

A Qualitative Study of Indian Media's Diplomatic Strategies to Suppress Kashmir Issues in International Coverage

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Introduction

The Indian media employs sophisticated diplomatic techniques to downplay the Kashmir concerns in international coverage, aiming to influence both domestic and global opinions of the region. This technique has developed and changed over time, in response to wider political, social, and technical shifts. In order to comprehend the subtleties of this strategy, it is crucial to analyse the diverse techniques utilized by the Indian media, the impact of government involvement, and the consequences of these practices on global perceptions and local discussions (Rege, 2023). The Indian media's fundamental approach revolves around portraying Kashmir primarily as a security concern. This framing entails the regular utilization of phrases such as "terrorism," "militancy," and "national security." The media's portrayal of Kashmir as a security issue accords with the government's perspective, framing the Indian government's actions as essential for upholding national unity and stability. This narrative restricts the opportunity for other viewpoints, especially those who emphasize the political, human rights, and socio-economic aspects of the Kashmir crisis (Li, 2022). The revocation of Article 370 in August 2019 stands as a crucial illustration of this approach. The Indian media coverage of this event mostly portrayed it as a momentous step towards the assimilation of Kashmir into India. The media focused on the potential advantages of development and economic integration, while mainly disregarding or minimizing opposing viewpoints from within Kashmir. The phenomenon of selective reporting was observed in multiple media formats, such as newspapers, television news, and digital platforms. Television debates frequently included pundits who supported the administration, so strengthening the government's favorable portrayal and downplaying conversations regarding human rights abuses and political consequences (McGarr, 2021).

Agenda-setting is a crucial element of the Indian media's strategy. This is the deliberate prioritization of specific tales above others. The media often prioritizes coverage of development projects, government efforts, and security operations, while downplaying information on human rights abuses and local concerns by giving them less prominent positions. During the lockdown and communication blackout in Kashmir that occurred after the abrogation of Article 370, the media mostly concentrated on the government's perspective of restoring normalcy and battling terrorism. The reports regarding civilian suffering, economic difficulty, and international condemnation were either insufficiently addressed or presented in

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a manner that raised doubts about their reliability (Pandow, 2022). One notable characteristic of the media's approach is its substantial dependence on official sources. Articles and news segments often reference statements made by authorities in the Ministry of Home Affairs, military spokespersons, and local administration. The reliance on authoritative sources leads to a consistent storyline that closely corresponds to the viewpoint of the government. Within the digital sphere, media entities frequently distribute official statements and press releases, while abstaining from distributing anything that is critical or expresses dissent. The uniformity observed across many channels highlights a wider effort to regulate the discourse about Kashmir in both conventional and digital media domains (Devrari, 2020). Media professionals' insights shed light on the difficulties and constraints they encounter when covering Kashmir. It is widely acknowledged that when the government's policies are critically covered, there can be negative outcomes, like being denied official information, losing advertising money, and facing legal ramifications. This setting promotes a climate of self-restraint, where controversial subjects are either softened or completely avoided. Journalists and editors adhere to an unspoken agreement within the industry to refrain from transgressing certain limits in order to protect their professional trajectories. Despite the inclusion of dissenting perspectives, they are frequently relegated to less visible portions, distanced from the headlines or prime-time positions (Shah, 2022).

