society influenced the prospects of peace (Wolfsfeld 2004). These objectives were framed in the form of two preliminary research questions:

RQ1: *What is the nature of the news coverage accorded to the Kashmir conflict by the Indian and Pakistani press?*

RQ2: *How has the ‘other’ been represented in the Indian and Pakistani press?*

RQ1 would be answered by examining the coverage for news content that promoted or demoted violence. As the political impact of the media was dependent on the *amount* of space accorded to a particular kind of news and the *way* the issue was presented (as set out in the discussion on the PMP cycle, together these amplified the changed political environment), a measure of the quantity and quality of the ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ content – or news capable of encouraging and discouraging peace, respectively – in selected Indian and Pakistani media would provide a picture of the journalism in the two countries. Further, in light of the media’s fascination with the political ‘elite’ suggested by the literature, it was interesting to examine the different sources used by the media: to what extent were the antagonists able to influence news production in India and Pakistan?

RQ2 demanded a profile of how the other parties involved in the conflict were presented to the ‘home’ audience by journalists in the two countries. It was possible to answer this by using similar measures – the quantity and quality of negative and positive representation of the other in the media, and the sources involved – as the ones engaged by RQ1.

4.2 | Pre-testing content

The first phase of the empirical inquiry began with a pilot content analysis in early 2005. It was purely exploratory in nature, the intention simply to see what was ‘out there’ in the Indian and Pakistani media before arriving at a research design. Besides the obvious logic rooted in the centrality of media content to this inquiry, a major influence to choose content analysis for the pilot was the precedence it enjoyed in similar studies. Raju et al (1984), Gaunt (1990), Mermin (1999), Semetko & Valkenburg (2000), Wolfsfeld (1997a, 1997b, 2001, 2004), Hickman &

Barlett (2002), Barbar & Weir (2002) and Lee et al (2005), among others, had utilised it effectively.

The initial plan was for a content analysis that fitted the traditional definitions: the “objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” as Berelson (1952, p 18) put it, or as Kerlinger (1986, p477) would have, a systematic method of “analysing content and treatment of communication, which usually results in the development of objective and quantitative information”. It was a ‘classic content analysis’ (Bauer 2000), aimed merely to quantify what Gunter (2000) called ‘surface events’ in news.

A scan of news content in the major English national newspapers in the two countries – *The Indian Express, Tribune, Times of India, Hindustan Times* and *The Hindu* in India, and *Dawn, Frontier Post*, and the *News* in Pakistan – indicated the coverage was broadly similar. As many scholars had theorised about conflict situations (Schudson 1996; Bar-Tal 1998, 2000; Wolfsfeld 2004), both the media approached Kashmir in an ethnocentric way, presenting it as an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ issue, in which ‘our’ stance was just and ‘theirs’ unjust. In light of this commonality, and to contain the sample size to manageable proportions, it was decided to limit the initial pilot analysis to 20-25 Kashmir-related news stories that appeared in two of the largest circulated newspapers: the Indian *Hindustan Times* and the Pakistani *Dawn*. The stories were randomly selected from the newspapers’ websites.

The pilot analysis, as mentioned before, was exploratory in nature – and as such, quite simplistic in what it aimed to achieve. The unit of analysis (coding unit) was a complete news report. Each report would be examined individually and categorised thematically. The aim was to provide an overview of the coverage in terms of certain recurrent and broad themes.

A systematic look at the content, however, showed such coding would not provide an adequately clear description of what appeared. The main reason was the exceptionally complex nature of the news stories. Many involved multiple themes and sub-themes, often contradictory, defying simplistic classification.

So another analysis was attempted, this time with paragraphs as the basic coding unit. This provided a relatively clearer reading of the themes, but it was still broad. While it was indeed possible to arrive at an overriding theme for every news story, or paragraph, it was felt this was at the expense of other underlying and interesting communication, overlooking the nuances within.

The solution, then, was to choose a more ‘micro’ coding unit. Coding for the single word, the most elementary syntactical unit (Krippendorff 2004), or even individual phrases had already been ruled out as such de-contextualised analysis would provide only a very superficial reading of the content. The ‘macro’ thematic analysis with paragraphs or the complete story as coding unit also provided only a partial description of the content. The requirement, then, was a coding scheme that analysed text minutely, but not so minutely that it was plucked out of context, a scheme that recognised the meaning of acts (Morrison 1993); and captured not just the major themes, but sub-themes as well. In essence, a content analysis aligned to Krippendorff’s definition (2004, p18) as “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use”.

This demand led to the sentence. It was a manageable unit, ‘large’ enough to communicate on its own, but not so ‘large’ as to contain themes that would stretch coder-judgement. But even at this level, there was remarkable intricacy. Many were complex constructions, ‘loaded’ with varied and conflicting meanings. The following is from the Pakistani newspaper *Dawn*, about India’s offer for peace talks in 2001:

India moved on Wednesday to end a **sham** in Kashmir and to get down to **real business** with Pakistan, as it called off a **farcical** ceasefire in the Himalayan region and proposed to invite Pakistan's Chief Executive General Pervez Musharraf for talks with Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Though announcing a peace venture from India, the unit – keeping in mind that it appeared in a Pakistani daily – can be seen as also casting a shadow on the Indian side, presenting it as responsible for a 'sham', as the author of a 'farce' in Kashmir. An attempt to resolve the conflict, thus, was contextualised as coming from the 'other' who has till now not behaved in a 'good' manner. In effect, the main theme – the reason why the unit was written – has been framed by sub-themes that arguably lowered "the legitimacy and public standing of the antagonist involved in the peace process" (Wolfsfeld 2004, p11). Such communication necessitated a coding scheme that could capture such sub-themes, the 'extra' communications, as well.

4.3 | Content analysis: a crossover

The coding scheme developed in light of these requirements examined *segments* of the sentence. The unit of analysis was still the sentence, but the scheme coded *within* it. Essentially, it divided the sentence into main and sub segments based on its grammatical construction. This provided for recording the main theme, as expressed in the main segment; and any sub-theme or sub-themes it may have, as expressed in the sub-segment or segments. Taken together these recordings gave a more complete description of the sentence. By 'adding' up the descriptions of the sentences one could arrive at a clearer profile of the news report. Also, by extending this 'addition' across all news items in the content sample, a clearer profile of the coverage, which would include empirical descriptions of all major themes *and* sub-themes, could be arrived at.

4.3.1 | Coding unit

As the scheme rests on the segmentation of a coding unit, the rules applied to break it into main and sub segments need to be clearly set out. *The coding unit was a sentence, a grammatical construction the end of which was marked by a period.* There was an exception, however. Headlines and sub-headlines, which though not ending with a period would be treated as individual units.

4.3.2 | CP and NCP

Every coding unit communicated a main substance or theme. Extensive pre-tests found that this was contained in the independent clause. This was the centre of its being, the reason why it was written, and this communication contained in the set of words that formed the independent clause in the unit was labelled the *Central Point (CP)*.

Besides the CP, many units – both textual sentences and headlines – contained a secondary substance or theme. This ‘lesser substance’ was mostly found in the dependent clause, and labelled the *Non-Central Point (NCP)*. The following units make this clear. The first is a textual sentence, the second a headline:

Barely 24 hours after 13 Amarnath pilgrims were shot dead in Anantnag, militants gunned down 15 civilians in a remote village in the Doda district.

Vajpayee warns of war, visits troops in Kargil

The underlined section is the independent clause – also the CP. The rest is the NCP. The NCP, as we can see, is contained in the dependent clause, and usually appended to the CP by way of a comma, a conjunction, or sometimes both. In the first of the examples below, a conjunction connects the NCP to the CP (the CP is underlined), while in the second there is both a comma and conjunction (the CP is underlined):

The Jaish-e-Mohammad's chief co-ordinator in India was unrepentant and said had he not been caught he would have worked to inflict another strike against India.

We are presently exploring all the diplomatic avenues, but other options are not closed.

Some units had more than one independent clause. In such cases, the *first* independent clause in the sequence was taken as the CP. The assumption is that as the writer had chosen to 'lead' the unit with it, it is the more significant of the two communications. The second independent clause then became NCP (a unit could have only one CP). The latter unit above is a good example.

4.3.3 | Role of NCPs

The NCPs, the extensive pre-tests had found, either *qualified* the CP by contextualising, or *added* to it by appending a secondary theme. In both cases, the NCPs were found to either strengthen or weaken the CP. The following examples make this clear:

We are cautiously optimistic, but we do not believe one meeting can yield anything.

Mr Jagmohan has accepted Chief Minister Dr Farooq Abdullah's resignation and simultaneously put the State Legislative Assembly under suspension.

In the units above, the NCPs are underlined. The first one is an example of an NCP that qualifies, while the second one shows how an NCP adds to the CP. In both cases – whether qualifying or adding – the NCPs were found to either strengthen or weaken the CP. In the first example, the qualification can be interpreted as weakening the CP; the cautious optimism is tempered by the belief this particular meeting will not produce tangible results. In the second unit, another action taken by Jagmohan (then Governor of J&K) is communicated, adding to it. As the theme of this is similar to that in the CP (breakdown of the elected government in Jammu and Kashmir), it is taken as an example of an NCP strengthening the CP.

4.3.4 | *Qualifiers*

The pre-tests had found a number of recurrent words and labels that qualified – portrayed in a partisan way – aspects of the conflict. The scheme provided to code for such descriptors, hereafter referred to as *qualifiers*, on the basis of a pre-prepared list arising out of the pre-tests. The qualifiers listed were: 'terrorist', 'terrorism', 'terror' 'Pakistan-occupied Kashmir' (PoK), 'Pakistan/ISI-sponsored terrorism', 'Indian-occupied Kashmir' (IoK), 'freedom fighter', 'martyr', 'jihad', 'jihadi', and 'shahid'. The following units show how some of the descriptors are used:

The bomb finally went off, severing the terrorist's leg.

Muslim militants hanged a policeman as four more people were killed elsewhere in Indian-occupied Kashmir state, police said here on Tuesday.

Aftal also spoke of ISI⁷⁹-sponsored training camps in PoK.

The underlined qualifiers framed the actors, their action, state of affairs etc in a way that strengthened the ‘we-ness’ (Elliot 1986, Morrison & Tumber 1988, Bar-Tal 1998, Sreberny 2002, Jamieson & Waldman 2003), by ethnocentrically describing the other participants as a threat to ‘us’ and by presenting own side as righteous (Wolfsfeld 2004). These comfortably fit under the language of ‘war-oriented reportage’ (Galtung 1985, 2002; Lynch & McGoldrick 2005), which demonises and victimises. As Hickman and Barnett presents in a 2002 empirical study, such descriptors – for instance ‘terrorist’ instead of ‘militant’ – carry “a greater subjective connotation of threat” (p6).

It must be mentioned that the qualifiers were ‘embeds’; they formed part of the CP or NCP. For instance, in the first unit in the above set of examples, ‘terrorist’ is part of the NCP (‘severing the terrorist’s leg’), while in the second and third units, the qualifiers are housed in the CP. As such, they are additions to the theme and sub-theme already contained in the unit, and therefore coded⁸⁰ for own merit.

4.3.5 | *Main themes*

A careful study of mainstream news content from different periods in the conflict showed a variety of themes. Initially 33 of such were identified and a pilot analysis carried out. Subsequent analyses, including inter-coder reliability checks, were conducted thereafter, which led to the formulation of simpler and more efficient categorisation. The coding scheme thus arrived at provided for 13 broad themes (see Appendix 2 for more details):

- 1) *Active promotion of peace*: initiation of peace process, encouragement, momentum in talks, etc
- 2) *Demotion of conflict*: need to discontinue violence, cost of violence, etc
- 3) *Support to promotion of peace*: talks background, constructive criticism, peripheral details of talks
- 4) *Background references*: violence in the past, groups involved, other reminders
- 5) *Militant violence*: attack on security forces, blasts, consequences of such, etc
- 6) *Anti-militant violence*: all security actions and related communication against militants
- 7) *War moves*: cross-border incidents, war preparations, details of ground fighting etc
- 8) *Impediments to peace*: negative response to peace processes, bottlenecks in talks, lack of momentum, talks failure
- 9) *Blame/blackening of 'other'*: finger-pointing, implications the 'other' is deceptive
- 10) *Support to separatism*: justifying violence/separatism, glorification of war/warriors, etc
- 11) *Security excesses*: human rights violations, collateral damage in security actions
- 12) *Neutral issues*: non-conflict news

13) *Ambiguous*: mixed or unclear communication stretching coder-judgement

Four of the themes listed above require further explanation. As discussed in the chapter 3, the significant body of literature on ‘peace journalism’ holds the media responsible for actively promoting peace, which includes presenting the disadvantages of violence (Maslog 1990; Galtung 2002; Manoff 2000; and Lynch & Goldrick 2005) with a view to make an end to the conflict desirable. The classification ‘Demotion of conflict’ was included in the coding scheme in view of this literature, as an indicator of the extent to which Indian and Pakistan journalists engaged in such “prosocial” (Lee 1998, p238, cited in Gauntlett 2005, p56) portrayals.

Blame/blackening of ‘other’ and Support to separatism were two themes that emerged quite clearly in the pre-tests. These also housed the qualifiers – part of the language of war-oriented reportage – discussed above. Thus, while descriptors such as ‘terrorist’, ‘PoK’, ‘IoK’ etc fell under Blame/blackening of ‘other’, others that justified the violence or glorified it such as ‘jihad’ and ‘freedom fighter’ – what Knightley (2000) calls military triumphist language – were coded under Support to separatism.

The classification titled ambiguous was created as the pre-tests had flagged up a body of units that were difficult to classify. Despite being read in context, these stretched coder-judgement. The scheme aimed to err on the side of caution, and categorise units that could not be placed elsewhere as ambiguous.

4.3.6 | *Categorising themes*

The 13 themes listed above were grouped into three categories: Pro-Peace (PP), Anti-Peace (AP), and Neutral-Ambiguous (NA). The rationale for these classifications draws on framing, media effects and peace journalism literature.

Here a recap (with expansion where needed) of some of the literature discussed in chapter 2 would be useful. It can be said the media's interest in Kashmir is rooted in the notion that conflict is of news value. Scholars old and new, from Galtung & Ruge (1965) to MacShane (1979) and Brighton & Foy (2007), and journalism practitioners (Franklin 1986, Rich 2000) have written about the primacy of this in bestowing 'newsworthiness' on an event. The normative writings of literary journalism advocates such as Cheney (2001), and, more importantly, the scholarly works of Wolfsfeld (1997a; 2001; 2004) in the last decade have developed this further, putting forth that it is the drama inherent in a (conflict) situation that is of value to journalism. The "need for excitement" leads to an "obsessive search for drama" by the media and "is the primary reason why conflict is considered more newsworthy than peace" (Wolfsfeld 2004, p18, 19).

The emphasis on drama not only means the media considers the Kashmir conflict worthy of significant attention, but covers it in a way that exploits the dramatic potential the situation offers to the maximum. Reporters thus have a professional interest in choosing the more pronounced and extreme of the events – also, of ignoring items not violence-related and thus less dramatic – from the available pool of Kashmir-related news. They have a reason to make "all confrontations dramatic and extreme" (Wolfsfeld 2004, p19).

This organic cycle has arguably more relevance in today's world of "mediatized conflicts" (Cottle 2006, p74), wherein governments seek to control the media in order to win public support

for war efforts (Miller 1994, Tumber 2004, among others). This need for ‘media minding’ means conflicting parties provide the media ‘news’ it cannot resist –in essence, events that will be dramatic and exciting, or as Lynch (2001) puts it, events *created* to be reported. Whether one follows Wolfsfeld’s news value-led reasoning or the literature on propaganda and media management, the result of this all promotes a situation characterised by quantity and ‘quality’ (extreme) conflict news.

Though the effects of such media coverage is debatable (see chapter 2, section 2.5.3), an impressive number of scholars – among them, Kellner 1992, Philo 1995, Philo & McLaughlin 1995, Seib 1997, Morrison & Tumber 1988, Naveh 2002, Spencer 2004, Clutterbuck 1981 – appear to believe it indeed influences the audience, though perhaps not in a direct and immediately tangible way. Development of the cultivation analysis (Gerbner & Gross 1976, Griffin 1996; Weimann 2000; see section 2.5.4) by Morgan & Signorielli (1990, p18) sees news messages as providing an “environment” in which people construct their social reality. Audience immersion in this environment – this *media culture*, as Kellner (1990) terms it – results in a cumulative media influence on the reader’s perception of the world s/he lives in, an internalisation of the ‘reality’ presented over and over. Bar-Tal (1998, 2000, 2004; see chapter 2, section 2.3.1 for discussion), approaching the issue from a psychological perspective, puts forth that in times of protracted conflicts, societal members are more susceptible to such media influence. Then, citizens favour and consume reportage that, among others, presents extreme, confrontational views of the enemy, thus allowing themselves to be influenced in a subconscious attempt to develop a conflictive ethos, a psychological mechanism to endure the stress of violence. Peace journalism scholars (Galtung 2000, 2002, McGoldrick & Lynch 2005, Maslog 1990; see chapter 2, section 2.4 for discussion), putting forth a body of largely prescriptive literature on how conflicts should be reported constructively, classifies such coverage as ‘war-oriented’ and ‘peace-oriented’, each with distinctive practices and language. Wolfsfeld (2004; see

Chapter 2, section 2.6.2 for discussion), building on this cross-disciplinary literature and offering his empirically-tested politics-media-politics cycle, makes the more sophisticated argument that media content has the power to promote peace or conflict by “defining the political atmosphere” and nature of debate, “influencing the strategy and behaviour of the antagonists”, and “raising or lowering” their legitimacy and public standing (p11).

These stances, it can be argued, are all founded on the concept of news framing, broadly summarisable as “the process of organizing a news story thematically, stylistically and factually” (Maslog et al 2006, p24). Research into this area by scholars such as Iyengar (1991), Entman (1991, 1993), McLeod & Detenber (1999) and Sotirovic (2000) has shown that the way news is ‘packaged’ could activate specific thoughts, ideas and interpretations in the readers – or as McComb et al (1997) put it, tell the audience *how* to think about something.

The coding scheme used for this study is comparable to the competing war and peace frames offered by Galtung and Wolfsfeld, at its theoretic heart founded similarly on framing theory. The underlying argument is that certain kind of communication, when presented in a particular context, can provide an environment that could promote peace attempts, or one that could hinder it. Themes believed to promote peace – or attenuate conflict – were termed Pro-Peace, and those expected to hinder it – or accentuate conflict – were labelled Anti-Peace. A third category, Neutral-Ambiguous housed themes that were – as the title makes clear – neutral, contained strains of both AP and PP, or was simply unclear.

The PP category comprised the first three themes (hereafter referred to as sub-categories): Active promotion of peace, Demotion of conflict, and Support to promotion of peace. The three present peace – or an end to the conflict – as a desirable and achievable possibility, as a path that has been undertaken, thus cultivating a general “upbeat and optimistic mood” (Wolfsfeld 2004,

p11-12) that makes it easier for the public to “invest” in the “peace stock” (p18). A common criticism about content analysis – particularly by scholars critical of effects research – is that it is unable “to recognise content or meanings of acts” and end up overcounting “antisocial” and undercounting “prosocial” – in this case anti-peace and pro-peace, respectively – actions (Gauntlett 2005, p56). The subcategories Demotion of conflict and Support to promotion is an effort to counter this. Every act of violence, or a criticism of the peace process, is not automatically counted as anti-peace. The two subcategories provide for the ‘deserving’ from among those to be coded as PP, depending on the framing and context. For instance, a criticism about the peace process, provided it is put forward in a constructive manner, would fall under Support to peace process. So would a mention of the talks breakdown if it is, for instance, framed as the “first step” in a process to be continued. Similarly, a reference to a violent act, if couched as warning or consequence of the conflict, would be coded under Demotion of conflict.

Under the AP category there were eight themes (hereafter referred to as subcategories): Background references, Militant violence, Anti-militant violence, War moves, Impediments to peace, Blame/blackening of ‘other’, Support to separatism, and Security excesses. As is obvious, most themes here are ‘bad news’, about violence, antagonism and separatism, which could inflame the political atmosphere and raise the level of rancour between the actors. The conflict, or even the peace process underway, is presented as a series of strife and discord, and “notions of peace and reconciliation appear naïve against this background” (Wolfsfeld 2004, p19) The underlying assumption is that bad news, however objectively reported, creates an environment which promotes the view the world we live in is violent and brutal (Weimann 2000), a world made⁸¹ so by the actions of the ‘other’ – and in such a world, “concessions to the enemy look at best foolhardy and at worst like acts of treachery” (Wolfsfeld 2004, p19).

The NA category had the last two themes: Neutral issues and Ambiguous. The former captured non-conflict news mainly⁸², other aspects of life in Kashmir; while the latter was another effort to ensure that “antisocial” acts were not overcounted. This subcategory provided an alternative placement for news the coder could not judge clearly, thus protecting to an extent from what Gauntlett (2005, p56) would term “exaggerated impression” of levels of violence.

4.3.7 | Active and passive subcategories

Both AP and PP subcategories was further grouped, as *active* and *passive*. The former comprised those sub-categories that *actively* promoted peace or conflict. In other words, those kinds of news that worked towards *attenuating* or *accentuating* the status quo (conflict). The second group of subcategories, on the other hand, promoted peace or conflict *passively*, either by supporting peace processes in a less obvious manner, or by continuing the status quo (conflict) without actually accentuating it. Below is a diagrammatic representation:

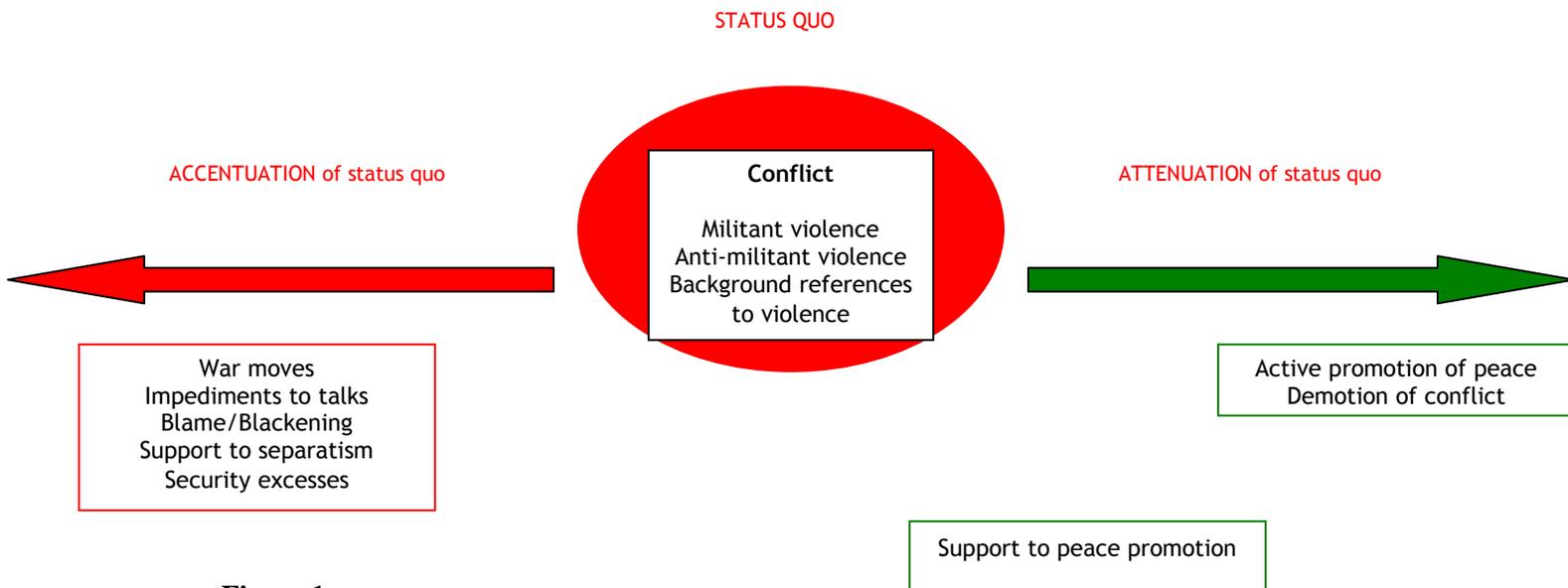


Figure 1

The status quo situation, as the depiction makes clear, is the conflict. All subcategories that captured news of the existing state of affairs and its continuation without actually exacerbating it were taken as passively AP. This grouping thus comprised Militant violence, Anti-militant violence, and Background to references to violence.

The rest of the AP subcategories – War moves, Impediments to talks, Blame/Blackening of ‘other’, Support to separatism and Security excesses – were termed actively AP, as these comprised active themes that went beyond merely maintaining the status quo, depicting or contributing to an accentuation of the conflict.

All the PP subcategories were taken to work *against* the status quo, creating a ‘positive’ environment in which the public could invest in “peace stock” (Wolfsfeld 2004, p18). Of the three themes under PP, the first two however were seen as promoting such an environment in a *more* prominent manner. Thus, Active promotion of peace and Demotion of conflict were classified as actively PP. The third subcategory, Support to promotion of peace, helped the peace processes, contributing to the negation of the status quo, but in a supportive and less obvious way. Hence it was treated as passively PP.

4.3.8 | *Quantifying content*

The earlier discussion on CP and NCP had underlined that within a coding unit, there were communications that differed in strength: every unit promoted only *one* main substance, the CP, even though the unit may contain other ‘lesser substance’ or ‘substances’. Similarly, as noted above, every subcategory was not of the same vigour: some captured news that promoted the

cause of peace or conflict more actively than others. In view of this, the coding scheme provided for different ‘measures’ for CPs and NCPs, and the active and passive subcategories.

Essentially, this was by ascribing numerical values. It must be made clear at the outset that no claim is made that these values reflect the true strength of these communications. Rather, these should be seen as rough indicators of the vigour with which CPs and NCPs and certain themes are presented.

Before moving on to CPs and NCPs, it needs to be mentioned that symbolically all AP subcategories were ascribed a negative (minus) value and PP themes a positive (plus) value. For differentiation purposes, a passive subcategory, whether AP or PP, was accorded an x1 value, while its active counterpart was given an x2 value. Thus, Support to promotion of peace (PP passive) was valued at +1 while Active promotion of peace received +2; and Militant violence was valued at -1 while War moves received -2.

A similar distinction was made between CP and NCP (including qualifiers, which were considered as a subgroup of NCP). As the CP carried the main substance of a unit, it was decided it would get the full value of whichever subcategory it was coded under. For instance, if the CP was a passive AP/PP communication, it would receive a -1/+1 value. If it was coded as an active AP/PP communication, it would get an -2/+2 value.

The NCP, for its part, would get only *half* the value of the subcategory it fell under. For instance, if an NCP detailed militant violence, thus falling under a passive AP subcategory, it would receive half of the subcategory’s -1 value – in effect, -0.5; similarly, if it carried communication that was coded as War moves, it would be ascribed -1.

4.3.9 | Overall Unit Value

The Overall Unit Value (OUV) is the sum of the numerical values of a CP and any NCP/NCPs in a coding unit. Thus, if a unit has a CP with a -2 value and an NCP with a -1 value, its OUV is -3.

If a unit has only a CP, and no NCP, the OUV will be the value of the CP.

Depending on the OUV, a unit can be termed AP, PP or NA. If it carries a negative value, it is AP; a positive value, it is PP; and if its value is 0, it is NA.

It was quite common for the CP to belong to one category and the NCP/NCPs to another category. In such cases, irrespective of which category the CP belonged to, the OUV decided whether the unit was termed AP (OUV = negative value), PP (OUV = positive value), or NA (OUV = 0).

4.3.10 | Overall Story Value

The Overall Story Value is the sum of all OUVs in the news item. This would include, besides the textual units, the headline and sub-headline (where applicable).