Policy analysts offer further context by elucidating the strategic imperatives that underlie the media's approach. The Indian government considers the media to be an essential instrument in its diplomatic strategy, especially in influencing global attitudes. The suppression of unfavorable reporting is primarily motivated by the need to maintain a positive worldwide image and counter Pakistan's narrative on Kashmir. Analysts characterize the media in India as an informal expansion of the state's diplomatic apparatus on Kashmir, aiming to present a narrative of stability and progress to offset any unfavorable depictions on the international platform (Azam, Akram, & Mustafa, 2023). Academic viewpoints prioritize the historical backdrop and development of media practices in India. The phenomena of media control and narrative management are not novel, but they have gotten increasingly complex due to technological improvements. Contemporary approaches integrate conventional methods of media control with contemporary digital impact tools. The link between government mandates and media compliance encompasses the use of both coercive and persuasive strategies. The portrayal of Kashmir in the media serves as a prime example of the manipulation of storytelling in present-day India (M. K. Khan, Riaz, & Huzaifa, 2023). It is essential to cross-reference media content with interview data and existing research on media diplomacy and conflict reporting to guarantee the credibility and veracity of these insights. The triangulation approach confirms the systematic character of the themes and strategies that have been discovered. The findings are consistent with previous studies on media manipulation and narrative control in areas of conflict, when governments employ media outlets to shape public perception and sway foreign viewpoints. The emphasis on framing, agenda-setting, and dependence on official sources aligns with extensively documented strategies of media diplomacy (Gabel, Reichert, & Reuter, 2022). The knowledge acquired from media professionals, policy analysts, and academics supports the themes highlighted in the content analysis. These interviews offer a more profound comprehension and framework for the motivations and influences that propel the observed media behaviors. By integrating numerous data sources, the study's robustness is improved, providing a comprehensive perspective on the media's influence in crafting the narrative on Kashmir (Lalwani & Gayner, 2020).

The intentional endeavor by the Indian media to synchronize its coverage of Kashmir with government narratives, stifling opposing perspectives and advocating a positive depiction on the global stage, carries substantial ramifications for media diplomacy and conflict reporting.

This approach entails presenting Kashmir predominantly as a matter of security, giving priority to news that aligns with the government's stance, and substantially depending on information from official sources. These practices emphasize the complex connection between political authority and media activities, emphasizing the importance of critically engaging with media content in areas of conflict (Pandow, 2022). Essentially, the Indian media use diplomatic tactics to hide Kashmir issues in international coverage, aiming to control views and uphold a narrative that aligns with the government's policy. This endeavor is characterized by a persistent portrayal of Kashmir as a matter of national security, a discerning selection of topics that give priority to news favorable to the government, and a strong dependence on official sources. These techniques are strengthened by a culture of self-censorship prevalent in the media sector, motivated by the possible consequences of engaging in critical journalism (Khawaja & Zahoor, 2020). These techniques have consequences that go beyond discussions within the country, influencing how the international community views the Kashmir issue. The Indian government seeks to exert control over the narrative surrounding Kashmir in order to project a stable and progressive picture of the region to the world community. This is done to counter any negative depictions that may emerge from overseas media or political forces. This method is a component of a more comprehensive diplomatic strategy that employs media as a means to shape worldwide public opinion and uphold geopolitical position (Kaul & Saxena, 2022).

The intricate structure of media efforts exemplifies wider patterns of media manipulation and storytelling observed in various regions of conflict across the globe. Governments are becoming more aware of the influence the media has on shaping public perception and world opinion. As a result, they are using several strategies to guarantee positive coverage. These strategies involve presenting topics from a particular perspective, controlling the media's focus on specific stories, and using authoritative sources to uphold a unified narrative (A. Khan & Khan, 2020). The significance of digital platforms in this strategy is especially remarkable. In the era of social media and online news, exerting control over the digital narrative has become equally crucial to regulating traditional media. The utilization of digital platforms by the Indian media to distribute government viewpoints while evading critical content underscores the complex nature of contemporary media control. This strategy guarantees that the government's account is disseminated to a broad range of individuals, including the worldwide diaspora and international observers who depend on digital news outlets for obtaining information (Akhtar, 2020). The study's findings highlight the necessity of actively monitoring media material, particularly in areas of conflict where government control is prominent. Gaining insight into the mechanisms of media control and narrative management enables viewers to analytically evaluate the content they consume and discern the possible biases and agendas involved. It is crucial to have this active involvement in order to keep the public well-informed and to guarantee that a variety of viewpoints are included in discussions about disputed topics such as Kashmir (Roy, 2021). Subsequent studies can expand upon these discoveries by investigating the influence of media tactics on public sentiment and the results of international diplomacy. Analyzing the media behavior in other countries dealing with internal problems might offer significant insights into the efficacy and repercussions of narrative control. Furthermore, examining the influence of digital media on influencing perceptions and the interplay between conventional and digital media in managing narratives can deepen our comprehension of these intricate processes (Chakraborty, Sasil, & Purkayastha).