The headline and sub-headline were coded the same way as a textual unit, for CP and NCP, applying the same coding categories. However, as it can be argued that these are more significant – certainly prominent – than a textual unit, the actual unit value (what a unit is originally coded as) of a headline received an x2 value and that of the sub-headline an x1.5 value. That is, the

OUV of a headline was double its real value and that of a sub-headline one-and-half times more⁸³. Again, these numerical differentiations need to be seen as indicators, and nothing more.

The OSV of a news report, thus, is arrived at by adding the headline OUV, the sub-headline OUV (where applicable), and the OUVs of all textual units. This could be either a negative, positive or zero number. And accordingly, the story would be termed AP, PP or NA. For instance, if a news item had four units, which were coded as follows:

Unit 1 (headline): CP = -2, NCP = -1

Unit 2: CP = -2 (no NCP)

Unit 3: CP=-2, NCP1=-1, NCP2=-0.5

Unit 4: CP = +1, NCP = -1

The OUV of Unit 1 is -6 (-3x2; headlines carry an x2 value), Unit 2 is -2, Unit 3 is -3.5, and Unit 4 = 0. The OSV, hence, is $-6 + -2 + -3.5 + 0 = -11.5$.

4.3.11 | *Coding for sources*

To clearly answer the RQs, it was important to profile the main sources of news the press quoted. The scheme provided for this, by way of an integrated set of rules. The ‘source-coding’ was done simultaneously, without revisiting the content, and allowed to code not only *who* were the main sources the media used, but also *what* kind of statements – AP, PP, NA – they made.

All units, including headlines and sub-headlines, that cited a particular source, were examined. Only those that carried a clear attribution – either a direct quote, or a paraphrase clearly citing the originator – qualified for this.

News sources were divided into eight groups: Own Government or *Own-G* (ministers, bureaucrats, and politicians belonging to ruling party/coalition); Own Non-Government or *Own-NG* (all political sources that were not part of the ruling government/coalition); Other Government or *Other-G* (members of the political machinery in the other government), Other Non-Government (non-governmental political sources on the other side); Indian Security Forces or *ISF* (police, paramilitary, army, etc); Pakistani Security Forces or *PSF* (police, paramilitary, army); Separatists or *Sep* (all forces demanding J&K's separation from the Indian union, including armed militants); and Miscellaneous or *Misc* (think tanks, civilians, third parties including foreign governments, and anonymous or unclear sources). Depending on who was cited, the aim was to code the statement as originating from one of these eight groups.

For instance, if an Indian newspaper quoted an Indian government official as making a statement that fell under the sub-category 'War moves', the unit would be source-coded as Own Government or Own-G. On the other hand, if the statement came from the Pakistan side, and was presented in an Indian newspaper, it would be coded as Other Government or Other-G.

The point to be noted here is that the source-coding was in addition to the 'main' coding. The main coding would categorise a unit as AP, PP, or NA (and also show the final 'strength' of that communication by way of a numerical value), while the source-coding would *associate* it with a particular news source.

Thus, it was possible to get a clear idea of the main sources the press relied on, and also the kinds of statements the different source groups made. This could be done with every news report, and also across all news reports to provide an overview.

4.3.12 | *Applying the coding scheme*

The application of the coding scheme can be seen in the news report⁸⁴ below. It is part of a report that appeared in the *Hindustan Times* of December 19, 2001, soon after the Indian Parliament was attacked by a suicide squad which India believed was trained in Pakistan, and New Delhi responded by preparing for war. The coding in brackets show whether the segment/sub-unit is CP or NCP (or qualifier⁸⁵, denoted by the letter Q), and also the sub-category number followed by its corresponding value.

Headline

IAF on alert (CP=7, -2), troops moved to Pak border (NCP=7, -1)

OUV = -6 (-3x2)

Text unit 1

Even as New Delhi weighed its options over what punishment to mete out to terrorists (Q=9, -1) from across the western border (NCP=7, -1), the Indian Army was placed on maximum alert (CP=7, -2).

OUV=-4

Text unit 2

Official sources in Jaipur said that both the army and Indian Air Force have been put on high alert (CP=7, -2, Own-G).

OUV=-2, Own-G

Text unit 3

Army units have been moved to forward positions along the international border and the LoC in Jammu and Kashmir (CP=7, -2).

OUV=-2

Text unit 4

At least five trainloads of men and equipment arrived at Jammu (CP=7, -2) and more were arriving all night (NCP=7, -1)

OUV=-3

Text unit 5

Families of armed forces officials said officers have been recalled for duty (CP=7, -2, Misc) and all leave has been cancelled for the next four to five months (NCP=7, -1, Misc)

OUV=-3, Misc

All units in the text above clearly fall under the sub-category War moves, which carried a -2 value. As we can see CP and NCPs, including a qualifier, have been coded. Two attributions – one Own-G and the second Misc – were also source-coded, and the story profile can be depicted thus:

AP story

OSV: -18 (-6 + -4 + -2 + -3 + -3)

Total text units: 5 (AP=5, PP=0, NA=0; AP value=-12, PP value=0; NA value=0)

Sources: Own-G, 1 attribution, value=-2; Misc, 1 attribution, value=-3

4.3.13 | *Coding for prominence*

Before the final analysis was undertaken, another development was made to the coding scheme to allow it to record how prominently a headline (and the corresponding report) was displayed on the front page. A set of rules was integrated into the scheme that made it possible for the coder to ascribe a numerical value to a headline. This value was termed the prominence score (P-SCORE hereafter).

The P-SCORE, which was a development of the Attention Score scale that Budd (1964) used to study Australian and New Zealand newspapers, was based on five parameters, posed below as questions:

- 1) Did the headline start above fold?
- 2) Was it the main headline (lead story) of the day?
- 3) Was it carried across two or more columns?
- 4) Did it comprise three or more paragraphs?
- 5) Did it carry a visual of any sort (photograph, graphic, etc)?
- 6) Was it displayed in any special⁸⁶ slots?

An affirmative to each question received a point. A P-SCORE of 6, thus, was the highest a headline could score and 0 the lowest. The assumption here is that prominent stories would receive highly visible ‘news slots’ (above fold, special slots/display, with visual)⁸⁷ and more space on the front page (more column inches, across columns).

4.4 | Coding scheme, in summary

In view of the complex set of rules detailed above and the different measures involved, a summarisation of the coding scheme setting out what it hopes to achieve will be helpful here. Essentially, it allows the coder to record the nature, strength, and prominence of news content, and produce independent descriptions for headlines and news reports. Further, it captures the different sources used by the media.

The scheme comprises two sets of rules. The first defines how the different communications in a unit would be coded. That is, how to break down a sentence (unit) into segments (CP, NCP and qualifiers), based on the primary and secondary ‘substances’ it communicates. The second specifies the basis of ascribing a numerical value to each of the segments, an overall value for the unit (OUV), and also an overall value for each news items (OSV).

The scheme classifies content into three broad categories: AP, PP, and NA. Based on the two sets of rules, the scheme aims to categorise every news unit – and also individual news reports or stories – into AP, PP, or NA. The AP, PP and NA are further divided into several sub-categories, each housing a main theme, and a unit is coded for this as well (in fact, the broad categorisation is arrived upon after such a base classification).

Further, the scheme provides for ‘source-coding’. This captures the different news sources cited by the media, and produces comprehensive descriptions of what kind of statements – AP, PP or NA – these sources made.

The scheme utilises three ‘measures’ in the coding process: frequency, intensity and prominence. The frequency coding records the *number* of units coded under a particular category

or sub-category. In essence, it keeps count of the recurrent themes and produced a frequency score (F-SCORE) for each category, sub-category and source group.

The second measure is intensity. The intensity coding captures the ‘strength’ of a unit/report by way of an intensity score or I-SCORE. It records the degree to which a particular unit/report is AP or PP. A numerical measure of this is found in the corresponding OUV or OSV. Thus, in effect, the I-SCORE of a unit is the same as its OUV.

The last measure the scheme uses is prominence. The prominence coding records the display accorded to a particular headline/news story, and results in a prominence score or P-SCORE.

By viewing the content across these measures, the scheme allows a clear profile of it to emerge. Not only does it show the ‘AP-ness’, ‘PP-ness’ and ‘NA-ness’ of the content across two variables (frequency and intensity), it captures how these categories of news is displayed on the front pages as well. Further, it produces independent descriptions for headlines and text (the ‘body’ of reports). This, in turn, provides for a comparison⁸⁸ between headlines and text, allowing us to see how accurately headlines reflect the main content. Lastly, the scheme makes it possible to profile the extent to which the media was dependent on different categories of news sources.

4.5 | Research Questions revisited

The RQs stated in the beginning of this chapter aimed to profile the news content that appeared in the Indian and Pakistani press, with emphasis on how the other antagonists were presented to the publics concerned. The examination of the Indian and Pakistani mediascape and the fairly extensive analyses undertaken to arrive at a suitable methodology in the initial phase of

this study provided a more clear idea of how the research objectives could be met. The coding scheme that evolved out of the exercise also offered fresh possibilities to answer the research questions in a more insightful manner, including measuring the prominence with which the media presented different kinds of news. In light of these the RQs were finalised, with sub-questions exploring various aspects set out, as presented below:

RQ1: *What is the nature of the news coverage accorded to the Kashmir conflict by the Indian and Pakistani print newspapers?*

- To what extent has it been supportive of peace attempts?
 - How many news units, stories⁸⁹, and headlines are pro-peace, to what strength, and how prominently were these displayed?

- To what extent has it been unsupportive of peace attempts?
 - How many news units, stories, and headlines are anti-peace, to what strength, and how prominently were these displayed?

- To what extent has it been neutral or ambiguous?
 - How many news units, stories, and headlines are neutral, and to what strength, and how prominently were these displayed?

- What are the main origins – sources cited in news constructions – of anti-peace and pro-peace news?
 - What was the contribution of the major actors involved?

RQ2: *How has the ‘other’ been represented in the Indian and Pakistani print newspapers?*

- Has the ‘other’ side been portrayed negatively or positively?
 - What is the ‘strength’ of the anti-peace and pro-peace portrayals of the other side, and how prominently were these displayed?

- What are the origins — main sources quoted in news stories — of such portrayal?

4.6 | Two-stage coding

The content analysis was attempted in two stages. The first involved coding a sample of headlines and sub-headlines related to news stories on Kashmir. In all 912 such units were examined, across 10 events of significance in the conflict history, each of which was covered over a specific time period. This coding is hereafter referred to as *headline analysis*.

The second stage involved coding the texts accompanying a section of the coded headlines. This was to supplement the headline analysis. While the headlines offered an overview, it was felt the second coding – referred to as *text analysis* hereafter – would provide for a closer, more nuanced examination. The text analysis coded the whole of the text of the story on the front page (‘turns’ were ignored; as explained in section 4.6.3 below), including the related headline (and sub-headline, if any). In all 268 news stories were examined thus, across eight of the 10 events coded in the headline analysis.

4.7 | Sampling and other parameters

Purposive sampling was employed in both the headline and text analyses to arrive at a manageable sample size. In the headline analysis, the quantity of coverage coded varied from event to event, depending on the extent of media attention it received. In other words, if an event was covered over weeks, more of it – over a longer period of time, that is – was coded in comparison to an event that lasted only a few days. No such effort at proportionality was made in the text analysis, as its objective was to enrich the headline analysis with insights. Thus, seven days of coverage was coded across all events in the text analysis. The specifics of the sampling are discussed below.

4.7.1 | *Parameter 1: Three newspapers*

Three national English language daily newspapers⁹⁰ were chosen for the headline analysis. These were the *Times of India* and *Hindustan Times* in India and the *Dawn* in Pakistan. All three are full-sized dailies. The *ToI* and *HT* are, in that order, the most-circulated English papers in New Delhi, with pan-Indian readerships. *Dawn* is considered one of the two most powerful English dailies in Pakistan, if not the most. As the English press is a significant influencer of the political powers in both nations, the coverage of Kashmir in these quality newspapers is crucial. Also, in a vast mediascape fragmented by numerous publications in diverse regional languages, these papers, as part of an English press that unifies the public on national issues, can be seen as reflectors of the general media mood on Kashmir.

For the text analysis, one newspaper each from India and Pakistan was coded. This was to limit the sample size, as the coding was intense and time-consuming, involving a far larger number of coding units (each individual sentence in the text), with multiple elements to each,

requiring multiple judgements from the coder. Hence, only stories appearing in the *Hindustan Times* and *Dawn* were examined.

4.7.2 | Parameter 2: 10 events

The CA sought to profile how the conflict was presented over time. So it was important to cover the span of the conflict – or as much of it as was practical. To achieve this, 10 significant events that had impacted on the conflict were selected for the headline analysis. Each of these corresponded to a specific time period. Five of the events were of violence, or *war events*. The other five related to peace attempts, or *peace events*. Such an effort, to provide equal weightage to war and peace events in the analysis, was for comparative purposes. It allowed testing the thesis that conflicts consume more media attention than news of peace. Further, it made it possible to discern specific patterns in the media’s approach to these two kinds of events. As the figure below shows, all in all 113 days of coverage was analysed – of this 57 related to war events and 56 to peace events.

Event	Year	Nature <i>War/peace</i>	Headline Analysis <i>No of days coded</i>	Text analysis <i>No of day coded</i>
Rubaiyya Sayeed kidnapping	1989	War	6 days	Not coded
Charar shrine destruction	1995	War	7 days	7 days
Lahore Declaration	1999	Peace	8 days	7 days
Kargil war	1999	War	28 days	7 days
Ramzan ceasefire	2000	Peace	7 days	7 days

Agra summit	2001	Peace	28 days	7 days
Attack on Parliament	2001	War	9 days	7 days
New York talks	2004	Peace	7 days	7 days
Delhi talks	2005	Peace	6 days	Not coded
Blasts on 'peace' train	2007	War	7 days	7 days

Figure 2

The events spanned the conflict from 1989 to 2007. The selected war events were: the Rubaiyya Sayeed kidnapping (1989), destruction of the Charar-e-Sharief shrine (1995), Kargil War (1999), attack on Indian Parliament (2001), and blasts on India-Pakistan 'peace' train (2007). The peace events chosen were the ones that came to be known as: the Lahore Declaration (1999), Ramzan ceasefire (2000), Agra summit (2001), New York talks (2004), and Delhi talks (2005). Care was taken to choose events from across the two decades discussed in the Kashmir section earlier. The coverage of some events spilled across many days, even months (as in the case of the Agra summit and Kargil conflict). Hence, to contain the sample size to manageable limits, the analysis was limited to only the 'heart' of these periods – that is, the days when media attention was at its greatest. Mostly, in case of war events, this began the day after the particular incident and continued for the next few days. In case of peace events, media attention began before the day of the talks and took a few days thereafter to peter out. Summaries of these events are given below, in chronological order:

The Rubaiyya Sayeed kidnapping (1989): This is generally seen as the beginning of the conflict. On December 8, 1989, militants of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front

kidnapped Dr Rubaiyya Sayeed, the daughter of then federal home minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed. The hostage crisis ended after the government released five jailed militants in return for Rubaiyya on December 13. Six days of news coverage, between December 9 and December 14, was coded for the headline analysis. No text analysis was conducted on this coverage.

The destruction of Charar-e-Sharief shrine (1995): This followed a siege the Indian army laid around the famous shrine revered by both Kashmiri Hindus and Muslims, some 30 km southwest of Srinagar, to flush out foreign militants. In May 1995, the shrine and some 300 houses around it were engulfed by fire. The militants escaped. The Indian government accused the militants of destroying the shrine at ‘Pakistan’s behest’ to cover their escape, while the Pakistan establishment said the destruction took place when the Indian army stormed the shrine. Seven days of coverage was coded for the headline analysis, from May 8 to May 14, including the immediate days leading up to, and after, the destruction. The text analysis too coded for all of the same days.

The Lahore Declaration (1999): The first major political agreement after the 1972 Shimla Accord between India and Pakistan, this was the direct result of a historic summit in Lahore between then Indian prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Pakistan PM Nawaz Sharief. The bilateral declaration was seen as a major breakthrough in the particularly strained relations between the two nations after they both conducted nuclear tests in 1998. Vajpayee and Sharief asserted their commitment to peace and stability in the region. On Kashmir specifically, they promised to intensify their efforts to adopt measures to contain violence and find a solution. In all eight days of coverage was coded for the headline analysis, from February 16, 1999 when media reports began to appear on

the front pages, to February 23, 1999, two days after the agreement was signed (both dates inclusive). In the text analysis, seven days of coverage was coded.

The Kargil war (1999): A high-altitude armed conflict between India and Pakistan in the Kargil district of the Jammu & Kashmir, this came just months after the Lahore Declaration. The cause was intrusions into the Indian side of the *de facto* border by militants and Pakistani army regulars, who occupied strategically important mountain peaks. In May 1999, the Indian army launched an operation to recapture the lost ground. Pakistan denied state intrusion, saying it was the work of independent Kashmiri freedom fighters. On July 26, after weeks of intense ground war backed by artillery and air support, and direct US pressure on then Pakistan prime minister Nawaz Sharief, India recovered its peaks. The war, which came to an end on July 26, is seen as an attempt by Pakistan to internationalise the Kashmir dispute. Of the five war events chosen for this study, this had the most longevity, attracting media attention from early May 1999 to late July. To reflect this lengthy reportage, 28 days of coverage was coded in the headline analysis, ensuring representation from the beginning, the middle and end periods. The text analysis coded for seven days, again selected across the three periods.

The Ramzan ceasefire (2000): In November 2000, India announced it would halt its offensives against militants in Kashmir during the holy month of Ramazan. Coming in the wake of the Kargil war, the ceasefire is generally seen as then Indian prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's effort to repair the strained relations with Pakistan. The move was cautiously welcomed by Islamabad and most separatists, though a section of militants in Pakistan rejected it as meaningless. Seven consecutive days of coverage from November 20 when the announcement of the truce appeared in print was coded in the headline analysis. The same seven days were coded in the text analysis.

Agra summit (2001): The Ramzan ceasefire in Kashmir was extended twice and continued till May 23, 2001. Even as he announced its end, Vajpayee invited General Pervez Musharraf – who had by then come to power in Pakistan after a military coup – for peace talks. A two-day summit between the two leaders took place in the north Indian city of Agra on July 15 and 16. Kashmir was the main topic of discussion. But the two failed to arrive at any formal agreement and the summit ended without the hoped-for joint declaration. News of the summit was presented in the media from the day Vajpayee invited Musharraf till the end of July. Of the peace events chosen, this received the most extensive media attention. To reflect this, 28 days of coverage was coded in the headline analysis, ensuring representation from the beginning, the middle and end periods. The text analysis coded for seven days, again selected across the three periods.

Attack on Indian Parliament (2001): On December 13, 2001, five armed men infiltrated the complex that houses the Indian Parliament. They opened fire to kill seven people and injure many others before security personnel shot them dead. Though no one in the Indian government was hurt, the attack was the most high-profile attempted by militants of the Kashmir cause, and almost caused a war. Holding Pakistan-based militant groups responsible, India mobilised its army to the border – a move Pakistan reciprocated. The military stand-off came to an end months later. The actual attack was focussed on for the CA. Including December 14, the day when the news first made it into print, nine days of coverage was coded for the headline analysis. Seven days were coded in the text analysis.

New York Talks (2004): Though a disappointment to both India and Pakistan, the Agra summit was the start of a wave of diplomatic efforts between the two nations. Three years later, in September 2004 Musharraf met Dr Manmohan Singh, who had succeeded

Vajpayee as the Indian prime minister, on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York. The talks are seen as a success, as both sides showed flexibility -- for the first time in the history of the Kashmir conflict discussed options to resolve the dispute. Six days of coverage was coded in the headline analysis. No text analysis was conducted for this coverage.

Delhi Talks (2005): The NY talks were followed by another meeting between Dr Singh and Musharraf in New Delhi on April 17, 2005. The two-and-a-half hour discussions ended on a positive note. This time the leaders signed a joint declaration, burying the 'ghost of Agra in Delhi' (as the *Hindustan Times* put it). The event received sustained media attention from the day Musharraf arrived in Delhi. Seven days of coverage was coded in the headline analysis, including the days leading up to and immediately after the meeting. The same seven days were coded in the text analysis.

Blasts on India-Pakistan 'peace' train (2007): A day before the Pakistani foreign minister was expected in India for peace talks, two bombs exploded on the Samjhota Express train bound for Lahore from Delhi. The blasts and the ensuing fire killed 65 people, most of them Pakistanis. Both India and Pakistan denounced the attack as terrorism and said it was aimed at disrupting the peace process. The train service was restarted in 2004 after a two-year gap as part of the peace process. The event received focussed, if not lengthy, media attention. Seven days of coverage was coded in both the headline and text analyses.

The selected events, as we can see, span much of the conflict. Together they provide an overview, chronicling its twists and turns, across various time periods.

4.7.3 | Parameter 3: Front page news

All Kashmir-related headlines, sub-headlines and associated text that appeared on the front pages of the selected newspapers on the dates under study were examined. ‘Turns’ – any text that continued on to an inside page – were excluded. Also excluded were related ‘pointers’ (tag lines for stories inside, including news briefs) and photo captions. Front page news was seen as sufficient to fulfil the mandate of the study, as it was a strong indicator of media priorities on Kashmir. Also, such a selection helped contain the sample size to manageable proportions and simplified data collection considerably.

4.8 | Intra- and Inter-coder agreements

As discussed in the first part of this chapter, the coding scheme was formulated through a process that involved a careful examination of the content to be analysed. Some 30 news stories were coded in full in three separate pilot analyses before the scheme was finalised. In each of these analyses, an independent coder was brought in to check for inter-coder reliability, which improved with each stage. Additionally, the scheme was presented to three researchers with CA experience to check for validity, and revisions carried out on the basis of their inputs.

Once the scheme was finalised, the headline and text were coded by the researcher in roughly five months. As is usual in such cases, where the content is analysed by a single individual, an intra-coder reliability check was carried out. Fifteen per cent of the headlines – 135 units – were re-coded in four to five sessions. This was undertaken at least a week after the initial coding in all cases. The intra-coder agreement⁹¹ was 92%. An intra-coder check was carried out for the text analysis as well, again after at least a week had elapsed. Ten per cent of the text analysed – 355 units across 36 news stories – were re-coded. Here, the agreement was 87%.

Further, an inter-coder agreement test was carried out. This was an additional check, in light of the multiple qualitative judgements the coding scheme called for and the possibility that the coder's 'over-familiarity' with the process might skew his evaluations. Ten per cent of the headlines – 90 units – and 5% of the text – 178-odd units across 20 stories – was coded by an independent coder. The inter-coder agreement for headline analysis was 88%. For the text analysis, it was 84%.

4.9 | Terminology and definitions

The coding scheme necessitated the creation of its own terminology. This section defines the key terms used in the discussions that follow.

Headline analysis: The cover term for the coding of the headline and sub-headlines.

Text analysis: The cover term for coding the 'full story'. This coded for the body text and also the story headline and sub-headline.

Peace event: A specific effort at peace. The media attention on Kashmir revolved around this particular event, and carried on for days. Conflict stories were also frequently part of the resultant coverage. This is also referred to as PP or pro-peace event (defined below).

War event: A specific incidence of violence and its aftermaths. The media attention on Kashmir revolved around this particular event, and carried on for days. This is also referred to as AP or anti-peace event (defined below).

Coding unit: A complete sentence, ending with a full-stop. Alternately, a headline or a sub-headline.

PP: Short for *pro-peace*, an evaluative cover term for any unit, story, or event which is seen as 'positive', facilitating peace. For instance, a sentence could be classified a PP unit if it produces a positive value as per the coding scheme. So also a story. All the peace events analysed are seen as PP.

AP: Short for *anti-peace*, the cover term used for the other extreme. Any unit, story or event seen as 'negative', impeding peace effort. A unit is classified AP if it produces a negative value as per the coding scheme, for instance. So also a story. All war events are considered AP.

NA: Short for neutral-ambiguous, the cover term used for any unit or story that produces a neutral value – zero – as per the coding scheme.

Three other terms directly related to the coding process need to be explained before we move on to the findings. The coding scheme provided for recording the frequency, intensity, and prominence of PP, AP and NA units in the headline and text analyses.

Frequency and F-SCORE: Refers to the part of the coding wherein PP, AP and NA units were quantified – by recording their number. The 'quantity' was recorded in the form of a frequency score or F-SCORE.

Intensity and I-SCORE: Refers to the part of the coding wherein the strength of the PP, AP, and N units was recorded by way of a numerical value. This results in an intensity score of I-SCORE.

Prominence: Refers to the part of the coding wherein the P-SCORE – short for *prominence score* – of a headline/text was recorded. The p-score provided a measure of the prominence a headline/text was accorded on the front page – that is, how well it was displayed in relation to other items – by way of a numerical value.

4.10 | Retrospection

It is no exaggeration to say the classic quantitative approach originally considered for this study transformed itself into a different being altogether. The final analysis undertaken was more than what Berelson (1952, p128) calls “content assessment”, or what Krippendorff (2004, p16) dubs “qualitative content analysis”⁹². Along the way, the approach integrated⁹³ qualitative techniques, acquiring some aspects of a critical discourse analysis: to a degree it provides for examining text in context (van Dijk 1977, Fairclough 2003, 2005), for analysing “mere utterances” in perspective (Bourdieu 1994; Fairclough 1998). Foundationally, thus, it is a qualitative analysis, which examines every unit in context, *then* quantifies the qualifications – or, to borrow from Miles & Huberman (1994, p42), an effort at “quantizing” data.

While these developments produced a scheme capable of mining rich research data, the coding involved was painstaking and time-consuming. Despite this, and the efforts made to safeguard against the weaknesses of content analysis in general, the scheme offers only an *interpretation* of the newspaper coverage. It needs also be acknowledged that it can at best claim

to have produced a partial profile of the content analysed. The following chapter, which details the findings of the CA, needs to be read with these limitations in mind.

Findings

5 | Kashmir in war and peace

THE REVIEW OF the Kashmir coverage in chapter 3 had highlighted a significant media interest in the conflict frame. Most reports, it appeared, focused on violence. So the assumption was the content analysis would find a higher proportion of anti-peace (AP) stories than pro-peace (PP). By extension, a second assumption could be made: the overall intensity of anti-peace stories would be higher. The more interesting question here was, how significant would the differences be? By comparing AP and PP news using three variables – an F-SCORE arising from a *frequency* analysis to ascertain proportionality, an I-SCORE from an *intensity* analysis to measure the strength of communication, and a P-SCORE from a *prominence* analysis to assess the display of stories in each category – this chapter presents the trends in the Indian and Pakistani press coverage of the Kashmir conflict.

The pattern that becomes visible at the very outset is that Kashmir received increased media attention during war events. As discussed before, coded were news content during periods characterised by war and peace events – the latter periods are collectively referred to as *wartime* and the former as *peacetime* hereafter – and efforts were made to provide equal weightage to both kinds. Thus, in both headline and text analyses, equal or near-equal days of coverage were chosen for each event. Despite this ‘level playing field’, the F-SCORE analysis shows *the conflict made the front pages more often in wartime than during peacetime*.

For the headline analysis 57 days of wartime coverage and 56 days of peacetime coverage were coded (the one-day discrepancy can be seen as a limitation of purposive sampling). Of the 912 headlines that appeared on these 113 days, 506 – or 55% – were from the wartime. Peacetime

accounted for 406 headlines, or 45%. In other words, compared to peacetime, 10% more stories on Kashmir appeared in the newspapers analysed during wartime.

The text analysis underlined the trend in bold, with wartime coverage presenting 16% more stories than what appeared during peacetime. Fifty-four days of coverage was analysed – half from wartime, half from peacetime – resulting in a total of 268 stories. Of this 155 – 58% – was featured during wartime. Only 113 – 42% – related to peace events.

Wartime, expectedly, was dominated by the news of conflict. This ranged from routine militant actions ('5 lined up, shot dead', '15 killed by militants in Doda', '5 soldiers die in Kashmir blast') in the state, to the out-of-ordinary, high-profile bomb blasts ('Terror rips peace train') and suicide attacks ('Suicide attack stuns India') elsewhere, not to mention the war in Kargil ('Massive assault launched to recapture Tiger Hills', 'India launches air artillery attacks') – in essence, news classifiable as AP.

Peacetime, on the other hand, mostly presented news of peace attempts. Among others, these included pre-talk details ('Vajpayee invites Musharraf to Delhi for talks'), optimistic comments about the attempt ('Peace process irreversible', 'We need to seize this opportunity'), and of course news of the actual event ('General arrives with a message of peace', 'Talks well begun, half done').

But this is not to say that peace events contained purely 'positive' or pro-peace (PP) news – or, for that matter, wartime contained only 'negative' or anti-peace (AP) news. Both included a proportion of AP/PP stories. In the case of peace events, there were headlines of routine violence and unrest, finger-pointing at each other, and deadlocks in the process to deny it purity.

Comparatively, PP news items in wartime events were fewer. Mostly these related to efforts to resolve the crisis at hand and improvement in the ground situation.

5.1 | Proportion of anti-peace and pro-peace news

The media's appetite for violence was again indicated when the proportion of anti-peace (AP), pro-peace (PP) and neutral-ambiguous (NA) news were compared by way of a frequency analysis. Of the 912 units thus analysed, 58% (n=531) was AP, while only 36% (n=328) was PP (n=55) and 6% NA. That is, there were *22% more AP headlines than PP*. The results of the text analysis supported this. Sixty-three per cent (n=169) of the 268 stories coded were AP, 36% PP (n=96) and 1% (n=3) NA. Here, *AP stories were higher by 27%*.

This is indeed a significant difference. In fact, this is also disproportionately higher than what the ratio of wartime to peacetime coverage warranted. As the headline and text analyses had shown Kashmir was in the news 10% and 16% more respectively during wartime than peacetime, it was expected the proportion of AP stories would be more. This was indeed so, but to a larger extent. The gap had more than doubled in the headline analysis (22%) – while the text analysis showed an 11% rise, to 27% more AP stories.

5.1.1 | *Anti-peace stories in peacetime coverage*

Earlier we had noted that pro-peace news in wartime coverage was far and few. The widened gap supported this observation. It also indicated the converse possibility that AP news in peacetime coverage was relatively more frequent. A comparative analysis provided the evidence: *peacetime coverage accounted for a higher proportion of AP stories than wartime coverage did of PP stories.*

For instance, the headline analysis of peacetime coverage showed that while 59% of the stories were indeed PP, 34% was AP. In contrast, in the wartime coverage a much larger proportion – 77% – was AP, and only 18% PP. Further, the percentage of NA stories was slightly higher in peacetime events than in wartime events (7% against 5%). Similar was the case in the text analysis. While 71% of the peacetime stories were PP, 28% was AP. On the other hand, in the wartime coverage a larger proportion (89%) was AP, and only 10% PP. The percentage of NA stories was same in both cases.

A closer look at the Agra summit and Kargil war coverage, symbolic of peacetime and wartime respectively, and comparable in terms of the duration coded, is instructive here. Dominating the 2001 talks in Agra was PP news. Besides the announcement which received significant media focus, discussed in the run-up to the talks were how it came about ('Decision was taken at luncheon meeting': *HT*, May 24, 2001) and the encouraging reception and optimistic comments ('Pak positive': *ToI*, May 26; 'US sees opportunity to resolve differences': *Dawn*, May 24) it received. Pre-summit preparations, proposals and related logistics received extensive coverage in stories that, among others, described Indian emissary K C Pant's efforts to arrive at an understanding with Kashmiri separatists ('Pant goes to J&K today': *ToI*, May 29), the separatists' request to meet the Pakistani president ('APHC leaders to meet Musharraf': *Dawn*, July 11), and the president finally landing in New Delhi ('General arrives, tries to make friends': *HT*, July 15). Also found – though with a lower frequency – were stories of friendly gestures ('Pakistanis can now get visas along LoC, at checkpoints': *ToI*, July 10; 'From Husain to Musharraf via Atal': *HT*, July 12).

But corrupting this pro-peace flow were anti-peace stories. '5 jawans die in blast' (*ToI*, May 26, 2001), displayed with equal prominence next to 'Musharraf gets invite', is an example. Such a

prominent display of starkly contrasting stories – both stories had a P-SCORE of 5, just one point shy of the maximum score – was admittedly less common. The more typical backdrop for the talks were anti-peace stories displayed with lesser prominence – below fold, for instance, with fewer column inches and a P-SCORE between 1 and 4 – such as ‘Strike paralyses valley’ (*Dawn*, July 14, 2001) and ‘20 injured in blast’ (*ToI*, June 16, 2001).

More to the point were the anti-peace stories related to the summit. Reports on the ‘sabre-rattling’ Indian and Pakistani politicians undertook on more than one occasion found prominent display. The day after the *HT* reported on Pakistan president Musharraf’s confirmation he would make the summit despite protests from a radical section in his country, it carried this story on May 29, 2001:

‘No allowances to Pak on Kashmir’

India brushed aside Pakistan’s terming of Kashmir as the ‘core issue’ and sent a firm signal to Islamabad today that India’s sovereignty over Jammu & Kashmir is not negotiable.

Breaking his silence after five days of constant Pakistani posturing over issues it would like to be discussed at the Vajpayee-Musharraf summit, External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh stated that New Delhi is opposed to “denominational nationalism” which forms the basis of the Pakistani claim over Kashmir.

The story was the lead, displayed with the high P-SCORE of 5. In comparison, Musharraf’s promise not to let critics stop him from attending the summit (‘Gen will visit Delhi despite opposition’: *HT*, May 28) had only a P-SCORE of 2. In fact, the news on May 28 and May 29 in the *HT* is a good – and uncommonly symmetrical – example of the ‘now-hot, now-cold’ approach the newspapers showed in their coverage. On May 28, of the three Kashmir stories that made the

front page, two were pro-peace, one anti-peace. The next day it was the other way around. Three stories again, but two AP, one PP. The combined P-SCORE of pro-peace stories on May 28 was 6; on May 29, the two anti-peace stories together scored higher, 8. Though this comparison of the P-SCORE is far from conclusive, it can be seen as supportive of the trend we noted above – the extra-attention newspapers accord anti-peace news.

There is another observation that needs to be made in this particular context. ‘No allowances to Pak on Kashmir’ is a story based on Indian foreign minister Jaswant Singh’s comments. However, the reporter firmly contextualises it as an ‘us’ against ‘them’ matter with phrases such as “...sent a firm signal to Islamabad” and “Pakistan’s constant posturing of issues...” before introducing us to what Singh actually said – which can be taken to be in ‘softer’, diplomatic language.

Stories on political hard-stands also appeared in the Pakistani press. This is from ‘Musharraf says no bargain on Kashmir’, the lead story in *Dawn* on July 12, 2001:

Addressing members of the NSC [*National Security Council*], the president reiterated that there could be no compromise on Pakistan’s principled position that the Kashmir issue must be resolved in accordance with the wishes of the people of Kashmir, says an official press release.

Gen Musharraf informed the meeting that he had consulted people from different sections of society, including political and religious leaders, all of whom had unanimously shared this belief.

Based on the Pakistan president's comments, the story appeared just a few days before the summit. Unlike in the *HT* piece, however, the reporter here has desisted from explicitly contextualising the comments as us-versus-them, adopting a more objective – also less analytical – approach to it.

Stories critical of the other side were also featured in both the media. This is a good example, from the *HT* of July 12, 2001, about a prominent Indian politician's unflattering comments about the Pakistan president:

Gujral lashes out at Musharraf

Former Prime Minister I. K. Gujral today accused Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf of being in a “very aggressive mood” virtually “holding a pistol to our head” asking India to talk Kashmir at the Agra summit or else he would go back.

The story continues with the Indian politician saying, “He is marching in ... What does he think? Is it a defeated nation he is coming to or is it a friendly nation he is seeking?”

Further, there were headlines that prominently chronicled the ‘failure’ – for instance, ‘Summit fails, Musharraf back home’ (*Dawn*, July 17, 1999). Simultaneously appeared stories that sought to find who was at fault. Two related stories: ‘Vajpayee blames Musharraf for talks failure’ (*Dawn*, July 23), ‘Musharraf derailed talks, says Sushma’ (*HT*, July 21). The finger-pointing was mainly from Indian politicians – which the media placed in a supportive frame before according it space on the front page. As in this story in *HT* (July 20, 2001):

PM holds Pervez in unfavourable light

As Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf revels in the media glory over his achievements at Agra, it is Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's impressions of him that will determine the future course of ties between the two countries.

A majority of the NDA leaders, who got a first-hand account of the summit from the PM yesterday, say the General has certainly not left a favourable impression on his host – a prerequisite for any breakthrough.

The story, which appeared as the lead with the high P-SCORE of 5, is attributed to unnamed sources in Vajpayee's government. The reportage centres on what Vajpayee told them about the summit. But it is not 'straight' news. The reporter offers fragments of analysis through the story – the lead paragraph is a good example of this – that not only places the Pakistan president in – to borrow a phrase from one of the news headlines analysed – “unfavourable light”, but firmly indicates that nothing will come out of the summit. The sweeping statement that “Vajpayee's impression” of Musharraf will “determine the future course of ties between the two countries” is left unsubstantiated. Later events proved the prediction that the state-to-state relations will not move forward – or as the report had it, “Vajpayee and Musharraf may at best come close to shaking hands again in New York when the UN Assembly is in session” – deeply erroneous.

Interestingly, even as the 'blame game' played out, there could also be seen in the media stories on efforts at 'damage control' ('A prelude to better things to come': *ToI*, July 18, 2001; 'No deadlock in talks: Musharraf': *Dawn*, July 19; 'Pak: We arrived at a working understanding': *HT*, July 20).

5.1.2 | *Pro-peace stories in wartime coverage*

As mentioned earlier, PP headlines in war events were fewer – only 18% compared to the 34% AP headlines in peacetime coverage. Mostly the PP stories related to efforts to resolve the crisis at hand and improvement in the ground situation. An examination of the Kargil war provides some typical examples. On June 9, 1999, several weeks into the conflict, *HT* reported on the diplomatic efforts to resolve the situation with this headline, speaking of Pakistan foreign minister's emergency visit to India: 'Sartaj coming for talks on Saturday'. And on June 14, of the telephone conversation between the two prime ministers: 'Sharif rings Atal'. As the two sides reached an understanding on de-escalation, the newspapers began to headline the improvement in the ground situation ('Mujahideen begin vacating Kargil area': *Dawn*, July 12, 1999; 'IAF suspends strikes, "will wait and watch"': *ToI*, July 13, 1999).

The search for PP stories in the text analysis of wartime coverage was harder, as they accounted for only 10%. This 8% dip in comparison to the headline analysis indicated that some of the stories had 'turned' from pro-peace to anti-peace – in other words, a percentage coded pro-peace in the headline analysis was at a closer, nuanced examination found to be anti-peace.

However, as the data set of the headline analysis also included a third newspaper (*ToI*), this was not conclusive. Hence a separate data set was created with inputs from only the *HT* and *Dawn*. Accordingly, 80% of the headlines in wartime coverage was anti-peace, 14% pro-peace, and 6% neutral. In contrast, the text analysis showed 88% anti-peace, 10% pro-peace and 1% neutral. Thus, we can see an 8% increase in anti-peace stories. A corresponding percentage fall (the slight discrepancy is because of rounding) in the other two categories makes it clear that this was at the cost of PP and NA stories. That is, some pro-peace – and NA – stories had indeed 'turned' into anti-peace in the text analysis. An example will make this clear.

‘PM’s appeal to maintain peace’ appeared in *HT*, the same day as the news of the Charar shrine burning down. As this was clearly an effort by the Indian government to contain the situation on the ground, it was coded pro-peace in the headline analysis. The text analysis, however, after examining the 12 units accompanying it as body text, returned it as an anti-peace story. This was because the body text – all 12 units of it, in fact – was AP, strongly putting forth negative communication including condemnation and finger-pointing at Pakistan. This excerpt (*sic*) from ‘PM’s appeal to maintain peace’ (*HT*, May 12, 1995) is typical:

Official sources said the unfortunate happenings in Charar-e-Sharif was yet another instance of Pakistan trying to create disturbances and fan communal passions with the intent of derailing the democratic process in J and K, especially as the election schedule was expected to roll out soon.

Islamabad’s continued interference in India’s internal affairs as witnessed during the Hazratbal crisis in 1993 was manifest in Charar-e-Sharif once again with the Government making its intention clear of the holding elections in J and K so that a popular Government could be installed in the State.

Such communication also ‘turned’ NA headlines into anti-peace. As is obvious from the label ‘neutral-ambiguous’, the category was also made up of unclear units, and many fell under it not because of neutrality but because they were mixed or ambiguous in their communication, thus preventing the coder from safely placing it as anti-peace or pro-peace. Many such were found to be anti-peace in light of the accompanying text, though there were cases of clearly neutral headlines too with overriding anti-peace units in the body text. ‘Vajpayee seeks fresh delimitation in J&K’, which appeared in the *HT* at the start of the Charar-e-Sharif episode, is an example of

the latter case. This was clearly neutral, belonging to the sub-category ‘other issues’, as it focussed on realigning the electoral constituencies in J&K. However, the text analysis found a proportion of the units focussed on the violence in Kashmir, and pointed to Pakistan as the cause. This excerpt from *HT* (May 8, 1995), which quotes Vajpayee, then leader of opposition in the Indian parliament, highlights the trend:

Similarly terrorism in the Valley should be crushed with an iron hand. He said that terror of bullets prevails and Pakistan too was adamant to foil the efforts of the Centre to hold elections in J and K.

Such units – in all 35% were found to be anti-peace – provided the story a strong AP hue on the whole, overriding the neutrality of the headline and other units. Thus, it ended with a -13.5 value in the text analysis and was classified as anti-peace.

5.1.3 | *Neutral stories*

What is equally – if not more – interesting is how *few* neutral stories there were. In the headline analysis less than 6% was coded NA. The figure is even lower in reality because, as we have noted before, many stories fell into the category not because of their neutrality but because of their ambiguous nature. This headline on how then Pakistan prime minister Nawaz Sharif did not turn up for a parliamentary meeting – it was during the Kargil war, when peace negotiations were on – is typical: ‘Sharif avoids house’ (*HT*, July 10, 1999). The exception to this ‘rule’ included headlines on bureaucratic bungling related to an election (‘Kashmir polls may be delayed’: *ToI*, May 12, 1995) and Musharraf’s swearing in before the Agra talks on June 20, 2001 (‘Musharraf is Pakistan president’: *HT*; ‘Takeover in “national interest”’: *Dawn*).

The pattern becomes more pronounced when we look at the text analysis. In the 268 stories examined, there were just *three* neutral stories – that is, less than 1% of the news related to any ‘normal’ occurrence. Earlier we had also noted how many headlines coded as neutral initially were found to be actually PP or AP when the accompanying text was examined. In the example of ‘Vajpayee seeks fresh delimitation in J&K’ and the accompanying text we looked at in the above section, we saw how neutral headlines are corrupted by the accompanying text. It must be mentioned that such ‘corruption’ did not place all neutral headlines that changed classification in the text analysis on the AP side. Some were found to be pro-peace as well, though this was less frequent. ‘India says ceasefire not mentioned in accord’, which appeared in the *Dawn* of July 12, 1999 at the height of the Kargil war, was placed as NA; it was ambiguous, as the headline did not make itself quite clear. However, the text analysis found evidence of ‘pro-peaceness’, in several references to the ground situation in Kargil improving, Pakistani forces withdrawing, and an assurance – backhanded arguably, but still an assurance – that the Indian army would hold its fire during the process as “it has no tradition of shooting at the backs of people”. In the final count, the majority of units in the story were found to be PP, providing it an overall PP value (4.5).

The susceptibility of units to be thus either anti-peace or pro-peace – and by extension the stories to be non-neutral – explains the 5% fall of neutral stories noted in the text analysis, to just 1% from the 6% of the headline analysis. Put another way, it showed how unlikely the media was to report a neutral incident related to Kashmir without corrupting it with the conflict frame in one way or other. A closer look at the stories that clung to their original status sheds light on this observation. Of the two, ‘Sharif avoids house’ (*HT*, July 10, 1999) was coded neutral because of ambiguity; as there was only one unit in the body text, which didn’t make itself clear, it could not be classified either anti-peace or pro-peace. The second, ‘Employees to go on strike in Kashmir’ (*HT*, May 8, 1995) is neutral as this excerpt shows:

The Employees Action Forum (EAF) has called for a complete lock-out of Civil Secretariat and all Government and semi-Government departments for 15 days, beginning May 12, in Kashmir.

The EAF, which spearheaded a 6-day strike last month in protest against the dismissal of 22 State government employees, has already given a call for a general strike tomorrow.

The story – which appeared during the Charar-e-Sharif episode – continues for another two paragraphs in the same vein. One of the few ‘straight’ news reports found in the content analysed, and the only example of a completely neutral story, it was also one of very few that tackled an issue not conflict-related.

All of which is telling on the coverage. Even discounting the nature of the text analysis that makes stories susceptible to classification as either pro-peace or anti-peace, we can still see from the headline analysis that Kashmir made the front pages *only if there was some violence or a peace attempt*. As we have seen, missing almost completely from the mix is news of anything that existed between the two extremes; absent even were any perspectives on economic and social issues, generally believed to underlie and impact upon most conflicts. It was as if Kashmir did not exist beyond recurring violence and the consequent attempts at resolution. The coverage, in short, indicated what (Knightley 2000) calls a superficial narrative, with little context, background or historical perspective. This is indeed a remarkable indicator of the nature of the media focus Kashmir received.

5.2 | Intensity of anti-peace and pro-peace news

The frequency analysis offered us a ‘quantitative’ overview, allowing us to compare the proportion of the kinds of news that made up the Kashmir coverage. This section deals with the quality of that content. How strong – or *intense* – was the anti-peace news in the media? How did it compare with the intensity⁹⁴ or I-SCORE of pro-peace news?

At the outset two hypotheses had been put forth: one, the proportion of anti-peace news would be higher than pro-peace news; two, the overall AP intensity would be higher. The frequency analysis provided evidence for the first. As intensity was in part dependant on frequency (more the number of a particular category of units, more the overall value of that category), the second thesis was more likely to be true. And so it was – as both the headline and text analyses made clear.

In all 912 headlines were coded for intensity. The total AP I-SCORE – the sum of the I-SCORES of individual anti-peace units – was -1013. The total PP I-SCORE was +531. The overall intensity of the *coverage* – the sum of the I-SCORES of *all* individual units analysed, that is the total AP I-SCORE plus the total PP I-SCORE– was -482. This can be taken as a measure of the extent to which AP news dominated the coverage in intensity.

The I-SCORE of -1013 is attributable to 531 AP headlines. The average anti-peace headline, thus, produced an I-SCORE of -1.9. As this value is mainly determined by which sub-category it is coded under, a closer look at that aspect is instructive here.

5.2.1 | *Most used anti-peace themes*

As discussed in chapter 4 (section 4.3.6), the anti-peace category breaks down into eight sub-categories, each with a specific theme (and sub-themes). The first three of these sub-categories recorded passive anti-peace communication, such as news of routine violence, anti-militant action etc – that is, news about the *status quo* (conflict). The other five house active anti-peace units, themes taken to exacerbate the conflict, or alternately detract from peace attempts, such as cross-border action and other war moves, blame or blackening the other side, and impediments to ongoing talks. In other words, news believed to accentuate the *status quo*.

Seventy-eight per cent of the AP headlines belonged to one of the active sub-categories, with ‘War moves’ accounting for 60% of the headlines, ‘Impediments to peace’ 13%, and ‘Blame/blackening of other’ 5%. As we can see, most AP headlines were of ‘War moves’, and expectedly the majority of those were found in the coverage of the Kargil war. Mostly headlines dealt with the ground fighting (‘Indian soldiers reclaim Jubar Hills’: *HT*, July 8, 1999; ‘Jets bombard Batalik area’: *ToI*, June 14; ‘Indian artillery assaults continue’: *Dawn*, June 11). The other sub-themes presented included diplomatic moves (‘Isolated Pak rushing Sartaj to Beijing’: *HT*, June 10), war rhetoric (‘We will give Pakistan a bloody nose: Army’: *ToI*, June 22) and plight of civilians in the war zone (‘Poorer residents forced to stay on’: *HT*, June 19).

Headlines coded under ‘Impediments to peace’ mostly related to political ‘hard-stands’ (‘No allowances to Pak on Kashmir’: *HT*, May 29; ‘Hurriyat rejects Vajpayee’s terms’: *Dawn*, May 30), pessimism and outright rejection (‘Truce offer termed a ploy’: *Dawn*, November 21, 2000; ‘Militants reject PM’s truce offer’: *ToI*, November 21, 2000), and also setbacks in the talks (‘Sushma throws spanner in the spokes’: *ToI*, July 17, 2001; ‘No agreed draft in Agra: *ToI*, July 23, 2001). The majority of such headlines were from peacetime coverage. More specifically, from

the Ramzan ceasefire and Agra summit, two peace attempts seen by many in India and Pakistan as having ended unsatisfactorily.

The usage of 'Blame/blackening of other' subcategory, on the other hand, was more spread across the timeline. Headlines of this theme were found across the timeline analysed, in nine out of the 10 events analysed. The exception was the 2005 coverage of the Delhi talks. Examples include 'Pakistan duplicity exposed' (*ToI*, 1995, from the Charar shrine burning), 'Indians kill five as curfew clamped on in Rajouri' (*Dawn*, 1999, Lahore declaration), 'Islamabad confusing issues: Delhi' (*ToI*, 1999, Kargil war), 'PM blames Pak for talks failure' (*HT*, 2001, Agra summit).

The three *status quo* sub-categories accounted for only 22% of the anti-peace headlines. Very few headlines focussed on 'Conflict background' (2%) and 'Anti-militant action' (again, 2%), leaving 18% in 'Militant violence'. This was the sub-category that found consistent usage: like 'Blame/blackening of other', it was used across almost all events, except for – again – the Delhi talks, but with higher frequency. Any violence initiated by separatist forces was recorded in 'Militant violence' and the headlines coded under it ranged from news on kidnapping ('Extremists kidnap Mufti's daughter'), siege ('Militants continue firing from shrine'), and curfew ('Kashmiris defy curfew in valley') to encounters ('12 more die in Kashmir gunbattles'), blasts ('20 injured in blasts'), and collateral damage ('Five pilgrims among 12 killed, yatra off'). Though with lesser frequency, such headlines made the front page even during peace attempts (for instance, 'Mufti escapes grenade attack', *Dawn*, New York talks 2004) and even the Kargil war, focussed as it was on the ground fighting, had its share of the 'routine' conflict (for instance, '22 killed in Valley; police on rampage', 'Seven Indian soldiers, 15 militants killed', '5 killed as ultras blow up vehicle').

In the above discussions we have seen how the active themes dominated the AP headlines. How significant were these themes in the overall scenario – that is, what proportion of the 912 headlines coded was claimed by these sub-categories? Again we see the dominance of the active themes. Forty-five per cent of the headlines belonged in the active sub-categories, overshadowing not only *status quo* themes (13%) but also the PP themes (37%). NA themes accounted for the rest.

The story these break-ups tells is quite straightforward: *the newspapers analysed not only focused on more AP news, they focused more on active AP news*. News that could accentuate the conflict was preferred over all other kinds of news, including passive (‘regular’) AP news.

5.2.2 | Absent anti-peace themes in Delhi talks

As the Delhi talks 2005 was the only event in which the ‘Blame/blackening of other’ and ‘Militant violence’ codes did *not* appear in the headline analysis, a closer look at it is warranted.

It was different from the peace efforts that preceded it in more than one way. Unlike the initial peace forays of 2000 (Ramzan ceasefire) and 2001 (Agra summit), both of which ended inconclusively, this finished on a positive note. More to the point, it occurred in a conducive political climate, as it followed the New York talks of 2004, which made significant headway in the India-Pakistan relations (as indicated by these headlines immediately after the talks in the September 28, 2004 *Dawn* and *ToI*, respectively: ‘NY round broke new ground: FO’, ‘We can do biz with Musharraf: PM’).

The sustained Track II diplomacy that followed the NY dialogue laid extensive ground work for the Delhi talks, and there appeared to be an effort from both Indian and Pakistani politicians –

and also important separatist forces – to avoid another ‘embarrassing Agra’. This sentiment found reflection in the press – and in as many words. This headline featured in the run-up to the talks in the *HT* of April 15, 2005 is an indication: ‘Pervez doesn’t want another Agra’. Three days later, at the end of the successful dialogue, the same newspaper led with this story: ‘Ghost of Agra buried in Delhi’.

This climate of political goodwill appears to have influenced the media coverage – as Wolfsfeld’s politics-media-politics cycle (2004) suggests – considerably. The end result was that not only were there no headlines of ‘Militant violence’ or ‘Blame/blackening of other’, there were no AP headlines at all. In fact, Delhi talks saw an unusual spell of positive reportage – 95% of the headlines were pro-peace and the rest neutral. The anti-peace stories – and indeed there were anti-peace stories, as a scan of the newspapers during this period shows – were relegated to the inside pages, making clear the media’s willingness to go with the political flow.

5.2.3 | *Most used pro-peace themes*

The pro-peace category is less complex than the anti-peace, comprising only three sub-categories. Of this, the first two captured the themes ‘Active promotion of peace’ and ‘Demotion of conflict’. Both aimed to record units that were taken as intensely positive. The third ‘Support to promotion of peace’ recorded units that, as the title indicates, played a supportive pro-peace role.

Fifty-seven per cent of the PP headlines belonged to ‘Active promotion of peace’, while ‘Support to peace promotion’ accounted for 43%. The majority of headlines that fell into the latter intensely positive sub-category were published in the run-up to the talks, particularly the days immediately preceding the dialogue, and focussed on pre-talk activities and preparations

(‘India’s formal invitation received’, *Dawn*, May 26, 2001; ‘General arrives with message of peace’, *ToI*, April 17, 2005), including political statements (‘Musharraf hopes India will be flexible, bold’, *Dawn*, September 23, 2004). Talks outcome and related statements, too, received good coverage (‘Good progress’, *HT*, July 16, 2001; ‘Peace process “irreversible”’, *Dawn*, April 18, 2005). Encouragement and positive responses to the talks were the other issues headlined significantly (‘US sees opportunity to resolve differences’, *Dawn*, May 24, 2001; Pak positive, *ToI*, May 26; A Husain for the general, *ToI*, July 12, 2001).

‘Support to promotion of peace’ comprised mostly of headlines that provided the background to the talks (‘Decision was taken at luncheon meeting’, *HT*, May 24, 2001), constructive criticism (‘Summit will be a flop if Pak harps on Kashmir: US experts’, *HT*, July 13, 2001), and also possibilities of opportunities in the future (‘Officials may meet on August 6’, *Dawn*, July 21, 2001). Improvement in the situation/crisis, however, was the most consistent and single dominant sub-theme under ‘Support to promotion of peace’. Headlines were found across the timeline, including wartime coverage. Two obvious examples are news of Rubaiyya Saeed’s release by kidnappers (‘Captors free Rubaiyya’, *ToI*, December 14, 1989) and de-escalation during the Kargil war (‘Fighting scaled down along LoC’, *ToI*, July 12, 1999; ‘Pak agrees to withdraw forces by July 16 deadline’, *HT*, July 13, 1999). Attempts to contain the situation was another sub-theme easily noticeable in wartime coverage (‘US rages restraint’, which appeared as part of the Attack on Indian Parliament coverage in *HT* on December 19, 2001 is a good example), while peripheral details of the talks (such as this headline about Pakistan president’s ‘tourist’ visit to Taj Mahal in Agra: ‘Musharraf’s soak in Taj’s beauty’, *ToI*, July 16) and positive responses to the breakdown in talks (‘Pak: We arrived at a working understanding’, *HT*, July 21, 2001) were two significant sub-themes seen in the peacetime coverage.

Interesting here is the story the sub-category ‘Demotion of conflict’ tells. This was created to record communication that encouraged discontinuing violence, directly or indirectly (by presenting its human and material cost, highlighting consequences, etc). One reason for such a sub-category was that in the extensive pre-tests, the theme had presented itself on a few occasions, standing out as much for its rarity as for its contrast from the other PP themes. Further, literature indicated the media would be unwilling to focus on the need to discontinue conflict – or rather, it would show a pronounced willingness to highlight “every act of violence, every crisis, every sign of conflict” (Wolfsfeld 2004, p18). The sub-category, hence, was included in the coding scheme as a ‘measure’ of this tendency. The fact that not one of the 912 headlines took up the theme supports the pattern. The newspapers analysed, it would appear, were reluctant to make the need to end violence a central focus in any story.

5.2.4 | Anti-peace and pro-peace I-SCORE: a comparison

A comparison of the anti-peace and pro-peace intensity – as expressed by the respective I-SCORES – is attempted in this section. It was noted earlier that the headline analysis had produced a total anti-peace I-SCORE of -1013 and a pro-peace I-SCORE of +531. The I-SCORE -1013 is the sum of 531 individual AP units. Similarly, the PP I-SCORE is attributable to 329 headlines. The average I-SCORE of an anti-peace headline, thus, was (-) 1.9 and that of a pro-peace headline (+) 1.6. This is an extremely significant difference statistically (p value is less than 0.0001).

A similar difference between the average AP I-SCORE and PP I-SCORE was seen in the text analysis in a more pronounced way. The total AP I-SCORE here was -4,625.25, attributable to 169 stories and the total PP I-SCORE 1,896, attributable to 96 stories. The average anti-peace

story, thus, produced an I-SCORE of -27 while an average pro-peace story produced an I-SCORE of +20 – a significant difference again (p value less than 0.0001).

Another way of looking at the text analysis results is in terms of individual textual units. What intensity was delivered by the average anti-peace/pro-peace unit? The 268 stories analysed had yielded 3,526 textual units (excluding headlines) in total. Of this, 1,286 were pro-peace units, contributing a total PP I-SCORE of +1,709. The majority (2,240) were anti-peace, however, contributing an I-SCORE of -4336.25. The average anti-peace unit, thus, delivered an I-SCORE of (-) 1.9 and the average pro-peace headline (+) 1.3 (p value less than 0.0001). These significant differences allow us to conclude that *the anti-peace intensity was significantly more than the pro-peace intensity*.

Insights into this pattern can be gained by a closer examination of wartime and peacetime coverage. As we have seen, anti-peace units had dominated the wartime coverage, just as PP units dominated the peacetime coverage. How intense were these headlines in relation to each other? Specifically:

1. In wartime coverage, how did the anti-peace units compare with the pro-peace units in terms of intensity?
2. In peacetime coverage, how did the pro-peace units compare with the anti-peace units in intensity?
3. More interestingly, how did the dominant categories in the two segments under analysis – the anti-peace headlines in wartime coverage and pro-peace headlines in peacetime coverage – compare against each other in intensity?

The wartime coverage had produced a total of 506 headlines. Of this, 387 were anti-peace (resulting in a total I-SCORE of -770.5), 91 pro-peace (total I-SCORE of 99), and 28 NA. The I-SCORE of the average anti-peace headline, thus, was -2. In comparison, the average pro-peace headline delivered an I-SCORE of +1.

In peacetime coverage, 406 headlines were coded. Of this, 140 were anti-peace (total I-SCORE = -242.5), 235 pro-peace (+431), and 31 NA. The I-SCORE intensity of the average anti-peace headline was, thus, -1.7. And the I-SCORE of the average pro-peace headline was +1.8.

The significant difference between the anti-peace and pro-peace intensity in wartime coverage is obvious from the two unit means (-2 against +1). This is not altogether surprising and can be summarised thus: *the anti-peace intensity of wartime was significantly more pronounced than the pro-peace intensity during the same period.*

More interesting is the pattern that appears to emerge from the peacetime coverage. The difference between the anti-peace and pro-peace I-SCORES is less pronounced here (-1.7 against +1.8), indicating the headlines retained their anti-peace intensity more despite being featured in an 'alien' context. To see how far this was true, the story-wise results of the text analysis were examined.

In peacetime coverage, the average anti-peace intensity of a story was -17 (-525.5 intensity, across 31 stories), against a pro-peace intensity of +22 (total I-SCORE = +1,762, across 80 stories). In wartime coverage, the average anti-peace intensity of a story was -29 (total I-SCORE = -4,071.5, across 137 stories), against the significantly lower pro-peace intensity of +8 (+134, across 17 stories⁹⁵). From these figures, two intertwined observations can be made. One,

the anti-peace intensity of peacetime stories was more pronounced than the pro-peace intensity of wartime stories (-17 against +8). Two, the anti-peace intensity of wartime stories was also more pronounced than even the pro-peace intensity in peacetime stories (-29 against +22).

What stands out here is how significantly high the anti-peace intensity was. Not only did the average anti-peace story clearly overshadow the pro-peace story in terms of intensity in its 'home' environment (-29 against +22), it maintained a robust presence in peacetime coverage as well (-17 against +22). In contrast, the average pro-peace story had only a fading presence in wartime coverage, comparing unfavourably with the intensity of the average anti-peace story (+8 against -29). For instance, '5 shot dead on J&K highway' (*HT*, November 23, 2000) is a routine story of violence that appeared in the peacetime coverage. Its anti-peace I-SCORE was -20.5. 'US stresses restraint', on the other hand, is a pro-peace story that appeared during wartime (*Dawn*, December 17, 2001), as part of the coverage of the attack on the Indian Parliament. Its pro-peace I-SCORE was considerably less pronounced, only +5.5.

A closer examination of the scenario shows two reasons for this difference. One, the anti-peace stories in peacetime were longer: where the text of the average pro-peace story in wartime coverage comprised 8 units, the anti-peace story in peacetime had 12. Two, while most anti-peace stories were 'uncorrupted' by pro-peace units, most pro-peace stories had their portion of anti-peace units. '5 shot dead on J&K highway' and 'US stresses restraint' are perfect examples of these patterns. The latter began thus: 'In a violent rebuff to the Indian Ramzan ceasefire offer, militants struck on Tuesday night, killing five truck drivers and conductors in cold blood.' The rest of the story was similar, all anti-peace units. 'US stresses restraint', published the fourth day after the Indian Parliament was stormed, focussed on US Secretary of State Colin Powell's appeal to New Delhi and Islamabad to contain the situation. But though the majority of the units retained the 'pro-peaceness' embodied in Powell's effort to resolve the stand-off, two units were anti-

peace, focussing on the ‘very tense’ situation between India and Pakistan, which had the ‘potential to spiral out of control’.

The end result of this was, as noted before, significantly more intense anti-peace news. In the final count, the overall coverage was clearly anti-peace in its intensity. We also saw that whereas pro-peace news is weakened in an alien environment, anti-peace news is not. In fact, it fares remarkably well in comparison to the ‘incumbent’ news, retaining its intensity to a high degree.

5.3 | AP versus PP coverage: comparison across the border

The frequency and intensity analyses, as discussed above, highlighted an overriding anti-peace domination. So it was quite likely that both Indian and Pakistani newspapers followed the same pattern of coverage. How did *Dawn* and *HT* compare in this regard?

The I-SCORE analysis shows AP news was indeed dominant in both the newspapers. While *Dawn* recorded a total I-SCORE of -662, *HT* was considerably more intense in its overall ‘AP-ness’, scoring -2,067.25, allowing the conclusion that while both the *HT* and *Dawn* presented predominantly AP news coverage, *HT* was significantly more anti-peace.

A comparative look at the F-SCORE analysis provides an insight into *HT*’s higher anti-peace intensity. Of the 130 news stories that *Dawn* carried, 56% (n=73) was AP and 44% (n=57) PP. Of the 138 stories in *HT*, the proportion of AP news was considerably higher, 70% (n=96) against 28% (n=39) PP news (2% was NA), up 32%. Thus, while *Dawn* carried only 12% more AP stories than PP on its front page, *HT* presented 34% more AP news. This is mainly traceable

to the way the two newspapers performed during wartime. *HT* carried more AP stories and *fewer* PP stories during this period than *Dawn*. Thus, *HT* covered 83 AP news items against the *Dawn*'s 53. And while *Dawn* presented 12 PP stories, *HT* carried just 4. A comparison of the I-SCORE story means also shows that the average *HT* report during this period was significantly more intense than the average *Dawn* report (-27 against -18).

It is possible to attribute these trends – the significantly higher AP intensity and proportion, the fewer PP stories in *HT* – to the fact that all war events occurred on Indian soil. Hence, these were of particular ethnocentric⁹⁶ (Wolfsfeld 2004) interest to the Indian paper, more so than for the foreign *Dawn*, resulting in more⁹⁷ news stories, of pronounced intensity. A case in point and an incident that contributed much to the difference is the attack on Indian Parliament. While the *HT* framed it as extraordinary violence, as an ‘attack on Indian democracy’ and statehood by Pakistani ‘elements’, the *Dawn* presented it as routine violence⁹⁸, a ‘shootout’ that saw ‘12 die’ as ‘gunmen stormed Indian parliament’. The result was more⁹⁹ intense AP news in *HT*: compared to the I-SCORE of -347 that *Dawn* recorded, the *HT* I-SCORE was -1,163 for this particular coverage.

5.4 | News slots¹⁰⁰: anti-peace versus pro-peace

Of extreme significance to this inquiry is the prominence score or P-SCORE. The above discussions have shown us the supremacy of anti-peace communication in frequency and intensity. But how did the media display the news on its front pages? How were AP and PP stories slotted in relation to each other?

Conventional news values uphold the primacy of conflict in journalism. War, violence, disorder, chaos, protests and the like are the natural surroundings for news. Peace, on the other

hand, is less worthy of journalistic attention, and many scholars (Galtung 1998 and Manoff 1998, among others) have commented on its uneasy and contradictory relation with news. In such a scenario, it was expected anti-peace news would have a higher P-SCORE than pro-peace. That is, in relation to the display accorded to peace-oriented news, news of conflict would be prioritised higher on the front pages.

This appeared to be the case at the outset. The 744¹⁰¹ headlines coded for prominence yielded a total P-SCORE of 2,336. Anti-peace headlines accounted for 57% of this (and a total P-SCORE of 1,324), pro-peace headlines 37% (868), and NA 6% (144). In other words, *on the whole* anti-peace news received better news slots and was featured 20% ‘higher’ on the front pages. But this is at best a rough indication. As the majority of headlines were anti-peace, and the P-SCORE is in part dependent on number of headlines in a particular category, a significantly higher overall P-SCORE was only expected. A clearer idea can be gained by comparing the P-SCORE means of the anti-peace and pro-peace headlines.

The anti-peace P-SCORE of 1,324 is divided among 436 individual headlines, the pro-peace P-SCORE of 851 among 264 headlines, and the neutral-ambiguous P-SCORE of 144 among 44. The average AP headline thus carried a P-SCORE of 3, PP headline 3.2, and NA 3.2. This is interesting. The P-SCORE means show that despite the final value indicating prominent anti-peace display on the whole, the average PP and NA headlines were displayed with *more* prominence than the average AP headline. An unpaired t-test shows the difference in prominence noted here was not statistically significant (p value=0.2907). However, the fact that there is *no* difference – that the anti-peace stories were *not* displayed with more prominence than the pro-peace stories – needs discussion. Here a look at the way some typical stories were slotted would be instructive.

As detailed earlier, a P-SCORE of 6 indicates the highest news priority possible. There were very few stories – only 2%, 15 in number, to be precise – that were accorded such prominent display. ‘Democracy attacked’ (*HT*, December 14, 2001), which chronicled the storming of the Indian Parliament, and ‘Terror rips Samjhata’ (*ToI*, Feb 20, 2007), which chronicled the twin blasts on the India-Pakistan ‘peace’ train are good examples of AP stories that scored 6. So are these *pro-peace* headlines: ‘India, Pak smile and joust, but Musharraf steals the show’ (*HT*, July 15, 2001; Agra talks), ‘Talks well begun, half done’ (*HT*, July 16, 2001; Agra talks), and ‘Let’s take this forward together’ (*HT*, April 19, 2005; Delhi talks).

As we can see from the two sets of headlines above, anti-peace *and* pro-peace news were featured in the ‘best’ slot. In fact, of the 15 headlines that were accorded the highest P-SCORE, six were anti-peace – and *seven* pro-peace. This *lack* of partiality towards AP news supports the pattern the comparison of P-SCORE means highlighted. Considered in this light, the assumption that the media prefers anti-peace news over pro-peace news can be taken as – if not untrue – simplistic.

5.4.1 | *The drama of breakthrough*

So what can this pattern be attributed to? There are two possible explanations. The first is what I label the *drama of breakthrough*. This is the excitement associated with the initiation of a peace process or a significant step forward in negotiations. As we have seen, it is the media’s search for drama that is behind its fascination for violence, disorder etc (Wolfsfeld 2004), for such news offers what can be labelled the *drama of conflict*. I propose that the excitement of breakthroughs satisfies this particular media criterion by offering an *alternate* drama – and consequent newsworthiness.

Applying this to the context, we see the peace events analysed all coincided with a significant breakthrough. The Agra summit indicated a major thaw in the India-Pakistan relations, ending the standoff the Kargil war had created. Moreover, it was a dramatic move, coming at an unexpected juncture, offered to a military ruler India had labelled the instigator of Kargil. The novelty¹⁰² – and drama – of this breakthrough bestowed on the announcement a high news value, as the P-SCORE of 5 accorded to ‘Musharraf invited for talks, J&K ceasefire off’ (*HT*) and ‘Vajpayee invites Musharraf to Delhi for talks’ (*Dawn*) attests. This news value was carried forward by the major among the peace details that were to follow, particularly those surrounding the actual meeting. This story, published after the first round of talks in *HT* (July 16, 2001) as its front page lead, shows the summit poised on the cusp of an agreement:

Talks well begun, half done

85-minute one-to-one cordial and frank

Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee’s acceptance of General Pervez Musharraf’s invitation to make a return visit to Pakistan for a back-to-back summit has revived hopes that India and Pakistan may be back on the bilateral track that was suspended in the wake of Kargil.

As the first day’s dialogue progressed, there were strong indications that a ‘chemistry’ was developing between the two leaders who held delegation-level talks after their one-to-one meeting at one of the pavilions of the five-star hotel where the Indian delegation is lodged.

Similarly, the New York dialogue in 2004 and the Delhi talks of 2005 were significant because the former saw India and Pakistan finally arriving at a joint declaration and the latter saw a further significant step in negotiations. The result was items of extreme newsworthiness,

demanding prominent news slots. We can see this in the following front page lead (*HT*, April 19, 2005):

Let's take this forward together

India, Pak for more CBMs, contacts

That the peace process was people-driven and "now irreversible", and bilateral relations were moving away from mutual suspicions towards an era of bilateral trust appeared the abiding sentiment encapsulated in the joint statement issued at the end of Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf's visit to India.

Thus, the peacetime coverage under analysis can be seen as brimming with the drama of breakthrough. This arguably stood in for the drama of conflict and satisfied the media's need for excitement, thus allowing it to grant such items prominent news slots. Here it is also worth noting that peace attempts occur in a climate of political goodwill, wherein the movers promote the cause of peace the hardest, exerting, as Wolfsfeld (2004, p60) puts it, their "greatest level of control over the political environment". This strengthens the drama of breakthrough, simultaneously 'leading' the media away from the drama of conflict – as we noted in the discussion on the Delhi talks.

5.4.2 | *The conflict in peace*

A second explanation lies in the way the genre of New Journalism – borrowing from the structure of literary narrative – explains journalistic narrative using the conflict-escalation-resolution model. Though variant in style and technique from the kind of reportage we analysed, the core principles can be applied to conventional journalism as well.

Like Galtung & Ruge (1965) and the many others after them, New Journalists too see conflict as central to any ‘interesting’ story. But their interpretation is wider: conflict is not limited to the *obvious* (‘bad’ or ‘negative’ news, for instance), but may be what can be labelled *obscure* as well. Every ‘good’ story has a conflict hidden within (Brooks 1992, Franklin 1986). In fact, it is this that makes it ‘good’. As Obstfeld (2002) puts it, conflict is “the hope element of the story”. It provides for suspense, awakening in the reader an interest in its outcome.

Evidence of obscure conflict can be seen in the peacetime coverage – and hence, it is argued, the prominent news slots. A good example is the coverage on the Agra summit. As it is, this is a product of the conflict; it is the violence that has prompted the dialogue. Hence, the summit is naturally newsworthy and can be seen as a variation of the basic ‘plot’ (the obvious conflict). This excerpt from the story headlined ‘Musharraf invited for talks, J&K ceasefire off’ (*HT*, May 24, 2001) is typical of the average references that anchor the attempt to the underlying conflict:

In reply to questions about the government’s sudden change of stance on initiating bilateral Indo-Pak dialogue without insisting that Islamabad first stop cross-border terrorism, [*Indian foreign minister Jaswant*] Singh said that New Delhi’s invitation to Pakistan’s Chief Executive aimed to take the peace process further on the basis of the Lahore Declaration and the 1972 Simla Pact.

Building on this is the ‘new’ conflict, which is inherent in the obstacle the peace move has placed before India and Pakistan. The outcome is uncertain, and here the stakes – which dictate the level of suspense in the story by providing a fear element – are even higher. If the talks fail, if the obstacle is *not* overcome, the situation could deteriorate. If it succeeds, the violence could end. In the latter case there would be a positive resolution (happy climax); in the former, there would be a negative resolution (an unhappy climax). This uncertainty of outcome when the stakes

are high is what retains the reader-interest – or, as Galtung & Ruge (1965) put it in their original listing of news values, adds ‘continuity’ to the event, thus giving it newsworthiness – till the point of resolution¹⁰³. In that sense the whole peace event can be seen as the ‘story’, serialised across days or weeks perhaps, with each news report a section or scene in it. The following news item from *HT* (April 17, 2005) makes this clear:

Musharraf comes goodwill hunting

The stress, clearly, was on the "positives" in the backdrop of "a much improved (bilateral) relationship" between India and Pakistan over the past year and a half.

The outcome, well placed sources said, would be "successful" if, at the end of President Pervez Musharraf 's second visit to India, the bilateral peace process remains on track, and there is forward movement on Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's "vision" to make the borders "softer" or "less relevant."

This means easier travel and trade across borders, without compromising security.

The story had appeared in the run-up to the Delhi talks. It captures, quite clearly, the ‘if’ associated with the dialogue: ‘The outcome, well placed sources said, would be “successful” if, at the end of President Pervez Musharraf 's second visit to India, the bilateral peace process remains on track...’ An idea of the high stakes involved is presented. This is the second attempt, the report makes clear, and a failure would derail the bilateral progress made in the wake of the failed Agra summit (not to mention sabotaging the ‘easier travel and trade across borders’ mentioned in the last paragraph). Further, the story makes its ‘continuity’ – one of the original news values put forward by Galtung & Ruge (1965) – evident. It is presented as one in a series that deals with the event, coming long after the plans of the talks made the news pages, and seeks to build on the

readers' existing knowledge about it. The conflict is not yet resolved, so the reader has to keep inching towards it till an outcome is published. Coming as it did just two days before the expected 'resolution' (the actual talks), the story is an important link in the chain of events – in a way, a preparation for the climax. It is not surprising, then, that it was accorded a P-SCORE of 6, the highest possible (the 'climax', 'Let's take this forward together' cited above, too, received the same P-SCORE).

5.4.3 | *Drama of breakthrough and conflict in peace*

The two theses, it can be argued, are not dissimilar but for the terminology. The conflict hidden in a peace move serves the same purpose as the drama of breakthrough. In fact, I suggest obscure conflict is the *cause* of the drama that accompanies most breakthroughs. As argued in the immediate discussion above, but for the struggle to succeed in the talks, the outcome of which was unsure, there would be no drama in the peace attempt.

This strongly suggests conflict is a core news value even in what can be termed peace-oriented reportage. At a practical level, this means the media not always shies away from PP news. In select cases, it would accord such news at least equal prominence as AP news. As this P-SCORE analysis shows, this is particularly true in the short-term.

5.5 | Sources of news: who said what

Elite consensus and nationalistic concerns are crucial determinants of how journalists report conflicts. As discussed earlier, scholars such as Bar-Tal (1998), Wolfsfeld (1997a, 2001, 2004), and Herman & Chomsky (1988, 1999) have offered different perspectives on this, including the extent of influence the government-in-power has on the way media frames news.

Joseph's study (2000), which analysed Indian press coverage in the early phase of Kashmir conflict (1991-92), had produced evidence that underlined this trend.

This analysis was aimed to gather further insights into the scenario. The idea was to profile the different views the media presented, and the priority it accorded each. As listed in chapter 4 (section 4.3.11), sources were divided into eight categories: Own Government (Own-G), Own Non-Government (Own-NG), Other Government (Other-G), Other Non-Government (Other-NG), Indian Security Forces (ISF), Pakistani Security Forces (PSF), Separatists (Sep) and Miscellaneous (Misc). Only those units – headlines or textual – that carried a clear attribution were 'source-coded'.

5.5.1 | *Anti-peace statements dominate*

The first pattern that becomes clear is that *mostly sources made anti-peace statements*. Of the total 912 headlines, 183 qualified for source-coding. Of this, 52% (n=95) was anti-peace with I-SCORE totalling -188; 39% (n=71) pro-peace, with an I-SCORE of 113.5; and 9% (n=17) neutral-ambiguous.

Among others, AP headlines were based on Pakistan foreign minister Sardar Assef Ahmed Ali's confrontational comment to India in the wake of the Charar-e-Sharief destruction ('Pakistan will give befitting reply: Aseef': *Dawn*, May 11, 1995) and the Indian police statement that blamed Pakistan's external intelligence agency for masterminding the attack on Parliament ('Jaish action directed by ISI: Police'; *HT*, December 17, 2001). AP statements also emanated from the separatist sides, as in this headline which focuses on a militant group's rejection of Pakistan government's decision to withdraw forces during the Kargil war: 'Pullout not acceptable: Al Badr' (*Dawn*, July 11, 1999).

Pro-peace headlines, as noted above, accounted for a lower percentage. Examples included the Indian prime minister's optimistic statement in the wake of the Delhi talks ('Peace process irreversible', *ToI*, April 19, 2005), Indian foreign minister's promise of productive dialogue with Pakistan in the run-up to the New York dialogue ('Singh vows purposeful talks with Pakistan', *Dawn*, September 24, 2004) and statements indicating the separatists' willingness to multi-level dialogue during the preparation for Agra summit ('We will talk to opposition: Hurriyat', *HT*, July 19, 2001).

The higher anti-peace to pro-peace proportion was supported by the text analysis. Here, 1,936 units were source-coded, of which 56% statements (n=1,084) were AP, 35% PP (n=678), and 9% NA (n=174). The anti-peace statements accounted for a total I-SCORE of -2136.5 and the pro-peace for 1,297. In addition to the anti-peace statements chronicling routine violence, the textual units also comprised statements of overt blame on the 'other' for the overall violence and related attempts to present the opponent in an unfavourable light. This excerpt from the earlier cited story 'Pakistan will give a befitting reply to India: Aseef' (*Dawn*, May 11, 1995), in which then Pakistan foreign minister Aseef responds to then Indian home minister Rajesh Pilot's warning to Pakistan in the wake of the Charar burning, is a good showcase of such units:

"Mr Rajesh Pilot is in the habit of threatening Pakistan from time to time and blaming the indigenous insurgency in J&K on us," Sardar Aseef told *Dawn* in an interview. "If India is serious to resolve conflict and avoid tension, it would not have shot down my proposal to the UN Secretary-General calling for additional personnel to monitor the Line of Control," he said, while dismissing Pilot's claim that Pakistan had sent armed mercenaries across the LoC to burn the 735-year-old shrine of the revered sufi saint Sheikh Nooruddin Noorani. "Pakistan must not test our patience for too long," said Pilot.

“Who is Rajesh Pilot to talk about war with Pakistan. I want to dispel his illusion of invading Azad Kashmir, because Islamabad will give India a suitable reply,” Sardar Aseef said sharply.

The statements above are all attributed clearly and appear to be aimed at casting a shadow on the antagonist’s standing. Aseef’s criticism is hostile, and suggests India is not serious about resolving the conflict. He questions not only the basis of India’s earlier ‘unfriendly’ statement but the personal credentials of the politician who made it. The statement clearly falls into the anti-peace category.

The pro-peace statements were mostly from peacetime coverage. However, there were references in wartime as well, including conciliatory statements, attempts to resolve the crisis at hand, and improvement in the ground situation. Here is an example from the Kargil conflict, about a United States encouragement to Pakistan to withdraw forces, from a story headlined ‘US lauds Pak appeal to ultras’ (*HT*, July 11, 1999):

A State Department official welcomed Pakistan’s decision to appeal to Kashmiri militants to help resolve the current Kargil situation. “We continue to be confident that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif wishes to see an end to the conflict in Kargil,” he added.

But such statements were significantly fewer than anti-peace statements. In light of the higher F-SCORE (proportion) and I-SCORE of AP units noted at the outset, this was not surprising. Thus, there is evidence of the anti-peace dominance continuing. The headline analyses quantified this as 13% more than PP statements, while the more thorough text analysis showed a wider gap, of 21%.

5.5.2 | *Reliance on government sources*

Previous studies had indicated that in conflict situations, the media relies heavily on government sources. How true was this of the Kashmir situation over the years? Also, government sources could be divided into different categories, as in this coding scheme. Accordingly, under this umbrella term fall Own-G, Other-G, ISF and PSF. Did the media reliance on these categories vary? Which was its primary source of news?

An overview of the results indicates that most stories originated from within the two governments¹⁰⁴. In the headlines analysis, 78% was attributed to such sources. The rest was divided among Misc (10%), Sep (9%), Own-NG (2%), and Other-NG (1%). The text analysis showed the same pattern, with Indian and Pakistani government sources accounting for 71% of statements, followed by Misc (15%), Sep (9%), Own-NG (4%) and Other-NG (1%).

A closer look at the individual constituents that make up governmental sources shows us that both the Indian and Pakistani newspapers relied most heavily on political sources within their *own* governments. Forty-nine per cent of the units in the headline analysis were clearly attributed to such sources and coded 'Own-G'. This pattern was the same across *HT* (48% against the 21% of Other-G, which was the second most-used category), *ToI* (51%) and *Dawn* (49%); all three gave own government members more prominence than any other source.

The text analysis underlined this. The largest number of statements used in the stories was from political sources from within 'own' government. Thus, while Own-G accounted for 37%, sources from the Other Government (Other-G) accounted for 16%. Indian Security Forces (ISF) and Miscellaneous sources (Misc) accounted for 15% each, while 9% of the units attributed Separatists (Sep) as their source. The newspapers used political sources *outside* its respective

government (Own Non-Government or Own-NG) less, in just 4% units. Pakistani Security Forces (PSF) were relied on even less (2%), while political sources outside the Other Government (Other Non-Government or Other-NG) were used the least (1%).

What kind of statements did ‘own’ government sources make? As the text analysis shows, by and large these were anti-peace (AP: 46%, PP: 44%, NA: 10%). What is more interesting here is not that there were more AP than PP statements – it was only expected, in light of the anti-peace dominance noted earlier – but that there were only 2% more of such. In other words, there were near-equal anti-peace and pro-peace statements from own government sources in the media. This, however, was not evenly spread. The majority of anti-peace statements (76%) were in the wartime coverage while PP statements were mostly made during peace attempts (80%). Here is an excerpt from the coverage of the attack on the Indian Parliament. Part of a story headlined ‘All options are open: PM’, which appeared in the Indian *HT* (December 20, 2001), it is sourced to then Indian prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who makes it plain he believes Pakistan was responsible:

Rejecting Islamabad’s offer of a joint probe, Vajpayee said that the bullet marks on Parliament’s gates, the dead bodies of the terrorists and their Pakistani origins were enough to prove Pakistan’s complicity. “It is for the Pakistani Government to take action against the organisations responsible for the attack since it is aware of their activities,” he said.

If the above were typical of the AP comments, the following is a good example of the pro-peace statements that own government members made. From the Delhi talks period, the excerpt appeared in the Pakistani *Dawn* as its lead story (‘Musharraf optimistic about visit

outcome', April 15, 2001), and chronicles Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf's expectations about his forthcoming dialogue with Indian Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh:

President Pervez Musharraf said on Thursday he was optimistic that the Kashmir dispute could be resolved and described their peace process with India as "fairly irreversible".

The story continues, with Musharraf hoping that "we can take advantage of" the "very harmonious and friendly environment" to "resolve our disputes", and reiterating the peace attempt could not be derailed easily:

"If you see people-to-people contacts, the business community, the cultural interaction, even politicians coming here exchanging from this side and going on that side, it is fairly irreversible I would say."

Governmental sources, thus, were responsible for both PP and AP statements. And though the scales tilted towards anti-peace statements in frequency, the difference was not very pronounced. This can be taken as further evidence of the media's willingness to entertain PP statements in select circumstances – and, importantly, of conflict journalism's tendency to be state-led.

5.5.3 | *News slots for own government*

The latter observation acquires strength when the mean P-SCORE of headlines based on government sources – and here we include not just political sources, but security forces as well, which can be taken as part of the government – is compared with that of the other source categories. As the P-SCORE measures the prominence accorded to a story, how the average

government-sourced headline fared in relation to others will provide a clear indication of the newspapers' priority in this regard.

Political sources within 'own' government, it was noted earlier, was the single largest category, accounting for 49% of the attribution in headlines. Further, there were the two affiliated categories, the Indian Security Forces and Pakistani Security Forces, which together accounted for 4% of the headlines in newspapers of their respective nations. Thus, in all 53% of the headlines analysed were sourced from 'own' governmental sources. The P-SCORE mean of this overarching category was 3.4. Second fell miscellaneous sources, scoring 3.1, then members of the 'other' government 2.8. News from separatists sources were displayed with a prominence of 2.3, while the political sources outside the government – own, or of the 'other' – received the least P-SCORE, 2. Thus, as the means show, the media prioritised stories originating from own government sources the highest.

5.5.4 | *The 'other' perspective*

Reliance on government sources was not limited to 'own' politicians-in-power. The newspapers presented views from the 'other' establishment as well, particularly from members of the other government. Though used with lesser frequency, this category was second only to 'own' government, accounting as the originating source for 25% headlines and 16% textual units. What kind of comments was the 'other' shown as making? Here an interesting pattern becomes noticeable.

The 'us' and 'them' attitude the media adopts in conflict situations discussed in the theoretical chapter had opened up the possibility that it would portray the 'other' as inimical to peace attempts. However, both the F-SCORE in both headline and text analyses show the

political sources from the other government as making *more pro-peace comments than anti-peace*. Forty-six per cent of the headlines sources to the other government were PP, against 41% AP and 13% NA; while the text analysis showed 50% as PP, against 41% AP and 9% NA. The I-SCORE, too, attested this pro-peace picture. In both the headline and text analyses, it was *not* a negative value – in the former case, it was 0, while in the latter it was +36.

It would be hasty to conclude that this media willingness to present the views of the ‘other’ – particularly, the pro-peace statements – undermines the hostile stance it is noted to generally adopt against the ‘enemy’. Instead, the pattern needs to be seen in the political context it originated. The lion’s share – 91% – of the PP comments from the other side came in peacetime. Peace moves, as noted before, occur in an atmosphere of political goodwill, where the warring sides actively promote the cause, ‘leading’ the media by way of, among others, (mostly) pro-peace statements. It is argued that this effort by ‘own’ government – its promoting talks with the opposing side will be beneficial – bestows on the ‘other’ a certain legitimacy¹⁰⁵. That it is ‘good’ enough to be talked to – and, consequently, a party to the talks – raises its media standing considerably, placing it among the ‘permissible’ newsworthy sources to be tapped. Mostly implicit in the initiation of a peace attempt, we can also see such legitimacy ‘granted’ explicitly, in so many words, by government sources, who profile the ‘other’ as worthy of dialogue. The following excerpt from ‘Musharraf optimistic about visit outcome’ (*Dawn*, April 15, 2005), which quotes Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf, is an example:

“I am fairly optimistic, I would say, because I see Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to be a sincere person and wanting to come to a resolution of this dispute.”

Appearing in the Pakistani newspaper during the run-up to the Delhi talks, it presented a positive picture of the Indian leader. The headline ‘We can do business with Musharraf: PM’ is

another example. Coming at the end of the New York talks (2004) in the Indian newspaper *ToI* and attributed to then Indian prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, it accorded Pakistan President Musharraf a different status than the one he had enjoyed after the Agra summit¹⁰⁶, arguably setting him up as a legitimate news source for the Delhi talks which were to follow¹⁰⁷.

The higher frequency of pro-peace statements from Other Government sources, thus, can be seen as *occasioned* by own government. But for their 'friendliness', it is argued, the media would not present such views with the greater frequency and intensity noted earlier. This thesis is supported by an examination of how the Other Government sources figured in war events.

It is safe to say that in wartime, government sources are not only unlikely to entertain warm or positive feelings towards the 'other', but hold it responsible for the crisis. The following comment from the Indian external affairs ministry justifying the decision to recall its envoy from Islamabad after the attack on Parliament in 2001 ('India ups the ante, recalls envoy', *HT*, December 22, 2001) is typical:

An MEA [ministry of external affairs] spokesperson said the "complete lack of concern on Pakistan's part and its continued promotion of cross-border terrorism" prompted New Delhi's decision.

"We have seen as no attempts on Pakistan's part to take action," she said.

The content analysis found many instance of such anti-peace profiling – in effect, delegitimisation – of the 'other'. Also, it was noticed other government views were presented rarely during this period, in just 10% of the units. (Such views made it into the paper mostly for the negative reason, because the 'other' made a statement that provided the media the drama of

conflict it craved; 88% of the units sourced to Other Government during this period, thus, was AP). Thus, we see a marginalisation of the ‘other’ here. This sidelining, coming as it does in a climate of de-legitimisation, and the significantly higher incidence of Other Government sources in the climate of legitimisation (discussed earlier), suggests the portrayal of Other Government views in the media was *led* by Own Government sources. Taken together with the evidence of the significant government influence on media we noted before, this thesis acquires strength.

5.5.5 | *Separatists and other sources*

Lost among the many statements from governmental sources are the views of the separatists. Despite being an important party in the conflict, statements from this group appeared in the press rarely: just 9% (n=174) of the 1,936 units source-coded originated from separatists¹⁰⁸. This sidelining too can be seen as occasioned by the governments – a result of de-legitimisation.

As noted in the section on the mediascape in India and Pakistan, the Indian establishment has always maintained the Kashmir conflict as Pakistan-sponsored, seeing the violence as fuelled from across the border by actors controlled by Islamabad. Pakistan, for its part, has treated the issue as an inter-state political problem, the violence a manifestation of the Indian ‘repression’. Both governments, thus, see each other as the second party in the conflict; to both, separatists are of less significance. This sentiment is particularly pronounced on the Indian side, which has actively discouraged separatist representation in its formal talks with Pakistan, bestowing on the group no *locus standi* other than that of a minor actor. An example is then Indian prime minister Vajpayee’s response to the separatist Hurriyat Conference’s request to be part of the Agra summit and his suggestion they talk to his emissary K C Pant. This is captured by the headline ‘Talk to Pant first, PM tells Hurriyat’ (*ToI*, May 30, 2001). Another is the refusal to allow the Hurriyat to

talk to the visiting Pakistan president: ‘Delhi shoots down Musharraf-Hurriyat meet’ (*ToI*, May 30, 2001).

Such de-legitimisation of the separatists, it is argued, lowered their newsworthiness, checking the media from presenting their views. A comparison of how often the media used separatist sources during war and peace events in the text analysis¹⁰⁹ – a comparison of F-SCORE, that is – provides some empirical evidence to support this theory. Only 35% of the 182 units attributed to this group came during peacetime¹¹⁰; wartime¹¹¹ accounted¹¹² for the rest. This *lack* of media interest in separatists as sources¹¹³ of information suggests they were taken to play an unimportant role during peace attempts – and, by extension, of government sources *not* legitimising them (if not actively de-legitimising, as we saw in the headlines cited above).

What pattern can be seen in the separatist statements that the media *did* present? The text analysis showed 69% of the total 182 units attributed to separatists was AP, 20% PP and 11% NA. Wartime, as noted above, accounted for the majority of statements (65%; of this 88% was AP, 4% PP and 7% NA). The following excerpt appeared in the *Dawn* of July 11, 1999 during the Kargil conflict. The three units, based on a press conference to reject a US-mediated proposal to withdraw forces from the war zone are typical of the AP textual units attributed to separatists:

Mr Hamza [*leader of the Al-Badr, a group fighting in Kashmir*] said all Mujahideen in Kargil, Drass and other areas were united and had refused to retreat from their present positions.

“The Mujahideen started their fight for the freedom of Kashmir without consulting US President Bill Clinton and [*then Pakistan President*] Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. Therefore, we are not bound to take dictation from any of them,” he said.

“We are quite strong at Kargil and Drass and in a position to take back more disputed areas from the Indian armed forces within a few days,” the commander said.

The larger proportion of such units meant that the overall intensity of the attributions sourced to separatists was negative. The 69% AP statements produced a total I-SCORE of -271, while the 20% PP accounted for +93. The overall I-SCORE, thus, was -178, allowing us to conclude the separatist statements presented in the media were anti-peace with an I-SCORE of -178.

Besides underlining the dominance of AP units in content analysed, this pattern – particularly, the overall marginalisation of separatist sources – is an indication of a worrying media failure: it limited and lowered the quality of debate on Kashmir by informing the public inadequately. The over-reliance on government sources noted above makes it clear that the media showcased mostly establishment views, blinding the general public to alternate perspectives. This observation becomes more valid when we consider that besides the separatists, political sources *outside* the governments in both nations – what we labelled Own Non-Government (Own-NG) and Other Non-Government (Other-NG) in the coding scheme – received poor representation. Of the 1,936 units source-coded in the text analysis, only 5% originated from non-governmental political sources¹¹⁴. Considering the dynamic political climate in both countries, particularly in India where successive *coalition* governments were in power, it is hard to believe non-governmental sources were completely consensual on the official Kashmir policy.

Hence it can be argued that the newspapers presented a rather less-than-complete picture of the conflict to the Indian and Pakistani publics. The simplistic black-and-white frame it produced, where a more complex one was called for, can be seen at best as ill-informing, if not misinforming, the public. The implication here is that there was a lack of substantive discussion

on the conflict, something other studies had noted as well. As Wolfsfeld put it (2004, p102): “[T]he news media provides a poor forum for public discourse over political issues. The rules of access and the norms of debate are mostly designed to ensure a good show rather than an intelligent exchange of views.”

5.6 | The ‘other’

The discussion titled ‘Other perspective’ (section 5.4.4) provided us an idea of how the press treated the ‘other’ as a news *source*. Using a sub-sample of headlines, this section builds on that, and aims to present an overview of how the ‘other’ was portrayed in the newspapers analysed. What image, for instance, did the Pakistani press present of India to its public? To what extent was it represented as an anti- or pro-peace party?

The earlier discussion had shown the newspapers marginalised other government politicians and separatists. Such sources claimed press attention mostly by anti-peace stances. The indication, thus, is that the ‘other’ was by and large presented to the public in negative light, as antagonists and war-mongers. The coding undertaken for this analysis – in which 316 units that mentioned the ‘other’ clearly from among the full sample of 912 headlines were re-examined according to a scheme aimed to capture how the ‘other’ was presented – underlined this strongly.

Fifty-one per cent of the headlines presented the ‘other’ as anti-peace, 28% as pro-peace and 21% as neutral-ambiguous¹¹⁵. The pro-peace headlines, unsurprisingly, related to the peace events. Mostly these presented the ‘other’ as initiating and encouraging peace attempts (‘India offers unconditional talks to Kashmiris’: *Dawn*, September 26, 2004; ‘Vajpayee wants talks to continue’: *Dawn*, July 13, 2001) and making friendly gestures (‘Pak to allow Indo-Iranian gas pipeline’: *HT*, June 16, 2001). This category also presented the separatists – the common ‘other’

to India and Pakistan – making conciliatory efforts, as in this *Dawn* headline of July 11, 2001 (Agra summit coverage): ‘Musharraf, Vajpayee equally vital: APHC’.

The anti-peace representation included headlines that showed the ‘other’ actively undertaking conflict-centric actions. A good example is this headline that appeared in *Dawn* (May 9, 1995) during the Charar-e-Sharif crisis: ‘Indian Army set houses ablaze in Valley’. The following examples, which appeared in the Pakistani press and names India as the ‘offender’, are illustrative:

2 more killed in Indian firing (*Dawn*, June 9, 1999)

Girl dies, 9 wounded in Indian firing (*Dawn*, July 9, 1999)

Such headlines were not limited to the Pakistani press. The following are typical of the ones that appeared in the Indian newspapers, holding Pakistan responsible for anti-peace activities:

Pakistan duplicity exposed (*ToI*, May 14, 1995)

Pakistan admits its men are in Kargil, Drass (*ToI*, June 12, 1999)

There were other headlines as well, less accusatory but still presenting the ‘other’ in unfavourable light by implying it is responsible for the crisis at hand, is the losing/deceptive party, etc. The following headlines are typical:

Talks fail as Pak stick to its line (*HT*, June 13, 1999)

Musharraf derailed talks, says Sushma (*HT*, July 21, 2001)

Pakistan gets a G-8 rap for violating LoC (*ToI*, June 21, 1999)

Heavy losses inflicted on Indians (*Dawn*, June 22, 1999)

Indian attacks repulsed: COAS (*Dawn*, July 8, 1999)

We will give Pakistan a bloody nose: Army (*ToI*, June 22, 1999)

An inter-newspaper comparison of how the ‘other’ was profiled is interesting. The *ToI*, it was seen, presented the ‘other’ in the ‘best’ light: 33% of its headlines profiled the ‘other’ as a pro-peace force. *Dawn* came second with 27%, while *HT* was the least ‘positive’ of the three, with 26%. This also meant that across all three papers the anti-peace domination continued, with the percentage of such references significantly higher than pro-peace representations – by 25 % in *HT*, 24% in *Dawn*, and 14% in *ToI*.

5.6.1 / Sourced representation and media statements

An examination of the above examples shows two types of representations. The first is what can be labelled *sourced* representation, in which the media attributes the unit to a particular source, making it clear whose view it is presenting. ‘We will give Pakistan a bloody nose: Army’ and ‘Indian attacks repulsed: COAS’ are illustrative examples – in the former, which appeared in the Indian press, the profiling of Pakistan originated from the Indian army, while in the latter, it came from the Pakistani army (COAS or chief of army staff).

The second type is what can be termed *media statements*. Here, the representation is delivered as a straightforward ‘fact’. ‘Talks fail as Pak sticks to its line’ and ‘Pakistan duplicity exposed’, which both appeared in the Indian press, and ‘Heavy losses inflicted on the Indians’ in the Pakistani *Dawn* are typical of such matter-of-fact statements. Within this type, there was a sub-type, where it was possible to make out the originating source. However, it was presented without citation, as a statement of fact. ‘Musharraf sees only Kashmir’, which appeared in the *HT*

of July 21, 2001 in the run-up to the Agra summit coverage, is a good example; it is fairly clear the news source is Musharraf himself, but the newspaper has summarised – interpreted – his comments into that statement.

Of the 316 headlines coded for representation, 78% were media statements. Only 22% were sourced representation, the majority of which originated from one or the other government. The higher proportion of media statements is at least in part a product of newsroom pressures – the page editor is required to produce a headline that fits the allocated space, summarises the story best, *and* will ‘hook’ the reader, all against what is normally a tight deadline – and is interesting for two reasons. One, the matter of fact presentation of the ‘other’ as an anti-peace entity (as we noted above, the majority of headlines *were* anti-peace) is likely to bestow on that image more credibility – the status of a ‘media truth’, particularly over time – than one that cites a certain source. Two, as the headlines are in effect an interpretive summary of what was said by sources, it is indicative of the extent to which the media *internalises* government views – most of the headlines were based on official stands, it could be seen – about the ‘other’. As these views were predominantly anti-peace, the likelihood of a cumulative effect on the media and its future coverage – such views colouring media perspective and influencing it to view the ‘other’ with mistrust perhaps – can be seen as real.

5.6.2 / *Intensity of representation*

As noted above, the majority (51%) of the 316 units coded presented the ‘other’ as AP (against 21% PP and 28% NA). The total anti-peace I-SCORE from the 51% was -236.5. The 21% PP units, for their part, resulted in an I-SCORE of +124.5. The final value – the sum of the anti-peace and pro-peace I-SCORES – thus was -112.

Examining the wartime and peacetime coverage, we see that wartime representations resulted in a total I-SCORE of -141.5, while the peacetime score was only +29.5. What is interesting is that peacetime accounted for a higher frequency – F-SCORE – representing the other side than wartime: 54% against 46%. But despite this, peacetime scored an unremarkable positive I-SCORE (+29.5 against wartime's -141.5). This was because of the higher frequency of anti-peace representations in peacetime (27%) in comparison to the pro-peace representations in wartime (11%). Which, in turn, is suggestive of the tendency to project the 'other' as anti-peace even in a pro-peace overall environment. A look at some headlines from the peacetime would be instructive here.

'Indians kill 5 as curfew clamped on in Rajouri' appeared in the *Dawn* (February 22, 1999), during the Lahore talks coverage. Indeed, the headline appeared on the same front page that carried the story on the success of the summit and signing of a bilateral declaration ('India, Pakistan agree to resolve all disputes'). Another example is 'ISI fished in troubled waters, tried to spark anti-India riots' (*HT*, June 17, 2001). The story, which cast aspersions on the Pakistani governmental agency Inter-Services Intelligence and possibly raised questions about the Islamabad's desire for peace, came during the Agra summit coverage. The sourced representation in the headline 'India not serious to solve issues: Musharraf', which appeared in the *Dawn* (November 26, 2000) during the Ramzan ceasefire, is illustrative of the government-initiated negative portrayal that has plagued both sides even in positive climate.

From the above, and the overall negative intensity value of -113, it is safe to conclude that all in all the newspapers presented the other with pronounced intensity. However, a comparison of the means of the anti-peace and pro-peace intensity – the value of the average negative headline with that of the average positive headline – shows no statistically significant difference. The pro-peace intensity of +124.5 was from 89 headlines. In other words, the average

pro-peace headline delivered an x1.4 value – which was the same that was delivered by an anti-peace headline (the total intensity of -236.5 arose from 160 anti-peace headlines). Thus, so far as the representation of the ‘other’ was concerned, while the overall the intensity was anti-peace, there was no evidence that the average anti-peace headline was more intense than the average pro-peace positive headline.

5.6.3 / How prominent?

This leads us to the question of display. How prominently were the anti-peace and pro-peace representations displayed in relation to each other?

As we saw earlier, most headlines – 51% of the 316 coded for representation – were anti-peace. Hence, it is not totally unexpected that this category accounted for the bulk of the prominence score: the anti-peace representations together accounted for 50% (n=520) of the total P-SCORE of 1,037, while the pro-peace accounted for 29% (n=300) and neutral-ambiguous for 21% (n=217). Thus, it is justifiable to say that overall anti-peace representation of the ‘other’ was displayed more prominently than pro-peace representation.

A closer examination shows the anti-peace P-SCORE score of 520 was distributed among 51% or 161 headlines. The average AP headline, in other words, was accorded a display worth 3.2 P-SCORE. Extending this calculation to the other two categories, we find the average PP headline received a display of 3.3 P-SCORE (89 headlines accounted for a P-SCORE of 300) while the NA received 3.3 P-SCORE (66 headlines, 217 P-SCORE). Here again, in the lack of difference among the means of the anti-peace and pro-peace representations, we see a willingness to display the PP with equal prominence as the AP. The criterion that determines such placement,

we had seen earlier, was the drama of breakthrough. An examination of the representations that scored the highest P-SCORE – 6, on the 0-6 scale – is illustrative:

Musharraf comes goodwill hunting (*HT*, April 17, 2005)

Let's take this forward (*HT*, April 19, 2005)

India, Pakistan smile and joust, but Musharraf steals the show (*ToI*, July 15, 2001)

The representation here is pro-peace. It can also be seen that all three headlines offered the drama of breakthrough; all related to peace talks and presented a major movement in the peace process. Thus, there is a rationale to believe that despite indications that the media internalises establishment views and tends to treat the 'other' as the enemy mostly, it is willing to consider pro-peace portrayal of the 'other' highly newsworthy, provided it comes in a climate of dramatic breakthrough¹¹⁶. A further analysis is required to test this thoroughly and explain what appears to be a synergistic relation between PP portrayal and the drama of breakthrough.

5.6.4 / Representation across the newspapers

Earlier we had seen that on the whole anti-peace representations dominated in intensity. We also saw it claimed better display on the front page than the other two categories. This section presents these patterns across *Dawn*, *HT* and *ToI*.

The intensity pattern was same across all three newspapers, with anti-peace representation pronouncedly dominant. *Dawn* took the lead, representing the 'other' negatively to an intensity of -50. Of the 109 headlines in it that mentioned the 'other', 57 were AP units and 29 PP (23 were NA), producing the I-SCORES of -90.5 and 40.5, respectively. *HT* came second, with an I-SCORE of -35. Of the 117 headlines it carried, 59 were AP (I-SCORE -79) and 30 PP (+44). *ToI*

was the least negative of the three, carrying 90 headlines, of which 43 were anti-peace (I-SCORE -67.5) and 30 pro-peace (+40).

What can we say about prominence accorded to the representation of the ‘other’ in these three newspapers? Again, we see the pattern noted in the overview – ‘better’ display *on the whole* to anti-peace representation – being carried through. In all three newspapers, AP representations received more prominent display overall. *HT* led this trend with an anti-peace P-SCORE totalling 202 (PP P-SCORE=108, NA=96), followed by *ToI* (AP P-SCORE=167, PP=105, NA=64) and then *Dawn* (AP P-SCORE=-150, PP=89, NA=56).

The anti-peace domination in display, as noted before, was more a product of the higher frequency than individual anti-peace representations being accorded pronounced prominence. This is clear from a comparison of the P-SCORE means, which show that in two of the three newspapers, the mean P-SCORE of anti-peace representations was lesser than that of pro-peace representations.

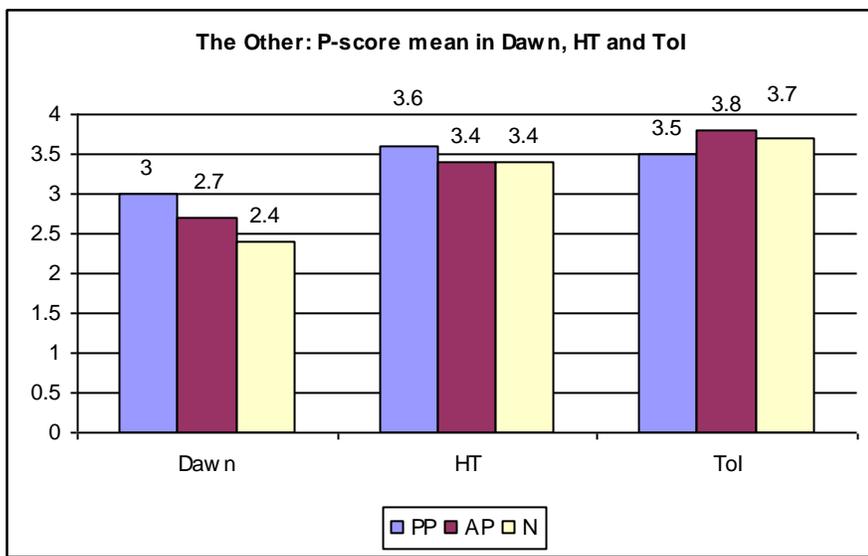


Figure 3

The above figure makes this clear. In *HT*, the anti-peace P-SCORE of 202 was spread across 59 headlines, resulting in a 3.4 mean. Pro-peace units, on the other hand, notched a higher mean, 3.6, with its total P-SCORE of 108 distributed among 30 headlines. In *Dawn*, again, the pattern was same, with the anti-peace representations scoring a mean of 2.7 (150 p-score/56 headlines) against the pro-peace P-SCORE average of 2.7 (89/29). The *ToI*, however, presented a different picture, with the anti-peace P-SCORE average a higher value (3.8: 167/43) than the pro-peace P-SCORE average (3.5: 105/30).

5.6.5 / *The story qualifiers tell*

Besides the data set discussed above, findings from the ‘main’ coding – the result of how ‘qualifiers’ fared, to be precise – can also be utilised for insights into the representation of the ‘other’. To quickly recap, qualifiers were terms that were taken as anti-peace¹¹⁷, embedded in the unit detracting or supplementing its overall value on its own merit, either by way of a non-desirable label (‘terrorist’, ‘Indian-occupied’, ‘held Kashmir’¹¹⁸, etc) or by glorifying the conflict and its participants (‘Mujahideen’, ‘jihad’, etc). The main coding scheme examined a wider sample – across 912 headlines and 3,526 textual units – for such references. Thus, it provides a better overview, though it is more indicative of a trend than conclusive. As this is a separate data set, it also provides for triangulation to an extent.

Embedded in the 912 headlines were 49 qualifiers. The majority of these – 30, to be precise – were non-desirable labels, appearing in the two Indian newspapers. The rest, appearing in the Pakistani press, were terms taken to glorify the conflict.

Of the 30 qualifiers that appeared in the Indian press, four labelled Kashmir as ‘occupied’ or ‘held’ by the ‘other’. ‘PM tosses PoK¹¹⁹ at Pakistan’, which appeared in the *ToI* of June 20, 2001, is an example. ‘15 shot in held Kashmir’, which appeared in the *Dawn*, contains a similar negative representation aimed at India. ‘Terrorist’ (or variations of it), however, was the most commonly used – 26 of the 30 qualifiers were from this category. The following are typical examples:

Terrorists storm Parliament (*ToI*, December 14, 2001)

PM vows do-or-die battle against terror (*HT*, December 14, 2001)

Terrorism must figure in (*ToI*, July 17, 2001)

The label ‘terrorist’ or its variations were used mostly in relation to separatist actions and were limited to Indian newspapers. The *Dawn*, which accounted for 19 qualifiers of the total 49, kept away from it, preferring to use terms that glorified the conflict and participants such as ‘Mujahideen’ and ‘jihad’. It also used ‘Azad’ or ‘free’ as a prefix in its references to the section of Kashmir under its rule (what India labelled Pakistan-occupied Kashmir), calling it ‘Azad Kashmir’, Azad Jammu and Kashmir or AJK. Examples:

IAF continues to pound Mujahideen positions (June 10, 1999)

India wants Mujahideen to vacate Kargil (June 13, 1999)

Four die in firing on AJK villages (June 14, 1999)

The text analysis showcased a more pronounced use of qualifiers. Almost every second story – 46% of the 268 stories examined – had at least one qualifier (the average number of qualifiers in a story was 2.8). In all, there were 353 qualifiers across the 3,526 textual units coded. The ‘non-desirable’ labels accounted for 52% (n=186) of this. The most prominent among

such was the label ‘terrorist’ or its variations, which accounted for 46% of the total (165), making it the most often-used. The use of ‘terror’ and ‘terrorism’ as can be seen in the following units are typical:

Similarly terrorism in the Valley should be crushed with an iron hand. He [*then opposition leader Atal Bihari Vajpayee*] said that terror of bullets prevails and Pakistan too was adamant to fold the efforts of the Centre to hold elections in J and K.
(*HT*, ‘Vajpayee seeks fresh delimitation in J&K’, May 8, 1995)

Announcing the revocation of the six-month long ceasefire in what seemed to be an unexpected turnaround, the External Affairs Minister said that from now the security forces in Jammu and Kashmir “shall take such action against terrorists as they judge best”.
(*HT*, ‘Musharraf invited for talks, J&K ceasefire off’, May 24, 2001)

As we see in the two units above, the violence in Kashmir is referred to as terrorism, thus presenting the ‘other’ – the separatists – as not just originators of a mere conflict but as originators of a heightened anti-peace activity, terrorism. In the headline analysis, we had seen that *Dawn* kept away from this label. However, the text analysis shows that it did use the label to refer to the conflict or facets of it (in 57 units, accounting for 16% of the total number of qualifiers). All such usage came post 9/11, it was seen, and can be seen as an indication of Pakistan’s alignment with the US in the ‘war against terror’.

The Pakistani *Dawn* mostly used labels of glorifications, which together accounted for 48% of the qualifiers. The most common label was ‘mujahideen’ and ‘freedom fighters’ (or variants), which accounted for 20% (n=74) of the total qualifiers. The following excerpt from the *Dawn*

(‘Mujahideen reject withdrawal proposal’, July 9, 1999) during the Kargil conflict is a good example, showcasing the use of the qualifier ‘India-held’ besides ‘Mujahideen’:

The commanders of Mujahideen fighting in the Indian-held Kashmir on Wednesday rejected any appeal or order by Pakistan to withdraw from the strategic peaks they had already captured in the Indian-held Kashmir.

5.6.6 | *Qualifiers and political environment*

An interesting pattern that emerges here is the relation between qualifiers and the political environment. Earlier, in the discussion titled ‘Absent anti-peace themes in Delhi talks’ (section 5.2.2), we had noted a media willingness to provide largely pro-peace coverage in climates of political goodwill. A similar pattern can be seen here as well. There was significantly fewer anti-peace qualifiers in the Delhi talks, which, as noted earlier, was conducted in a conducive political atmosphere. During that period, in the 147 textual units analysed across 14 stories in the HT, there were only three qualifiers (way below the average of 2.8 qualifiers per story). *Dawn*, too, recorded a smaller figure, just 5, across 180 units of 12 stories.

5.6.7 | *Qualifiers in Dawn and HT*

We had seen *Dawn* was the most anti-peace of the three newspapers in the way it portrayed the ‘other’. Here again, we see the similar pattern, with *Dawn* accounting for a higher percentage of the qualifiers. Fifty-eight per cent (n=150) of the total, thus, appeared in *Dawn*, against the 42% (n=204) in the *HT*. This 16% difference is underlined when we consider that the *Dawn* had carried roughly 5% *less* text (1,598 units against the 1,944 units that appeared in the *HT*).

The main theme to emerge from the immediate discussions above is that the newspapers analysed by and large presented the 'other' as an anti-peace entity. Mostly the 'other' emerged as 'antagonist' and 'enemy', and while there were cases when such portrayal was restrained, such instances were few. This pattern of anti-peace domination was seen to be led by the government to a considerable extent. The next chapter examines these findings and the anti-peace domination noted in the initial part of this chapter in light of the RQs, and arrives at a conclusion.

Conclusion

Bad news

THE BROAD ARGUMENT I intent to make in this chapter can be summarised thus: with overriding anti-peace coverage and negative portrayal of the other sides, the print media in India and Pakistan most likely played a destructive role in the Kashmir conflict. Newspapers on both sides were partisan in how they presented the conflict to their publics, clearly setting it out as an us-versus-them issue in which ‘we’ were the victims and ‘they’ the perpetrators of violence. The coverage was vigorously state-led, with much of the news originating from government sources, promoting the official perspective. There was little exploration of substantive issues – or, for that matter, of reconciliation opportunities. All in all, thus, the reportage was classifiable as ‘war journalism’ (Galtung 2000, 2002), which, as many scholars have argued in similar situations (Bar-Tal 2000, Wolfsfeld 2004), could only have encouraged the continuance of the conflict, contributing much to its intractability.

These statements are founded on the empirical findings of the content analysis and the extrapolations possible from the body of literature reviewed earlier. As set out in the form of RQ1 and RQ2 (chapter 4, section 4.4), this study had two specific purposes. First, it aimed to profile the news coverage accorded to the Kashmir conflict by the Indian and Pakistani press. Second, it strived to profile how the other side was represented in newspapers on both sides of the border. Below, first relevant findings that answer the research questions are presented. The profile of coverage thus drawn is then examined in light of relevant literature for broader conclusions where possible. In the last section, the implications of this inquiry for journalists and policymakers are discussed.

Before analysing the findings, a word about their generalisability will be helpful. While this study is specific to the print media, it is suggested the findings can be taken as a conservative indicator of the general media performance in both India and Pakistan. The newspapers analysed were chosen because of their ‘national’ character (see section 4.1 in chapter 4; also 3.1 in chapter 3), the English press linked a readership fragmented by regional languages across both India and Pakistan). As well-reputed, ‘quality’ broadsheets, these arguably produced better journalism on Kashmir than the regional press or the 24-hour television, both of which are considered¹²⁰ more strident and sensationalist. Given the situation, and the scholarship on it, it would be quite surprising if the other media did *not* mirror the trends noted in the press – if anything, the patterns elsewhere would only be more pronounced.

Nature of Kashmir coverage

RQ1 aimed to ascertain the nature of the coverage accorded to the Kashmir issue by the Indian and Pakistani press. Essentially, how much of it was anti-peace, how much pro-peace, and how much neutral-ambiguous? Also, how intense were these three overall? And how prominently were these categories displayed in the newspapers? These questions are answered by the findings from the frequency, intensity, and prominence analyses.

The frequency of AP, PP and NA content, as expressed by the F-SCORE, provides a clear picture of the ‘quantity’ of each news category. Both the headlines and text analyses showed that the proportion of AP news was more than that of PP and NA news. Of the total headlines across the three newspapers, 58% (n=531) was AP, against 36% (N=328) PP and 6% (n=55) NA (see section 5.1, chapter 5). The text analysis underlined this, showing there were 63% (n=169) AP stories, 36% (n=96) PP and 1% (n=3) NA. The proportion of AP news, as we can see from

these figures, is conspicuously higher – 16% more than the other two categories put together in the headline analysis, and 27% more in the text analysis. The trend was similar in both the Indian and Pakistani newspapers analysed: *Dawn* of Pakistan carried 56% AP headlines against 38% PP and 5% NA; the *HT* of India, 57% AP headlines, against 35% PP and 8% NA; and the *ToI* of India, 62% AP headlines, against 35% PP, and 3% NA. Thus, in view of the significantly higher proportion of AP news content, we can conclude: *in their coverage of the Kashmir issue, both the Indian and Pakistani newspapers presented predominantly anti-peace news.*

The second aspect of RQ1 relates to the intensity of AP, PP, and NA news. How did these compare with each other? Again, the intensity of AP news that appeared in the press overshadowed the intensity of PP news. Where PP news recorded an I-SCORE of +531 in the headline analysis, AP news showed - 1,013 (section 5.2, Chapter 5). Thus, the overall intensity of the coverage was a negative value, -482, which can be taken as a measure of the extent to which AP news dominated the coverage in intensity in the headline analysis. In the text analysis, the total AP I-SCORE was found to be -625.25 and the total PP I-SCORE +1,896. The overall intensity of the coverage, thus, was -2,729.25. We see the same pattern as in the headline analysis, only stronger: a clear domination of AP intensity. This domination was seen in newspapers on both sides. The text analysis showed the measure of *Dawn*'s intensity to be -662 and that of *HT* as -2,067.25. Both are, as we can see, negative values, and provide a measure of the extent to which the intensity of AP news overshadowed the intensity of PP news, allowing us to conclude that *AP news dominated the Kashmir coverage in intensity in both Indian and Pakistani newspapers.*

The prominence score mapped how AP, PP and NA categories of news were displayed by the press. A comparison of the P-SCOREs from the headline analysis shows that AP news accounted for 57% (n=1,324) of the total P-SCORE (n=2,336), while pro-peace headlines

accounted for only 37% (n=868), and NA just 6% (n=144). The trend was similar in all three newspapers; AP headlines accounted for a significantly higher P-SCORE (see discussion in chapter 5). While this was expected (as P-SCORE is in *part* dependent on number of headlines in a particular category and, as we saw, the majority of headlines were AP), the fact still remains that *on the whole anti-peace news received more prominent display – 20% better display if we go by the P-SCORE comparison possible from the headline analysis – on the front pages by newspapers on both sides.*

Five other findings that add depth to the above conclusions need mention here. The first is that *the press retains a healthy hunger for AP news even during a ‘peace wave’*. Peace attempts are characterised by a positive political wave and relative goodwill between antagonists (Wolfsfeld 2004). But despite this, as discussed in chapter 5, section 5.1.1, overall peacetime coverage accounted for a higher proportion of AP stories than wartime coverage did of PP stories. The text analysis showed 28% of the peacetime stories to be AP, whereas in the wartime coverage only 10% was PP. More importantly, as the I-SCORE analysis showed, the average intensity of an AP story in peacetime was significantly more pronounced than the average intensity of a PP story in wartime (-17 against +8; see section 5.2.4). The AP stories in peacetime were lengthier than the PP stories in wartime (12 units against 8). Further, while most AP stories were ‘uncorrupted’ by PP units, most PP stories had their share of AP sentiments. Thus, it can be said that while PP news was weakened in an alien environment, AP news retained its intensity to a high degree, underlining the media’s fascination – its obsessive search for drama (Wolfsfeld 2004) – for ‘bad’ news at all times.

The second is the dominance of active themes among the significantly higher proportion of AP news. Forty-five per cent of the headlines coded fell into the active AP sub-categories (news taken to accentuate the conflict), overshadowing not only *status quo* themes (13%; news

taken to prolong the existing conflict situation without actually accentuating it) but also the PP themes (37%). Thus, *not only was there significantly more anti-peace news, there was significantly more active anti-peace news*. The significantly high AP intensity noted in newspapers on both sides is mostly explained by this trend, as active themes score higher than passive themes in intensity score.

Third, the average anti-peace unit was significantly more intense in its ‘negativity’ than the pro-peace unit was in its ‘positivity’. This is reflected in the final I-SCORE of the overall coverage, a negative value as noted above, and is underlined by a comparison of the I-SCORES of an average AP and PP units. According to the headline analysis (the trend is similar in the text analysis), the average AP unit was delivered with an intensity of (-) 1.9, while a PP unit was delivered with an intensity of only (+) 1.6. This is a significant difference statistically (p value is less than 0.0001), allowing us to conclude that not only was there an anti-peace dominance in overall intensity of the coverage, *the average anti-peace intensity was significantly more than the pro-peace intensity as well*.

A fourth relevant finding relates to the sub-categories ‘Conflict background’ and ‘Demotion of the conflict’. The former essentially recorded units that communicated the historical background and other attempts at contextualising the conflict, while the latter aimed to capture communication that encouraged discontinuing violence, directly or indirectly (by presenting its human and material cost, highlighting consequences, etc). The headline analysis shows just 2% (n=18) of the units were coded under ‘Conflict background’ and none under ‘Demotion of conflict’. Thus, it can be concluded that *the press made no attempt to emphasise the need to end the conflict – nor did it contextualise ongoing incidents sufficiently*.

The fifth finding relates to sources of news. From the 183 headlines that were ‘source-coded’, we see the newspapers on both sides relied heavily on sources within their respective governmental machinery. Thus, according to the headline analysis, 78% of news originated from such sources. Of this, a significant proportion (49% of the total) was from political sources within the respective government. This pattern was the same in all newspapers analysed; all three gave members of their own government more prominence than any other source. This meant that other sources – separatists, the governmental and non-governmental views of the other side, even political sources *outside* ‘own’ government – received only negligible attention, and alternate perspectives were marginalised, allowing us to safely conclude that *the coverage in both the Indian and Pakistani newspapers was significantly state-led, predominately promoting official views and statements at the cost of alternate perspectives.*

The nature of Kashmir coverage in the Indian and Pakistani press, hence, can be summarised thus: *intensely, prominently anti-peace.* The newspapers analysed in both nations featured significantly more anti-peace news, the intensity of which far surpassed that of the other two news categories. Also, overall the anti-peace news was displayed on the front pages more prominently than pro-peace or neutral-ambiguous news. There is evidence that the press showed a pronounced preference for *active* anti-peace content over passive anti-peace themes, and presented more of the kind of news that was seen to actually exacerbate the conflict. Further, the newspapers appeared to exhibit a marked indifference towards news that encouraged the discontinuance of violence, as also news that aimed to contextualise the conflict. Lastly, the coverage on both sides was state-led to a significant degree. News stories were mostly culled from governmental sources, particularly political sources within the Indian and Pakistani state machineries, with little emphasis on counterviews and alternate perspectives – of not just separatists but even political sources outside the government.

Profile of the ‘other’

RQ2 relates to the representation of the other side in the Indian and Pakistani media. What image did the Pakistani press present of India, and the Indian press of Pakistan? To what extent of intensity and prominence was India/Pakistan represented as an anti- or pro-peace party in each other’s newspapers? And how were the separatists portrayed? The findings of the headline coding, particularly of the supplementary analysis discussed in chapter 5 (see section 5.6), are harnessed to answer these questions. Again, a measure of the portrayal is presented across three variables – the F-SCORE, I-SCORE and P-SCORE.

The F-SCORE of the supplementary analysis, which coded a sub-sample (n=316) of the total 912 headlines, showed that the majority of news units presented the ‘other’ as an anti-peace entity. Thus, while 51% of the headlines depicted the ‘other’ as engaging in conflict-centric activities or issuing related anti-peace statements, 28% units presented it as a positive force undertaking pro-peace actions (the rest 21% were neutral-ambiguous). This largely negative representation of the ‘other’ was similar across all three newspapers (HT carried 25% more AP representation of the other than PP; Dawn, 24% more; ToI, 14%), allowing the conclusion that *both Indian and Pakistani newspapers represented the ‘other’ mostly in negative light, as antagonists encouraging violence and opposed to peace efforts.*

The I-SCORE of the supplementary analysis provided a measure of this anti-peace representation of the ‘other’. The AP I-SCORE overshadowed the PP I-SCORE. Where the ‘other’ was presented as a positive entity with a total intensity of (+) 124, it was portrayed negatively with a total intensity of (-) 236.5. Expressed in percentages, anti-peace representation of the ‘other’ accounted for 66% of the total I-SCORE (n=124+236.5=360.5), while pro-peace representation accounted for just 34% – in essence, AP representation was 32% more intense than

PP representation. Interestingly, while the analysis showed the average pro-peace representation was as intense as the average anti-peace representation (both scored an x1.4 value), the latter appeared in the newspapers with more regularity (as the higher F-SCORE discussed earlier shows), leading to the higher AP I-SCORE. Despite this explanation, the fact remains that overall the 'other' was presented as a negative force with more intensity than it was presented as a positive force. Using the percentage figures we arrived at earlier, this can be summarised thus: *the intensity of the anti-peace representation of the 'other' was 32% more than the intensity of its pro-peace representation in the coverage.* The final I-SCORE of -112.5 can be seen as a numerical measure of this negative representation.

The P-SCORE followed the same pattern. The anti-peace representations accounted for 50% (n=520) of the total P-SCORE of 1,037, while the pro-peace accounted for 29% (n=300) and neutral-ambiguous for 21% (n=217). Here again, we see the average anti-peace and pro-peace units (as also the average NA unit) recorded more or less the same P-SCORE, indicating that they received similar prominence on the front pages. However, because of the higher frequency of the anti-peace representations, the latter appeared in the newspapers with more regularity (as the higher F-SCORE discussed earlier shows), leading to the higher AP P-SCORE and it is justifiable to conclude that overall anti-peace representation of the 'other' received dominant display in the newspapers. Using percentage figures this can be expressed as: *the prominence of the anti-peace representation of the 'other' was 21% more than the prominence accorded to pro-peace representation in the coverage.*

Two other findings can be harnessed to sketch the press portrayal of the 'other' in full. The first relates to the representation of the separatists, the common 'other' for both India and Pakistan. As argued in chapter 5, a de-legitimisation by both governments has resulted in the press paying scant attention to separatist views. Thus, despite being an important party in the

conflict, statements from this group appeared in the newspapers rarely: just 9% (n=182) of the 1,936 units source-coded in the textual analysis originated from separatists (this percentage was the same in headline analysis as well). Of this 69% presented them as making anti-peace statements, of a total AP intensity of -271; and just 20% as a pro-peace force, of a total PP intensity of +93 (11% was NA). The significant difference between the anti-peace and pro-peace representation can be presented as percentages thus: *the newspapers presented the separatists mostly as an anti-peace entity, with 49% more frequency and 48% more intensity than it presented them as a pro-peace entity.*

A supportive second finding useful in this context arises from the way the newspapers made use of qualifiers. The text analysis showed that every second story had at least one qualifier -- and the majority of these were what can be termed non-desirable labels. Of the total 353 qualifiers coded across 3,526 textual units, 52% (n=186) were terms such as ‘terrorist’, ‘India-held Kashmir’, ‘Pakistan-occupied Kashmir’, etc, which were used to represent the ‘other’ – India, Pakistan, or separatists, as the situation warranted – or actions by the ‘other’. This supports the conclusions drawn above.

So what can be said about the picture of the ‘other’ the three Indian and Pakistani newspapers painted on their respective front pages? It was anti-peace, and intensely so. Mostly the Indian press presented Pakistan and the Pakistan press India as a negative entity, the enemy engaged in deeply anti-peace and antagonistic activities, and clearly responsible for the conflict in Kashmir. While there were cases when this portrayal was restrained, even positive, such instances were relatively few (and mostly occasioned or led by the respective state). Again, the negative portrayals were played up, receiving a significantly prominent display overall than the positive ones. The separatists received scant media attention from both sides, despite being a major constituent in the conflict. While there were attempts by the Pakistani press to glorify and

encourage their activities, such attempts were limited, and mostly the separatists emerged as an marginal party to the conflict in the newspapers on both sides – and in the Indian press, as perpetrators of violence without just cause.

Kashmir and the coverage

The preponderance of anti-peace news – which can be translated as news that can contribute to the continuance or accentuation of a conflict, including negating peace efforts – in the overall coverage and the negative portrayal of the ‘other’ noted above suggests the press played what can be termed a counterproductive role in the Kashmir issue. The literature examined in chapter 2 firmly supports the argument that the media plays a significant role in conflicts (Kellner 1992, Philo 1995, Philo & McLaughlin 1995, Seib 1997, Morrison & Tumber 1988, Naveh 2002, Spencer 2004, Wolfsfeld 2004), influencing the way the situation is perceived by audiences, particularly the members of the societies involved, and, through their influence on policymakers, feeding back to influence the pursuance of the conflict (Allan 1999, McNulty 1999). The explorations into public opinion (Habermas 1989, Lippmann 1922), the works of agenda-setting theorists (McCombs & Shaw 1972, Cohen 1963, Dearing & Rogers 1996), and the scholarship of cultivation analysts (Gerbner & Gross 1976, Morgan & Signorielli 1990) provide a solid basis for this belief in the media’s capability to influence conflicts.

As per Wolfsfeld’s PMP cycle (2004, p11), which builds on the body of literature just cited, the significance of the media arises from its capacity to *amplify* the changes occurring in the conflict politics. Accordingly, it is the politics that initiates media performance, which then influences conflict policies. This influence and whether it is constructive or destructive depend on the nature of the coverage and the extent of amplification – simply put, the *amount* of news space accorded to it and the *way* the issue is presented. Essentially, if the coverage is ‘positive’ (or pro-

peace, as we have termed) it can create an environment in which the antagonists can strive towards and perhaps reach a solution; and if the coverage is negative (or anti-peace, as per our definition), it can create a situation conducive for violence instead of peace.

Further, as established the coverage on both sides of the border was pronouncedly negative. There was a significantly higher proportion of anti-peace news, of significantly higher intensity and displayed more prominently than pro-peace news. There was little engagement with substantive issues, explorations of the causes underlying the conflict-on-the-ground and the conduct of it. The stress was on violence perpetrated by the 'other', with insufficient contextualisation and quite often insufficient reportage. The coverage on both sides was ethnocentric: journalists mostly relied on governmental sources and promoted official stances, with inadequate exploration of alternative perspectives. And in newspapers on both sides, the 'other' was portrayed as the enemy and the cause of the conflict.

Drawing on the PMP theory again, it can be argued that the predominance of anti-peace news and negative portrayal of the 'other' could only have contributed to accentuating the conflict. The press, as Wolfsfeld argues (2004, p11), is capable of four major influences in a situation such as Kashmir: one, it can define the political atmosphere; two, it can influence the nature of debate; three, it can impact the strategy and behaviour of the parties involved; and four, it can raise or lower the legitimacy and public standing of the parties involved.

The anti-peace domination in the coverage, accordingly, is likely to have defined a political atmosphere not conducive for dialogue, a general mood of pessimism persistently fed by news of violence and strife, where a solution appeared impossible – in short, a political environment in which people would not invest in the peace stock. While there were spells in which pro-peace news dominated, these need to be seen as punctuations in a prolonged conflict,

and often corrupted by a relatively higher proportion of anti-peace news. The lack of engagement with substantive issues and the marginalisation of alternate perspectives would not have been productive either, contributing to an ill-informed public debate. In light of the third of the four media influences that Wolfsfeld outlines (see section 2.6.1 in chapter 2), it is also possible that the marginalised parties – particularly the ‘weaker’ separatists – adapted their strategies to suit the media demand for conflict by providing extreme actions and statements, thus raising the level of violence. The preponderance of active anti-peace news vis-à-vis less active themes noted earlier and the fact that separatists mostly were portrayed as engaging in negative activities – rather, they received news space mostly when they undertook anti-peace actions – can be taken as indicative evidence for this. Lastly, it would be surprising if the negative portrayal of the ‘other’, including the separatists, did not raise questions about their legitimacy and lower their public standing, generally conveying the impression that they cannot be trusted to honour their commitments and hence the chances of peace are bleak.

Bar-Tal’s (2000) thesis on intractability provides more insights into the situation, particularly on the impact of negative coverage on the continuance of conflict. As discussed earlier, antagonistic societies impart certain societal beliefs to its members, which include the justness of one’s goal, the de-legitimisation of the other side, positive self-image, and own victimisation, to survive the stress of the conflict. These societal beliefs – cognitions shared by the public figure frequently on the public agenda – is much discussed, and is referred to frequently by the leaders to justify their decisions. Such “indoctrination” causes the internalisation of the societal beliefs (Bar-Tal 1998, p42) and over time they form a kind of ideology, a conflictive ethos. The media’s contribution to this is significant: as a major channel of communication between societal leaders and members of the society, and the setter of public agenda (McCombs & Shaw 1972; Graber 1980; Iyengar et al 1982), it plays a crucial role in the “indoctrination” of societal beliefs. The intensely anti-peace representation of the ‘other’

highlighted by the content analysis is a good measure of the negative societal beliefs societies impart to its members in similar situations – as we saw, there was clear evidence of the de-legitimisation of the ‘other’ and own victimisation besides indications that both sides strived to present to their respective publics some of the other sentiments listed by Bar-Tal, including the portrayal that ‘our’ goal was just while ‘theirs’ was unjust. It is only reasonable then to argue this trend contributed to a conflictive ethos. As Bar-Tal (1998) further argues, while such an ethos is a self-protecting mechanism created to *endure* the conflict, once created it also *perpetuates* it, pushing it towards intractability. Seen in this light, the negative societal beliefs about the ‘other’ evidenced in the Indian and Pakistani press coverage can be taken to have encouraged a conflictive ethos and the resultant consequences.

The argument, then, is that the Indian and Pakistani coverage of the Kashmir insurgency most likely played a significant role in prolonging the conflict. The press on both sides not only created a non-conducive environment for peace attempts, but set the scene for its continuance and exacerbation as well. The persistent feed of news about strife and violence over years, particularly with the blame pinned on the ‘other’, arguably encouraged a conflictive ethos in societal members in both India and Pakistan – which, in turn, contributed to the intractability of the situation.

Implications for journalists, policymakers

Most journalists take pride in their professionalism. The majority of Indian and Pakistani journalists I know see themselves as fair-minded beings, uncorrupted by partisan values, seeking out the truth for the general good of all, taking enormous pride in being objective and balanced. And they abhor violence and bloodshed. It is ironic then that the coverage they have produced on Kashmir is counterproductive. Though Wolfsfeld’s Principle of Unintended Consequences (2004)

– the result of newsroom demands and the rough competition for news agenda by antagonists subjugating cherished journalistic norms to turn “peace-loving journalists into inadvertent mechanisms for the promotion of war” (p24) – explains why this happens, it is fairly safe to say this dynamic and the larger consequences of their reportage is not something that has been taken serious note of by working journalists.

An initial assumption was that in the constant race against deadlines, journalists fail to consider the consequences of how they report the many aspects of the conflict. This belief has only been strengthened by this study. Even as they dearly held on to the traditional norms of balance and objectivity, in personal interviews many journalists came across as “inadvertent” mechanisms of war (an impression well-supported by the close reading of the coverage the content analysis called for): ethnocentric, firm in their societal beliefs of victim-hood perpetrated by the violence of the other side, unwilling to entertain alternate possibilities. They appeared to believe such an approach to journalism served their society best, and were dismissive of the impressionistic critiques of partisanship aimed at their coverage in the past.

A similar lack of consideration of the potential consequences of a ‘media war’, and the dangers of strident, partisan coverage and unquestioning support to governmental stances in conflict situations can be seen on the part of policymakers as well. Again, this is an impression gathered from personal interviews supported by the empirical findings, including the fine-grained reading of media content the coding process entailed. The majority felt the media was doing a “good” job in presenting the reality about the conflict – and if that comprised blaming the other and concentrating on the violence, well, that was only because that *was* the reality. In short, like the journalists, they appeared oblivious to the strategic influences of war coverage and their own part in the media-conflict relation.

The findings of this study challenge these beliefs about the ‘goodness’ of the Indian and Pakistani media. The measure of productive and counter-productive coverage and the various trends noted in this study underline the need for introspection and a more informed engagement with Kashmir by media personnel as well as their political ‘minders’. But this can happen only with cooperation from journalists. There needs to be a willingness to think about – or rethink – their responsibilities, to question their own traditions and practices, to adapt their journalism to the requirements of war after due strategic considerations. Journalists need to be aware not only how to report violence, but also how to report peace attempts, which are extremely vulnerable to derailment. Only then can they meet the demands of news production in a conflict situation constructively.

At a tactical level, two related aspects need to be emphasised. First, is the need for conflict journalism training for media personnel covering Kashmir. Journalists posted to Srinagar get the job not because of their war journalism experience or education, but more for their willingness to function out of a bleak situation. Many, including parachute journalists, undergo no special training or briefing. Indeed many in Kashmir are not trained as journalists even, let alone in conflict journalism, but became journalists overnight to meet the demands of an abnormal situation. The need for professional development, hence, is of paramount importance.

Second, Kashmir coverage needs better coordination and planning than what exists today. Most national news organisations in India treat Kashmir as just another story, covered on the run when ‘something happens’. There are few specialists among the media managers – mostly, Kashmir ‘copy’ passes through the hands of a manager who is responsible for news collation from *all* the bureaux across India – and no dedicated budget or strategy. Again, as a section of journalists and media managers acknowledged, most news organisations offer no noteworthy compensation to correspondents posted to Kashmir, making it extremely difficult to find the right

talent. Moreover, tighter news budget mean journalists are pressured to produce ‘value-for-money’ reportage, with insufficient reportage, investigation, and introspection. An argument put forward by many senior news managers is that national newspapers in India serve a huge readership across different states – and in a nation where the news flow is remarkably high, and with tight news budgets, it is not possible to earmark special consideration to one state. The counter to that, once again, is: Kashmir is an abnormal situation (even among the many other abnormalities that happen across India), needing special attention.

A similar sensitisation to the requirements of Kashmir is needed among policymakers as well. The media relies heavily on government sources – political, bureaucratic, and security – to construct news about the conflict. While this places the state actors in an advantageous position, they need to ‘wield’ this power with caution. Ill-conceived, spur-of-the-moment responses may do no tangible harm in normal situations, but could have severe repercussions in an abnormality like Kashmir. Similarly, as the ‘stronger’ antagonist, the state needs to be sensitive to the amount of news space it consumes with its more efficient publicity machinery. Persistent de-legitimisation and marginalisation are likely to encourage more extreme violence from the ‘weaker’ separatists in an attempt to be heard. It is important for policymakers to understand these dynamics and find ways to deal with it efficiently. While certain sections of the political and bureaucratic leadership were sympathetic towards the need for more strategic thought, and there have been more mature responses in recent years, there still is not enough evidence of a long-term political strategy to deal with the situation.

Many academics have made similar recommendations in the past. Peace journalism scholars have put forward practical guidelines for journalists to follow in conflict situations to negate some of the problems highlighted above (Lynch & McGoldrick 2005, Manoff 1997, 1998). Wolfsfeld (2004), after a painstaking study of three peace processes which drew not only on content

analyses but in-depth interviews with more than 100 conflict participants, offers several strategic suggestions for policymakers and journalists. Journalism educator Howard Ross's writings (2002) and the passionate advocacy of Martin Bell (1997, 1998) are two other attempts aimed at convincing journalists to approach conflicts differently. However, despite being directly relevant to their work, such views appear not to have percolated to most journalists – or policymakers – involved with Kashmir. Perhaps it is idealistic to expect reporters and politicians to pick up academic – or even quasi academic – writings and proactively educate themselves on the scholarship available, but, crucially, the findings of this study point to the need to negate the informational vacuum in which the Indian and Pakistani media currently carry out its journalism on Kashmir.

It is here that better media-academia interactions can help. Academics, media watchdogs, and journalistic unions have an important role to play in this as well. The argument for special attention to Kashmir from the media and policymakers will be entertained only if politicians and journalists recognise the *need* for it. Unfortunately, there has been very little effort to foster such relations, or engage in relevant academic studies in both nations. As someone caught between the worlds of academia and media and sensitive to the sentiments of both, I suggest an elementary reason for the substantial scholarship on conflict journalism going unshared is a certain self-indulgence on the part of scholars and journalists. Consumed by an effort to strengthen their academic credentials, most scholars focus only on presenting their work to the niche audience of academic publications and are unwilling to take the extra effort required to make it accessible to a more general audience. Most journalists, for their part, do not consider academic research as particularly productive or newsworthy and are persuaded to take a professional or personal interest only when the findings are 'dramatic'. There is also a certain impatience on both sides about the other: journalists consider much of academics as removed from reality while the generalisations and the relative lack of rigour in journalistic explorations make scholars uneasy.

The result is a disconnect, particularly in India, which needs to be bridged. As part of the intelligentsia, both journalists and scholars need to be sensitive to this need and work towards better interaction.

Since I make the argument that the conventional journalistic practices applied to Kashmir by Indian and Pakistani media personnel have produced ‘war’ journalism and been counterproductive, it leaves the question what kind of coverage would suit the situation. Would the non-traditional approach advocated by peace journalism scholars help? Perhaps there is a need to look at conflict journalism without separating it into two extreme camps symbolised by the values of subjectivity and objectivity. The goal of both schools, as discussed in chapter 2, is the same: responsible journalism. Even in their seemingly contradictory methods of attempting that goal, there are similarities: both approaches advocate more or less the same rituality to how they report, verifying and confirming ‘facts’, using multiple sources, and striving for depth and insights. Both schools, it is safe to say, aim to produce ‘informed’ news stories.

A more productive approach, hence, is to view journalisms of attachment and detachment not as two dichotomous concepts, but complimentary ideas, which, working together, could contribute to a more informed sphere of journalism – and a more productive coverage conflict. It is simplistic to believe that the complexities of a conflict can be captured by one comprehensive model. As Zhao & Heckett (1998) suggest arguing for a brand of insightful, self-reflexive reportage they call critical objectivity, the world needs different kinds of journalism for different purposes. Keeble (2005, p63) makes a similar point with his call to move away from the objectivity-subjectivity duality and seek new paradigms. Lippmann’s (1922, 1992) idea of re-educating the public so the readers can evaluate news content for biases, Zhao & Heckett’s (1998) argument for far-reaching media reforms that would facilitate better reportage, and Allan &

Zelizer's (2004) belief that journalistic norms need to be realigned to suit new needs are all movements along the same path, perhaps even the beginnings of a paradigm shift.

The good news here is that in recent years, despite voices of angst and anger from conventionalists, there is a growing acceptance of subjective reportage, and a redefinition of what constitutes objectivity. Together this has bridged the gulf between the two schools, placing them on talking terms. Whether an arranged marriage between the two would produce better conflict journalism requires extensive exploration, but it can be said with some measure of confidence that the demand of a conflict situation cannot be practically met by any single brand of journalism.

Final reflections: return to journalism

In July 2007 I travelled to Srinagar again. It was my first visit in four years, the first since I began this study. Though I was there for academic interviews, I had promised my former editor a news feature, mainly to justify the press credentials he provided me. Given this research was driven by my sense of inadequacy in reporting the conflict, was my last story any different from my earlier ones? Four years into my research, what had I learnt to do differently?

The story¹²¹ I filed on how Srinagar had changed for the better was possibly the most 'positive' piece I had ever done from Kashmir. Indeed if I were to analyse the text, it would certainly rate as intensely pro-peace, its unit mean a high enough positive value to dispel any doubts to the contrary. Admittedly, there were other factors at play. For one, unencumbered by the pressure of an immediate news deadline, I had the luxury of time to develop the 'angle' I wanted. Two, I had the advantage of a fresh perspective and 'distance', brought about my sabbatical from the daily news grind. And three, there indeed *was* something positive to write

about: a democratically elected government at the helm of affairs in J&K and ongoing India-Pakistan peace talks had brought about a semblance of normalcy to Srinagar, which looked less like a city under siege.

My own contribution to the mix, as I see it now, was two-fold. The first was a willingness to explore a different story, one that focussed on the drama of peace rather than the drama of conflict, the obscure instead of the obvious conflict (see sections 5.4.1 and 5.4.2 in chapter 5). This was the harder piece to write, which would have been harder still but for the fact I was not burdened by pressing deadlines. Second, I made a conscious effort with my language choice, avoiding emotive and ethnocentric terms, ensuring as much as I could that the reportage was not only accurate but also in context. In essence, weighing every sentence, taking extra care to avoid framing it as another us-versus-them story – choosing to tell the story of hope and provide a cause for optimism where people could invest in the “peace stock” (Wolfsfeld 2004, p18). These efforts were a product of my rather late-in-the-day sensitisation to the dangers of conflict journalism brought about by my exposure to analyses and literature I was previously unaware of. While that is encouraging, the more interesting question is whether I would have adapted my reportage if circumstantial factors had not favoured me. What ‘positive’ options does a conflict journalist really have on a day-to-day basis when strife and violence continue?

Here the prospects are somewhat discouraging. Five years ago, I was fairly certain that objectivity was the solution to all war journalism ailments. Like many of my professional colleagues, I believed it was merely a matter of reportorial discipline and hence attainable in conflict situations. The initial years of this research and the arguments of scholars such as Glasser (1992), Iggers (1999), Schudson (1978) and Carruthers (2000) cured me of that naïve faith (see discussion section 2.5 in chapter 2). Peace journalism appeared to be an attractive alternative for some time, but much as I admire its idealism, I believe it to be impractical as well (see critique in

section 2.6, chapter 2). The constraints of news production in times of violence, driven to a large extent by ethnocentrism (Billig 1995, Kempf 2002, Carruthers 2000, Wolfsfeld 2004, Sonwalkar 2005; see discussion in section 2.3 in chapter 2), make ‘balanced’, ‘fair’ and ‘truthful’ reporting – whether it is by way of the stress on ‘facticity’ and ‘strategic rituality’ as advocated by the objective school, or by way of the socially responsible ‘truth-orientation’ put forward by subjective peace journalists – unrealistic. The pronounced ‘anti-peace’ coverage, the extent to which Kashmir news is driven by own government sources and stances, and the constant negative rendering of the ‘other’ that came to light in the content analysis are in line with Wolfsfeld’s (2004) PMP thesis, providing some evidence in its support. These patterns underline once again what does happen in ‘real-world’ war situations, despite most journalists’ desire for peace (see the discussion on the Principle of Unintended Consequences in section 2.6.3 in chapter 2).

My reformed belief as I conclude this study, then, is that the demands of a conflict, particularly of an intractable one, will override the good intentions of journalism, however ‘sensitised’ individual reporters are to the cause of responsible reporting. But journalists are not powerless. What they can – and should – do is strive to *limit* the damage of their reportage, contain its ‘anti-peaceness’, with a responsible and sensitive approach to reporting strife and a willingness to explore peace possibilities.

So am I making the case for a diluted model of peace journalism here? Not quite. I believe its adoption as *the* model for conflict journalism is not only impractical, as mentioned before, but fraught with danger. Accepting subjectivity as the journalistic norm in the fog of war, however well-intentioned, could very easily tear down the last check on unbridled partisanship, producing a journalism of ‘our truth’ instead of the ‘the truth’. At the same time, the inherent strengths of peace journalism, or, more broadly, the journalism of attachment – its experiential insights, its flexibility, above all, its humane face – is hard to ignore. Similarly, despite its ‘failure’ in war

situations, the qualities that journalism of detachment can bring about in certain situations – its ritualistic nature, for instance, can contribute to a more balanced presentation – cannot be dismissed out of hand.

An option to explore, then, is a mixed model, which allows for the norms of objectivity and subjectivity to coexist, to supplement each other. While we can see the beginnings of a change in this direction in the conflict journalism of recent years (in war blogs, in citizen journalism, and the body of reflexive pieces that appears even on news pages), objectivity is still very much the norm, the ideal for the majority of reporters. Subjective writings are mostly considered an exception to the rule, a poor cousin to ‘real’, ‘hardcore’ objective reportage. A mixed model requires we move away from this zero-sum framing that characterises conflict journalism today and demands a more liberal outlook from journalists: the acknowledgement that both schools have strengths that can be brought to bear, that one could counterbalance the other, and together the two can produce a more insightful coverage of the conflict.

All conflict incidents are not the same and cannot be reported efficiently using the same technique. Different situations require different journalism. For instance, the ritual of objective reporting by journalists sensitive to the dangers of ‘othering’ might work well for ‘breaking’ or ‘spot’ stories, where only ‘surface’ details are immediately available, while a subjective approach founded on meticulous investigation – what I would call an *informed* subjectivity – could provide insights into the same event as a ‘follow-up’ story. A judicious deployment of the two approaches could hopefully lead to a more constructive coverage overall, mitigating the pronounced negativity that characterises conflict journalism.

All this, however, requires some fundamental changes in newsroom culture. Most journalists are essentially peace-oriented people, willing to focus on constructive, ‘pro-peace’ news under

favourable political conditions. However, they continue to be victims of the Principle of Unintended Consequences (Wolfsfeld 2004), and journalism remains a normative profession, its this-is-the-way-it-is-done wisdom passed down the line by newsroom ‘elders’ – and accepted as such by the ‘cubs’ – without much critical thought. Change can occur only if journalists show a willingness to question their own traditions and practices. As argued earlier, sensitisation of journalists to the needs and issues of conflict situation could contribute to some healthy soul-searching in this direction.

Finally, a word on how this research has contributed to knowledge in the broader academic context. Two claims can be made. The first is methodological. The coding scheme used in this study, which demanded a significant investment of time and energy, offers a novel and more thorough way of examining conflict coverage than was possible before. Capable of measuring news tendencies across three variables, it brings to bear the strengths of qualitative and quantitative traditions. Though developed specifically for conflict coverage, the scheme is fairly flexible – the fundamental rules governing main and subsidiary communications in a unit and the ways to ‘quantify’ these by way of numerical values can be employed to analyse news coverage as removed as global warming.

The second – and more focal – contribution is to the field of conflict journalism in general, particularly the news media’s role in the Kashmir situation. It adds to the pool of knowledge on journalistic tendencies in situations of violence and attempts at peace. Specifically, it can be seen to enrich our understanding of the news dynamics regarding Kashmir, about which there have been precious few studies. This study, it is my modest claim, fills this academic vacuum to an extent. Metaphorically, it provides a ‘colour’ photograph of a situation which till now had only been served by the black-and-white snapshots of rudimentary, impressionistic analyses. My

findings will, hopefully, provide an empirical foundation for future research and discussions on Kashmir.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Though its official name is Jammu and Kashmir, the state is often referred to as simply ‘Kashmir’.
- ² Now *rediff.com*, a leading news sites in the world.
- ³ Every major road in Kashmir is sanitised for explosives at daylight, then kept ‘open’ — physically guarded — by the military personnel of the Road Opening Parties till dusk.
- ⁴ A military counterinsurgency force. Raised specially in the early 1990s to be deployed in Kashmir, it is staffed by regular Indian army personnel on deputation and ex-servicemen.
- ⁵ A former intelligence official, Saxena was appointed J&K governor in May 1990. As the Indian President’s representative – J&K was under President’s rule – he headed the administrative and security efforts till 1993. He returned for a second term in 1998, but without executive powers, as there was an elected government in place by then.
- ⁶ Journalists were also good sources of information, providing rich ‘human intelligence’ from the group. Saxena, who had headed the Research & Analysis Wing, India’s equivalent of MI6, put it this way: “Keeping in touch with the media, journalists was also important to get some feedback. They were seeing things which perhaps I was not seeing through my official channels.”
- ⁷ My journalistic interactions with some of the actors involved support this conclusion.
- ⁸ Expect during the Kargil conflict in 1999 perhaps, when India went to a limited war with Pakistan.
- ⁹ Sayeed’s daughter Rubaiyya was kidnapped by separatist militants soon after he took office, provoking a crisis that is generally seen as the beginning of the Kashmir conflict.
- ¹⁰ Various known as Indian-controlled Jammu & Kashmir (IJK), Indian-occupied Kashmir (IOK), Indian-administered Kashmir, depending on vantage point – also simply Kashmir.
- ¹¹ ‘Azad’ or Free Kashmir is Pakistan’s name for this territory. India calls it Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, while international bodies and news organisations prefer to use ‘Pakistan-controlled Kashmir’ or ‘Pakistan-administered Kashmir’.
- ¹² Named so by an India-Pakistan agreement in 1972.
- ¹³ A third split occurred later, in 1962, when India’s border skirmishes with China across the Himalayan ranges – both nations had different ideas on where their territory ended – developed into a full-fledged war. India suffered a humiliating defeat, leaving in Chinese hands 38,000 square kilometres of J&K. This was a sparsely-populated landmass called Aksai Chin, almost as large as Switzerland, and part of the Ladakh region. China had long claimed the region; India said otherwise. About 5,000 sq km of the land China contested lay on the Pakistan side, in the one-third of J&K it had retained after the first India-Pakistan war. Delighted at finding an ally against India, the days after the war saw Pakistan gravitating closer to China, willing to hand over the bit of Aksai Chin it held. And so it did, on March 2, 1963 under the Sino-Pak Boundary Agreement, thus splitting J&K into three, across three nations.
- ¹⁴ About £94,000 by today’s exchange rate.
- ¹⁵ Loose translation: ‘great king’. The title was used for the powerful monarchs of the era.
- ¹⁶ As per the British census of 1941, 77% were Muslim, 20% Hindu and 3% Sikhs and Buddhists (Bose 2003).

¹⁷ An English explorer and surgeon-turned-vet, he travelled throughout the Kashmir region and Ladakh in search of a suitable mate for the East India Company's military stud.

¹⁸ A statistic in proof: 90% of the Muslim houses were mortgaged to Hindu moneylenders in 1924 (Bose 2003)

¹⁹ The partition, as Pandey (2001, p2) writes, "occurred with remarkable suddenness and in a manner that belied most anticipations of the immediate future. There was a very short time — a mere seven years — between the first formal articulation of the demand for a separate state for the Muslims of the subcontinent and the establishment of Pakistan. The boundaries between the two states were not officially known until two days *after* they had formally become independent. And, astonishingly, few had foreseen that this division of territories and power would be accompanied by anything like the bloodbath that actually eventuated."

²⁰ Even before the maharajah got around to it, Nehru was contemplating military action. The news had been passed on by the British military commander in Pakistan, ironically across a telephone line that passed over the raiders' path (Collins & Lapierre, 1975).

²¹ The actual date/time of signing the agreement is important and is a cause of a controversy. Did Hari Singh sign before the first Indian troops landed in Srinagar on October 27? Or did he do it *after*, from the safety of Jammu, to which city he had fled? If the latter was the case, it gave the Indian troops the legal right to be in Kashmir. Schofield (2003) questions the Indian claim that Hari Singh signed it before October 27. The only way V P Menon, Nehru's emissary to Hari Singh, could have managed that was if he persuaded the maharajah to sign up on October 25 *before* he fled Srinagar early on October 26. But Menon's claim is he met Hari Singh in Jammu in the evening (October 26). This is doubtful, according to Schofield (2003, p56). She quotes more than one source to argue Menon more likely stayed overnight, got the Instrument of Accession signed the next day, possibly in the afternoon (after troops were airlifted to Srinagar), and reached Delhi after 4 pm. That, however, doesn't change the fact Hari Singh had in principle agreed to an accession — albeit a provisional one, which was to be confirmed by a referendum — before India began its military intervention (Schofield 2002).

²² The UNCIP was established after India complained to the United Nations Organisation in 1948 about Pakistani aggression in Kashmir and agreed to hold a conditional plebiscite under UN supervision.

²³ The elected head of J&K retained the title prime minister till 1953. Thereafter, it was changed to chief minister (like in every other state of the Indian union).

²⁴ J&K would have its own flag, emblem, constitution, and head of state. But the people of the state would be citizens of India, the Indian flag would be supreme, and the head of the state could not assume office without the Indian President's consent

²⁵ Released after more than four years, he enjoyed four months of freedom, before being arrested again, charged with conspiracy and thrown into jail.

²⁶ On December 21, a Presidential Order enabled the Indian President to govern the state; on January 9, 1965, the local National Conference was dissolved and the Indian National Congress party established a branch in Kashmir (Schofield 2003).

²⁷ At the end of the war India held 94,000 prisoners of war and 5,000 sq km of Pakistani territory, which it returned.

²⁸ Formed by Sheikh Abdullah's lieutenant Mirza Afzal Beg in 1955 to fight for the right of self-determination.

²⁹ Dr Abdullah's ouster appears to have been planned as early as 1983. Widmalm (1997) offers an excerpt from a personal interview with Devi Das Thakur, one of the legislators who withdrew support to Dr Abdullah's government to argue this point. Here Thakur is speaking about a private talk he said he had with then prime minister Indira Gandhi immediately after the 1983 J&K election which Dr Abdullah won: 'She [Gandhi] said, "How do you go about Kashmir?" and then I said that "this is one of the ways which we can do." "Can you do it?" [she asked.] I said, "Yes, I am capable of doing it." "But who's the horse you are going to flog then?" I said, "G. M. Shah." "But you are not pulling on well with him, how do you do it?" I said, "I'll surrender, I'll win him over," ... and then I went to Kashmir. Then I had a meeting with G. M. Shah at my son-in-law's house, where he came for the dinner ... And we planned the entire thing, and I came back and reported to her that this the line of acting.'

³⁰ In his book *My Frozen Turbulence* (1991) Jagmohan argues unconvincingly his actions were constitutional. He had recommended placing the state under governor's rule, he says, but Delhi had vetoed the idea, leaving him "no other option" but swear in G. M. Shah (p296).

³¹ The author's interviews in Kashmir also support this point.

³² As a senior federal minister Arif Mohammed Khan said to journalist Tavleen Singh (1995, p131).

³³ This was to continue and become India's biggest counterinsurgency operation to date. In the later years, Kashmir saw several more of the federal forces coming in, including the Indo-Tibetan Border Police, the Central Industrial Security Force. The regular army, too, deployed the Rashtriya Rifles, specially created to counter insurgency.

³⁴ India's external intelligence organisation.

³⁵ Ladakh was to remain so, though parts of the Jammu region were to see separatist violence later.

³⁶ Full text of the Lahore Declaration is available on the Indian embassy site: http://www.indianembassy.org/South_Asia/Pakistan/lahoredeclaration.html

³⁷ See 'Musharraf optimistic on future ties: Sattar', *Dawn*, July 18, 2001.

³⁸ See 'Democracy Attacked', *Hindustan Times*, December 14, 2001.

³⁹ The ISI, according to Hussain (2007), had begun planning a jihad in Kashmir before the Afghan campaign was over. As Lt General Hamid Gul, who headed the ISI, is cited as saying: "It is years of our work that has realized the armed uprising against the Indian forces in Kashmir" (p22).

⁴⁰ At the time of Independence, Kashmir was "dominated by a rural elite" (Prakash 2000, p320), with rich landlords exploiting landless peasants. India tried to overcome this by heavily subsidising the state with grants. Between 1950 and 1970, 90% of the state's five-year plans were funded by the federal government (in comparison, other backward states like Bihar got only 70%).

⁴¹ Combat is the final stage of military conflict (Haas 1974). Military conflict, which usually comes after diplomatic (lodging protests, withdrawal of ambassadors etc) and non-institutionalised conflicts (sanctions), includes all overt steps from the decision to go to war to the actual outbreak of combat.

⁴² Only the most extreme cases will feature all these characteristics. The less intractable ones have "less characteristics since conflicts differ in their intensity, severity, and extensity" (Bar-Tal 1998, p25).

⁴³ Behavioral abilities, which can be learned, at least partially (Bar-Tal 1998)

⁴⁴ Such strategies are not limited to war situations, but, as Palmer notes (2002b, p359), a core feature of all political processes today.

⁴⁵ See also Hudson & Stanier (1997, p321): “The truth is that any power the media has is conceded to it by the politicians.”

⁴⁶ Robinson (2004, p109) though suggests “the contemporary media are more powerful and influential than their predecessors”.

⁴⁷ Interestingly, despatches from the Crimean War can be seen to have created an evident ‘media effect’ (coming at a time when there were relatively less factors to feed into public opinion), shaking the middle and upper-classes in England “to the core” (Randall 2005, p17-18). An instance: Thomas Chenery’s writings on the miserable medical situation of the British army, together with a story in the *Times* which asked ‘Why we have no sisters of charity?’, prompted Florence Nightingale to offer her services in 1854 (Knightley 1989).

⁴⁸ Or “cultural communities sharing a common past, attached to a clearly demarcated territory, and wishing to decide upon their political future which lack a state of their own” (Guibernau 1999, p1)

⁴⁹ As Wolfsfeld (2004, p22) writes: “News stories are almost always about ‘us’ and what could happen to us. When it centers about ‘others’, it centers on how they affect us.”

⁵⁰ I make this statement as a non-participant observer privy to some of such deliberations, and also in light of anecdotal evidence from military sources who indicated that some journalists “shouldered up squarely” – as Carruthers (2000, p10) would put it – to keep an eye on the correspondent concerned.

⁵¹ Though this gives the impression Russell was the first professional war correspondent, that honour goes to possibly G L Gruneisen of the *London Morning Post* (Knightley 1989).

⁵² Definitions of objectivity have ‘matured’ over the years, shedding the harsh and narrow shackles of the old, reflecting the scholarly progress in the area.

⁵³ Searle acknowledges that “in order to state a brute fact” we require language, but goes on to make a distinction between “*the fact stated*” and “*the statement of it*” (1997, p2).

⁵⁴ Taflinger (1996) makes the same case by discussing the severe neurological and sensory limitations of humans, which prevent a reporter from “perceiving all there is to perceive”. Consequently, it is this partial perception that is “filtered” through the reporter’s “experience, education, culture and upbringing” to produce a news item (screens 2, 3).

⁵⁵ Schudson (1995), writing nearly two decades after Tuchman, employs a similar usage to describe news process. According to him, it is a “strategic ballet” between “sources and journalists within the structure of representative government and private news-gathering enterprises” (p3) – and as such, shaped by subjective factors.

⁵⁶ Hackett (1974, p253) argues that objectivity (and bias) should be treated as a rhetorical device, as a norm, to measure journalism’s “ideological effectivity”. It should be “a subject of investigation, rather than the standard by which we evaluate *other* objects (eg: news content).”

⁵⁷ This call for radical reforms is slightly reminiscent of Lippmann’s (1946) earlier call for re-education of the public. Where Hackett & Zhao (1998) focus on changes in how journalism is practiced by media institutions, Lippmann wanted changes in the way journalism is *read* by the public (and to a lesser extent, how journalism is practiced). Lippmann’s path to objectivity was by deliberately acknowledging our biases and keeping an eye out for those, and critically testing every opinion, every ‘fact’ presented in the news for validity. This is done by the journalists and the readers – and if both groups are re-educated, they would be capable of segregating bias from facts, Lippmann argued.

⁵⁸ *New York Times*, one of the newspapers Moeller analysed, appears to acknowledge the findings in an editorial titled *The Times and Iraq* on May 26, 2004, as this excerpt shows: “Editors at several levels who should have been challenging reporters and pressing for more skepticism were perhaps too intent on rushing scoops into the paper. Accounts of Iraqi defectors were not always weighed against their strong desire to have Saddam Hussein ousted. Articles based on dire claims about Iraq tended to get prominent display, while follow-up articles that called the original ones into question were sometimes buried. In some cases, there was no follow-up at all.”

⁵⁹ See also Tehranian (2002).

⁶⁰ Galtung, the architect of peace journalism, had used the same phrase to describe his idea. However, for him journalism of attachment meant being attached to “all actual and possible victims of the conflict” (Hanitzsch 2004, p486).

⁶¹ Wolfsfeld’s idea is in not really deviant from the set of ‘classic’ news values put forward by Galtung & Ruge. Most scholars see conflict as a core news value. Wolfsfeld’s argument appears to be that journalists search for not conflict per se, but the drama it provides. A more detailed case for this is made in chapter 5 (see sections 5.4.1, 5.4.2 and 5.4.3).

⁶² Richards (2007, p155) makes a similar observation, specifically about terrorists who are ‘acutely media sensitive’.

⁶³ A fallout of this adaptation to media needs could be made-for-the-press news, what Daniel Boorstin (1992) called ‘pseudo events’. This requirement also encourages moderates to be more extreme to capture media attention. A third point, made by Carruthers (2000, p272), is that media presence often prompts actors to act out the ‘war-in-the-head’ images they carry out in their minds. Herr (1978, p169) captures this beautifully with his observation of the Vietnam war in *Dispatches*: “You don’t know what a media freak is until you’ve seen the way a few of those grunts would run around during a fight when they knew that there was a television crew nearby; they were actually making war movies in their heads, doing little guts-and-glory Leatherneck tap dances under fire...”

⁶⁴ Galtung makes a similar point: “As the media work, they amplify the sounds of the guns rather than muting them.”

⁶⁵ Max Weber places extra emphasis on this, comparing journalistic and scholarly responsibilities: “[I]t is almost never acknowledged that the responsibility of every honourable journalist is, on the average, not a bit lower than that of the scholar, but rather, as the war has shown, higher” (cited in Tumber & Prentoulis 2003, p228). See also Clutterbuck (1981, p160).

⁶⁶ Howard (2002) made a similar point during a keynote address on the role of media in peace-building, terming conflicts as not routine news but “special” cases, requiring “more than a mechanical response in reporting it” (p2).

⁶⁷ These were undertaken as a pre-test. It was exploratory in nature, the intention simply to see what was ‘out there’ in the Indian and Pakistani media before arriving at a research design. See chapter 4 for more details.

⁶⁸ See <https://rni.nic.in/pii.asp> for an overview of press in India [last accessed on Feb 10, 2009]

⁶⁹ Online news coverage began in India with *Rediff On The Net* on February 7, 1996, mainly targeted at US-based Indians. It took another few years before the phenomenon caught up with the general Indian public.

⁷⁰ There were no private TV channels initially, and only a few till after the mid-90s. As for radio, news and current affairs is still banned on private channels.

⁷¹ The press in India, for instance, was instrumental in containing famines in the 1950s and 1960s. While two to three million people perished in China, only thousands died in India. Scholars such as Sen & Dreze (1989) attribute this to existence of an independent media that vigilantly disseminated information about the impending food crisis and made it – unlike in the Chinese case – impossible for the government to conceal the situation, thus forcing it to act.

⁷² Assistant sub-inspector, a designation in the police and paramilitary forces in India.

⁷³ Sayeed's daughter Rubaiyya was kidnapped by separatist militants soon after he took office, provoking a crisis that is generally seen as the beginning of the Kashmir conflict.

⁷⁴ Besides the Military Intelligence, India's internal and external intelligence agencies – the Intelligence Bureau and Research and Analysis Wing, respectively – had stations in Kashmir. Officials routinely met with "trusted" journalists, particularly from outside Kashmir as part of what can be labelled PSYOPS, psychological operations – and also as sources of information.

⁷⁵ Events "that occur on unpredicated occasions" (Palmer 2002a, p436), mostly incidents that demanded reportorial presence on the 'spot' (scene).

⁷⁶ This "compromise" can be seen as an indicator of the quality of Indian journalism. Many editors – and here I draw on personal experience as well – were dissatisfied with the quality of reportage in general, particularly accuracy. An editor interviewed put it this way: "As a rule Indian journalists are not particularly famous for developing multiple sources, whether they are reporting on terrorism, the stock market, an income tax-raid, or a routine crime story."

⁷⁷ 24% said India and Pakistan should fight terrorism together, while 34% did not express an opinion. Poll results available at <http://ibnlive.in.com/news/terror-an-enemy-but-pak-the-bigger-enemy/83611-3-p1.html> [last accessed Feb 8, 2009]

⁷⁸ Online news coverage began in India with *Rediff On The Net* on February 7, 1996, mainly aimed at Indians in the US. But it was only by 1998-1999 that it acquired a sizeable audience in India.

⁷⁹ Inter-Services Intelligence, Pakistan's external intelligence agency.

⁸⁰ Qualifiers were accorded the same weightage as an NCP and considered another sub-theme, which added an extra dimension to the unit.

⁸¹ As van Dijk (1985, p28) argues, news reports "presupposes vast amounts of shared social representations, including specific prejudices and ideologies". The presuppositions, in cases of protracted conflicts such as Kashmir, do not favour the Other, who is viewed as the antagonist. Hence, even objective reports of violence are seen in light of such presuppositions – in essence, there exists a strategic 'war frame' that automatically portrays violence as a creation of the enemy.

⁸² It also coded attributions and other 'neutral' details – that is, communication that did not merit an AP or PP label on its own.

⁸³ This additional valuation, it must be mentioned, applied only to the 'text analysis' (where whole news items were coded). In the headline analysis, which looked only at headlines and sub-headlines, no extra values were applied. The difference between text and headline analyses is explained later.

⁸⁴ It must be acknowledged that this is one of the few stories with a uniform theme and no contradicting sub-theme. Such a 'simple' report was chosen for easy comprehension: the purpose here is only to demonstrate how the CP, NCP segmentation and source-coding worked.

⁸⁵ A qualifier is accorded the same independent status as an NCP (that is, numerical valuation as per the same rule) and coded accordingly. Thus, if a qualifier is embedded within an NCP, as it happens in Text Unit 1, it is ‘counted’ separately (as a qualifier is taken to be an ‘extra’ communication).

⁸⁶ Newspapers routinely lay out ‘interesting’ stories in ways that will make them hard to miss. For instance, as box items, or as an ‘anchor’ (at the bottom of the page, across all or nearly all columns) or ‘flier’ story (similar to anchor, but right on the top of the page), or with the whole headline in capital letters.

⁸⁷ For the purpose of this study, news slots refer to the placement of a story on the front page – whether it occupied a ‘slot’ of prominence (for instance, whether it was the ‘lead’ or a ‘box’ story) or not.

⁸⁸ Examinations of the content while developing the protocol had given me the impression that headlines were not always true to the ‘copy’.

⁸⁹ The term is used here to mean the same as it does in newsrooms: as a descriptor for any write-up (news report, feature, analysis) meant for publication.

⁹⁰ The *HT* New Delhi edition was coded (except for the 2007 blasts on India-Pakistan peace train coverage, for which the Mumbai edition was examined). In the case of *ToI*, a mix of Bangalore, Mumbai and New Delhi editions were used. The *Dawn*’s Karachi edition was analysed.

⁹¹ The ‘simpler’ percentage index was chosen over the well-regarded Krippendorff’s alpha and Cohen’s kappa for inter- and intra-coder reliability because of the rigour of the coding scheme. The scheme had been sufficiently tested in pilot analyses and comprised a sufficient number of clear and well-defined coding subcategories as to limit ‘chance’ agreement. Further, the agreement was recorded in a meticulous manner. It was not enough for the second coder to arrive at the same overall unit value or category to record an agreement; the second coding for the CP and all subunits, including qualifiers, needed to match for that.

⁹² Berelson (1952) is unhappy with the term ‘qualitative’ CA, arguing it is a CA if it quantifies categories. If it does not, if it is a ‘non-quantitative’ study, he prefers the term ‘content assessment’. Krippendorff (2004) uses ‘qualitative CA’ to mean the varieties of discourse analysis.

⁹³ This integration brings up the question of paradigms. The classical call for paradigmatic purity and the accompanying incompatibility thesis – methods rooted in different worldviews are incompatible and cannot be enjoined – stand largely discredited in light of the many successful mixed method researches (Miles & Huberman 1994, Tashakkori & Teddlie 2003, Punch 2005, Corbetta 2003). As Greene & Caracelli (2003) argue, the assumptions, indeed the paradigms themselves are “social constructions, historically and culturally embedded in discourse practices, and therefore not inviolate or unchangeable” (2003, p95). Maxwell & Loomis (2003) add another supportive point. They say qualitative and quantitative methods involve distinct ‘components’, which can be enjoined in many legitimate ways – and as the two paradigms are not ‘pure’ to begin with, researchers lose little when they so mix. My research stance, in light of these discussions, is that any insistence on paradigmatic rigour can restrict potentially productive research, rendering it inflexible, incapable of absorbing fresh possibilities, locking the researcher within a paradigm, thus incapacitating him/her from producing anything but – in Kuhn’s (1970) words – ‘normal science’. Several scholars, among them Tashakkori & Teddlie (2003) and Maxcy (2003), have put forward pragmatism as a foundation for mixed model research. I am influenced by this new ‘paradigm’, its belief in the dictatorship of the research questions, its rejection of forced choice of epistemological positions.

⁹⁴ As discussed in chapter 4, the coding scheme provided for a numerical expression of the strength of individual units and stories – in effect, an anti-peace or pro-peace value that can be taken as a measure of intensity.

⁹⁵ These are rounded figures.

⁹⁶ These had more ‘relevance’ and ‘meaningfulness’ for Indians (Galtung & Ruge 1965).

⁹⁷ Both newspapers featured more or less the same number of news reports (*Dawn*: 130; *HT*: 138). However, the average *HT* report was lengthier (14 units against the 12 of the average *Dawn* report), resulting in 10% more news units overall: *Dawn* had 1,598 text units; *HT*, 1,944.

⁹⁸ Arguably, as part of a society accused of the ‘terror’ attack by India, *Dawn* had an ethnocentric interest in ‘playing down’ the violence, as presenting it as nothing out of ordinary.

⁹⁹ While there was no significant difference in the number of news reports in the two newspapers (*Dawn* had 130 while *HT* carried 138), the average *HT* report was lengthier (14 units against *Dawn*’s 12), resulting in 10% more news units in *HT*. Thus, while 1,598 text units were presented in *Dawn*, *HT* had 1,944.

¹⁰⁰ News slots refer to the placement of a story on the front page – whether it occupied a ‘slot’ of prominence (for instance, whether it was the ‘lead’ or a ‘box’ story) or not.

¹⁰¹ The 912 units coded in the headline analysis included 168 sub-headlines. The coding for prominence was carried out only on the 744 main headlines.

¹⁰² Harrison (2006), summarising the many writings on news values, lists 13 criteria to determine newsworthiness, among them ‘novelty value’ and ‘negative’ (violence etc). Another – and simpler – way of looking at the findings above is that in the given context, the ‘novelty value’ of the peace attempts was more pronounced than the value of the ‘negative’ (which was but routine).

¹⁰³ Provided the resolution does not hang fire. If it is spread across a long period of time, the reader-attention would fade and the story would begin to ‘drag’ (cease to be news). Wolfsfeld (2004, p18) appears to be arguing along the same lines when he says “incremental progress” in peace is “much less likely to be considered newsworthy” than major breakthroughs.

¹⁰⁴ Besides Own-G, Other-G, ISF and PSF, this includes also joint statements issued by India and Pakistan. This ‘category’, which accounted for 1% of the statements, has been contained under government sources for simplicity.

¹⁰⁵ That the media can raise or lower the public standing and legitimacy of antagonists is seen from Wolfsfeld’s work (2004)

¹⁰⁶ Vajpayee had blamed him for the summit failure.

¹⁰⁷ It is interesting to note that the Delhi talks did feature views from the other quite prominently – 34% of the total were sourced to Other government, in fact.

¹⁰⁸ This percentage was the same in both the headline and text coding.

¹⁰⁹ In all 1,936 units were source-coded in the text analysis.

¹¹⁰ Of this, 33% was AP, 47% PP and 20% NA.

¹¹¹ The argument is that in wartime separatists, as combatants on the ground, play a more direct role, acquiring newsworthiness – hence the increased media interest.

¹¹² Of this 8% was AP, 4% PP and 7% NA.

¹¹³ While armed militant were not easily available for news interviews post 1995, their ‘overground’ political counterparts were accessible all through, sometimes more so than ‘mainstream’ politicians. The limited representation of the separatist views in the media was *despite* this accessibility.

¹¹⁴ Of this, Own-NG accounted for 4%, Other-NG for 1%.

¹¹⁵ Many headlines fell into this unit because of ambiguity rather than neutrality. Examples include: ‘Hurriyat chief expects role at later stage’, ‘Cautious response by APHC’ and ‘Ajmer upset as Pervez skips visit’.

¹¹⁶ It is possible to argue the relation between positive portrayal and breakthrough is synergistic. Positive portrayals were mostly seen climates of breakthrough.

¹¹⁷ The extensive pre-tests as the coding scheme was formulated had shown there were very few pro-peace equivalents in the content. Hence, only the negative qualifiers were coded for.

¹¹⁸ The media in Pakistan use ‘held’ and ‘occupied’, interchangeably, as a prefix to Kashmir when referring to the territory administered by India. This is in line with Pakistan’s official stand that the Kashmiris on the Indian side of the border have been ‘held’ against their will in the Indian union by ‘occupying’ military forces. Thus, it is common to see ‘Indian-occupied Kashmir’ (IOK), ‘India-held Kashmir’, or simply ‘Held Kashmir’ and ‘Occupied Kashmir’ in newspapers such as Dawn and The News. The equivalent usage in Indian newspapers to refer to the territory that lies in Pakistan is ‘Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir’ or ‘PoK’. International media usually make use of either ‘Pakistan-administered Kashmir’ or ‘India-administered Kashmir’ to refer to the two territories. (See also endnote 10)

¹¹⁹ Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, India’s official label for the part of J&K administered by Pakistan.

¹²⁰ Most interviewees spoke of this. Dr Karan Singh appears to summarise their consensus with this comment about the way vernacular press covered the conflict: “The Urdu press and the Hindi press is a different world [than the English press]. The Hindi and Urdu press is much more chauvinistic, much more anti-Pakistan, much more nationalistic” (personal interview, July 2007).

¹²¹ Return to Paradise, *India Abroad*, September 28, 2007.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

For this thesis, in all 30 semi-structured interviews were conducted across three core groups in India, intimately involved with the conflict – government policymakers (10), separatists (4), and media personnel (16). Government policymakers included five politicians, three administrators, and two security commanders. Four separatist politicians were interviewed. The largest group was media personnel, which included journalists and government communicators. Twelve journalists were interviewed, five of them news managers or ‘gatekeepers’ (editors) at national publications, four correspondents who reported for them from Kashmir, and three local journalists in Srinagar. The government communicators included two public relations officials and two intelligence officers who interacted with the media as part of the government’s psychological operation efforts. Apart from the separatist politicians and some journalists (news managers), the other interviewees were involved with the conflict only for set tenures. Three interviews were conducted online. Most others lasted 40-60 minutes. All interviews were in English. Some interviewees requested anonymity. The list of respondents who spoke on record:

Professor Abdul Ghani Bhat, Chairman of the separatist Muslim Conference, interviewed in July 2007.

Ashok Jaitley, chief secretary of Jammu & Kashmir (1996-2002), interviewed in July 2007, New Delhi.

Asha Khosa, journalist, interviewed in July 2007, Gurgaon.

Dr Farooq Abdullah, chief minister of Jammu & Kashmir (1982-1984, 1986-1990, 1996-2002), interviewed in July 2007, Srinagar.

George Joseph, journalist, interviewed in July 2007, Gurgaon.

Girish Chandra Saxena, Governor, Jammu & Kashmir (1990-1993, 1998-2003), interviewed in July 2007, New Delhi.

Gopal Sharma, Director General of Police, Jammu & Kashmir (2003-2007), interviewed in July 2007, Srinagar.

Inder Kumar Gujral, 15th prime minister of India (1997-1998), interviewed in March 2005 and July 2007, New Delhi.

Jagmohan, governor of Jammu & Kashmir (1984-1989, 1990), interviewed in July 2007, New Delhi.

Mirwaiz Omar Farooq, founder and chairman, All-Parties Hurriyat Conference (an umbrella organisation of separatist parties), interviewed in July 2007, Srinagar.

Mohammad Sayeed Malik, journalist, interviewed in July 2007, Srinagar.

Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, chief minister of Jammu & Kashmir (2002-2005) and federal home minister (1989-1990), interviewed in July 2007, Srinagar.

Syed Ali Shah Geelani, leader of the separatist Jamaat-e-Islami, interviewed in July 2007.

Lt General (retd) Vinayak Gopal Patankar, Commander 15 Corps and Security Advisor to J&K chief minister (2002-2003), interviewed in July 2007, New Delhi.

Vishwanath Pratap Singh, 10th prime minister of India (1989-1990), interviewed March 2005, New Delhi.

Zafar Meraj, journalist, interviewed in July 2007, Srinagar.

Core questions for politicians, policymakers, security officials (not all questions were relevant to all interviewees):

- 1) As a key government official/politician who has been directly involved with Kashmir, how would you describe the way the national Indian media, especially the mainstream press, has covered the conflict?
- 2) What are your impressions of the Pakistani media coverage of Kashmir? Could you elaborate on any overriding characteristics?
- 3) What kind of image do you think the Indian media has portrayed of Pakistan, and the Pakistani media of India? Has this portrayal been consistent over events/years, or do you think its tone/tenor changed?
- 4) Do you think the media has an influence on the Kashmir conflict? If so, could you outline how? Could you also elaborate on the extent of this influence?
- 5) You communicated with media personnel in Kashmir. Could you share what the strategic objectives of this communication were, and how those were met?
- 6) Your own personal consumption of the media, to what extent does that influence/inform your decisions pertaining to the conflict?
- 7) How important a factor do you think is the Indian media in shaping public opinion on Kashmir? On a scale of 1 to 10, where would you place it?

- 8) As a government official, and often an adviser to senior politicians, how important do you think public opinion is in shaping policy decisions on the Kashmir issue? On a scale of 1 to 10, where would you place its importance?
- 9) To date, do you think the Indian media has played mostly a positive, negative, or neutral role vis-à-vis the conflict? Could you give examples?
- 10) What, according to you, is responsible journalism in a conflict situation like Kashmir? In other words, where do their responsibilities lie?
- 11) Do you think the media has a constructive role to play in the Kashmir conflict?
- 12) Many argue that the political bias of the media – journalists and media organisations - affects its coverage? Do you agree with that view?

Core questions for journalists (not all questions were relevant to all interviewees)

- 1) Do you believe your own views about the Kashmir conflict and Pakistan influences the way you report news? What checks and balance, if any, have you built into to prevent this happening?
- 2) To what extent would you say the media – and here I am talking about what you read in the media – influences you?
- 3) Do you feel – have you ever felt – any pressures from outsiders when you were covering the conflict? Would you say you had a free hand to report what you thought should be reported?
- 4) Self-censorship – have you ever felt the need for it?

- 5) What would you say is the best way to report the Kashmir conflict?

- 6) Do you believe everything you hear in the media?

- 7) There is a view that excessive media attention can be harmful to a peace process. Comment?

- 8) Some have also said that the media hypes conflicts. Do you feel the Indian media has been sensationalist? What about the Pakistan media?

- 9) When you write a story, do you actively consider the impact it will have on your readers? Or is that something you leave to the editors?

- 10) A pilot content analysis I undertook shows that overall the Indian media has been 'nationalist' in the way it has covered the conflict. Do you think this is in line with the responsibilities of a journalist?

PRO-PEACE

1. Active promotion of peace (+2)

This subcategory comes into play with the initiation of a peace process. Peace processes should not be confused with negotiations to resolve a particularly troublesome militant action – for instance, the siege of a mosque, or a kidnapping – but are more strategic in nature.

- Peace process initiated
 - Announcement/invitation
 - Delivery of invitation
 - Action on invitation
 - Talk dates proposals for dates
 - Agenda/schedule/parameters
 - Other logistics/planning
 - Pre-talk meetings (to prepare for actual talks)
- Encouragement to peace process/talks
 - Welcome, expression of satisfaction/happiness.
 - *Example:*
 - *Pakistan on Saturday expressed satisfaction at the tone and tenor of Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's letter to Chief Executive Gen Pervez Musharraf inviting him to New Delhi for talks (CP=+2, 1), saying it had no "painful references or irritants" (NCP=+1, 1).*
 - Willingness to sustain peace effort beyond immediate meeting
 - Backing to peace players
 - Advantages of/hopes from the initiative
 - Advantages of peace
- Momentum
 - *Immediate* logistics leading up to talks
 - Peace players' travel to venue (Eg: Musharraf's arrival in India during Agra talks)
 - Welcome to peace players
 - Final pre-talk meetings, etc
 - Positive details of talks
 - Momentum in discussion
 - Statements about momentum
 - Agreements, assurances, commitments at meeting
 - Invitation for more talks, visits, other friendly measures (Confidence-Building Measures, or CBMs)
- Conciliatory and damage control exercises

2. Demotion of conflict (+2)

- Cost of violence, human, and material
- Need to discontinue conflict
- Consequences, warnings

3. Support to promotion of peace (+1)

- Talks background
 - This will deal with communication that provides context to peace attempt – essentially, background info, including later references to the talks in question, or any previous attempt in the context of peace. An indicator to such communication is the tense: 'talks were announced last Friday', 'the decision had come about as a result of...', etc. However, this is only an indicator, and coder needs to be open to background info irrespective of the tense used. Key communications include:
 - How the decision came about
 - Details of pre-announcement/invitation events

- Details of CBMs such as ‘ceasefire’ or ‘non-initiation of combat operations’ that preceded invitation for talks
 - Other preparations leading up to announcement/decision
 - *Example:*
 - *The announcement came after an hour-long meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) chaired by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.*
 - Later references to announcement/invitation (to provide background)
 - Background references to CBMs (the Lahore-Delhi bus, for instance)
 - And also, possibility of talks in future (this differs from ‘Invitation for more talks...’ under 3, as can be seen below)
 - *Example:*
 - *...there were credible reports that foreign ministers of both countries could hold bilateral talks on the margins of their meeting at the SAARC ministers’ conference in Kathmandu next week.*
- Constructive criticism/analysis of peace process/peace actors
 - Conditions, suggestions for talks to make headway, including units that say talks *will move forward if/when a certain condition is met.*
 - *Example:*
 - *The [Pakistan] foreign minister reiterated that for meaningful talks on a settlement responsive to the will of the Kashmiri people, the APHC delegation should be allowed to visit Islamabad as was proposed on December 2 last year by the Pakistan government.*
- Peripherals
 - Fringe activities of players/entourage
 - Sightseeing trip en route/at venue
 - Musharraf’s trip to Agra
 - Other details/communication not *directly* related to talks
- Positive reaction to breakdown of peace process
 - Units conveying there’s hope still, the failed summit/attempt is not the end.
 - “We hope the process of dialogue will continue.”
- Improvement in situation
 - Lessening of violence, infiltration, etc
 - Need for CBMs
 - Defusing stand-off/situation
 - Negotiations, details of such, to end a particular standoff
 - Appeal, request to end standoff, including positive statements the standoff will end
 - Breakthrough/momentum in tactical negotiations
 - End of a stand-off – for instance, release of Rubaiya – and details of it

ANTI-PEACE

4. Conflict background

This will deal with communication that provides context to the conflict – essentially, background info, including later references to earlier violence and peace attempts in the context of violence (as opposed to references to peace attempts in the context of peace). An indicator to such communication is the tense: ‘Rubia was kidnapped on Friday by members...’, ‘...(JKLF) was founded in 1965’, etc. However, this is only an indicator, and coder needs to be open to background info irrespective of the tense used (for instance, ‘The group is demanding the release of five jailed militants’, ‘The Front wants secession of Kashmir from India’). Key communications include:

- History of conflict

- Contextualisation/comment/analysis of a particular violence - why/how it came about (excluding those on War moves)
- References to players, groups involved in history
- Previous peace attempts, including the Lahore Declaration, Simla Accord, etc
- References to earlier violence (background info to provide context)
- Qualifications such as 'strife-torn', 'revolt-torn', 'bloody valley', etc

5. Militant violence (-1)

This is the default category for violence in Kashmir: to be used in 'mixed' units (unit mentioning both militant and security actions); in units where the violence cannot be pinpointed as 5 or 6; in units recording civilian deaths in crossfire, etc. Besides which, it will include:

- Attack on security forces
- Attack on civilians
- Collateral damage in attacks
- Threats
- Bomb blasts
- Details/accounts of such
- Setback to life due to militant actions
- Political criticisms directly related to particular militant action
 - Criticism of state government in the Rubaiya incident, for instance
- Security, administrative responses directly related to a particular militant action
 - Search for kidnapped victim
 - Surrounding of besieged mosque
- Negotiations deadlocked/slacken

6. Anti-militant action (-1)

- All security actions against militants (capture, killing, search)
- Statements after anti-militant activities (confessions/statements in custody, etc)
- Prevention of violence, infiltration
- Seizure of explosives
- Anti-militant strategy
- Policy/discussions on anti-militant strategy
- More troops deployment
- Demand for anti-militant action (not to be confused with demand for action following a war move; that will go in 7)
 - *Pakistan must arrest the militants/freeze their arrest, etc*

7. War moves (-2)

- War preparations/incidents/moves
 - War strategy
 - Policy/discussions on war/military strategy
 - Statements on war incidents
 - War rhetoric
- Cross-border firing/shelling, details, consequences
- Out-of-ordinary violence (Attack on Indian Parliament, Blast on Indo-Pak peace train)
- Analysis/commentary on war moves
- Overt threat/belligerence
- Disruption of CBM
 - Announcement of withdrawal
 - References to withdrawal
 - Justification for withdrawal

- Criticism of CBM
- Anti-CBM activities

8. Impediments to peace (-2)

This subcategory comes into play with the initiation of a peace process. Peace processes should not be confused with negotiations to resolve a particularly troublesome militant action – for instance, the siege of a mosque, or a kidnapping – but are more strategic in nature.

- Negative response to peace process
 - Outright rejection, pessimism
- Bottlenecks during talks
 - Separatist demand to be included in talks
 - *Different from ‘constructive criticism’ under Pro-Peace category 1. This is for units that communicate talks will fail/not make headway *unless* a certain condition is met.
- Indian opposition to third-party mediation
- Pakistan demand for Hurriyat inclusion
- Separatist opposition to framework of talks
- Hardening of public opinion
- Antagonism against the other
- ‘Warnings’, hard-stands, inflexibility
- Impasse in ongoing peace talks
 - Lack of momentum
 - Deadlock
- Failure of talks
 - Announcement
 - Details on the causes of failure
 - Comments post-failure, including justification, rejection of other’s view, etc
 - Speculations about, commentary on summit failure
 - *Example:*
 - *“Musharraf had made his intentions not to compromise on Kashmir fairly clearly known with the help of a media briefing he conducted with the highest echelons of Indian journalists. The successful impact of that event prompted the Indians to make public their version of the....”*
 - Post-summit logistics:
 - Musharraf’s departure from Agra
 - Vajpayee returns to Delhi
 - Negative reactions (failure was expected)

9. Negative representation of Other (-2)

- Explicit blame/pronounced accusation on/of Other (depends in part on severity of action/result, and strength of phrasing) Examples:
 - Vajpayee blames Musharraf for talks breakdown
 - PM blames Pak for talks failure
 - ISI [Pak intelligence] behind Parliament attack
 - Indians kill 5 as curfew clamped in Rajouri
 - Indian army set houses ablaze in valley
 - The Indian Army resorted to heavy artillery bombardment deep inside Pakistan territory...
- [Less explicit/pronounced blame/accusation not to be coded here Examples:
 - Boy dies in Indian firing along LoC
 - India continues firing along LoC
 - Extremists kidnap Mufti’s daughter
 - Indian air-craft guns opened fire late on Saturday at a Pakistani plane...

- Indian troops on Sunday launched a major offensive against militants in Kargil sector...]
- Denials/counters to accusation/blame by Other
- Criticism of personalities, policies, actions, statements
 - India not serious about resolving issue: Musharraf
- Implication the Other has been deceptive
- Condemnation of policy, action (including that of militants)
 - Condemnation of Rubaiya kidnapping
- Labels such as ‘terrorists’, ‘Pakistan-occupied Kashmir’, ‘Indian-occupied Kashmir’, ‘terror’ attacks, etc.

10. Support to separatism (-2)

- Justification of violence, separatist stand/demand
- Welcome of militant victory
 - Celebration of released militants in Rubaiya incident, for instance
- Glorification of war, warriors
 - Qualification of conflict as glorious, desirable (including labels such as ‘jihad’)
 - Qualification of people engaged in conflict as heroes (including labels such as jihadi, mujahideen, shahids, freedom fighters, etc)

11. Security excesses (-2)

- Human rights violations
- Allegations of human rights violations
- Collateral damage in security actions
- Condemnations of security excesses

NEUTRAL-AMBIGUOUS

12. Additions, clarifications, other issues (0)

- Attributions
- Clarifying a stand
- Additional details
 - Where, when, how of an incident, for instance
 - Details of details (communication that on its own does not merit a PP or AP value, where the linkage is distant)

13. Ambiguous (0)

- Unclear communication
- Ambivalent communication with strains of more than one category