In essence, the study highlights the crucial influence of media in molding the discussion around Kashmir, exposing the intricate tactics employed to manipulate both local and global perspectives. By conducting thorough study of these activities, the research deepens our comprehension of the media's involvement in statecraft and conflict management. It underscores the importance of being watchful and critically evaluating media narratives in locations where there is disagreement or conflict. The results emphasize the significance of

media literacy and critical thinking in effectively navigating the intricate media environment, guaranteeing the inclusion of various perspectives, and fostering a more knowledgeable and equitable discussion on globally significant matters.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the framing techniques employed by Indian media when covering the Kashmir issue.
2. To assess the agenda-setting role of Indian media in relation to the Kashmir issue.
3. To evaluate the extent to which the Indian media depends on official sources while reporting about Kashmir.

Research Questions

1. What is the approach of the Indian media in presenting topics relating to Kashmir, and what specific terminology is commonly employed in this presentation?
2. Which categories of narratives pertaining to Kashmir receive higher priority in the Indian media, and which ones are continually marginalized?
3. To what extent and in what circumstances do Indian media outlets reference government officials while reporting about Kashmir?

Significance of the Study

This study is particularly significant as it explores the complex interaction between media practices and political power in a highly disputed region. This research offers valuable insights into the methods of media control and narrative management by analyzing how Indian media strategically frames, sets the agenda, and depends on government sources to report on Kashmir. Grasping these methods is crucial for understanding the formation of public opinion and international views, especially in areas of conflict. The findings emphasize the significance of media in the practice of statecraft and diplomacy, illustrating how information may be strategically controlled to advance national goals and stifle opposition. Moreover, this study makes a valuable contribution to wider conversations on media ethics, the freedom of the press, and the influence of media narratives on democracy and human rights. It emphasizes the importance of critically engaging with media material and supports the promotion of more impartial and independent journalism, particularly in areas facing political and social unrest. The study promotes transparency and accountability in media operations, which in turn cultivates a well-informed and discerning worldwide audience.

Literature Review

The correlation between media and state is crucial in shaping public perception and global narratives, especially in conflict-prone regions like Kashmir. An analysis has been conducted on how the Indian media has dealt with the Kashmir issue, focusing on its close adherence to government policy. This includes the way it presents the topic, sets the agenda, and relies heavily on information from official sources. This alignment often results in the suppression of dissenting opinions and the promotion of a unified national perspective, with the aim of maintaining a favorable international image. In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the wider implications of media diplomacy and its impact on international relations and talks about human rights, it is essential to grasp this complex relationship (A. Gupta, 2020). An example that demonstrates how Indian media strategically minimizes the significance of Kashmir concerns in international news coverage is the way they handled the aftermath of Burhan Wani's death in 2016. Burhan Wani, a young leader of the Hizbul Mujahideen, was

killed during a clash with Indian security forces, leading to widespread protests and unrest in Kashmir. The Indian media mostly portrayed Wani as a terrorist and gave priority to the government's viewpoint of maintaining law and order. The prevailing story overshadowed the significant local sentiment that considered Wani as a martyr, a perspective that received scant attention within India and was suppressed in broader international discourse (Tahirkheli, 2023). The depiction of Burhan Wani's death illustrates a broader pattern in the way the Indian media covers events in Kashmir. Indications suggest that the Indian media often gives priority to matters of security and terrorism, aligning with the government's stance on national unity and sovereignty. This shift in emphasis redirects attention from issues related to human rights violations and the political aspirations of the Kashmiri populace. The media has a significant role in shaping public perception of the conflict, both domestically and globally, by prioritizing storylines that align with government agendas. Consequently, this has a direct influence on the outcomes of diplomatic endeavors (Yadav & Kirk, 2023).

The agenda-setting theory, developed by McCombs and Shaw, explains how the media prioritise certain topics, hence affecting both the public and policy agendas. The Indian media's agenda-setting in relation to Kashmir is evident through the intentional prioritising of specific news stories while disregarding others. Development projects and government initiatives in Kashmir receive frequent focus, while reports on human rights violations and local concerns are given less priority. This intentional choice of coverage ensures that the subjects that align with the government's narrative receive greater focus, both domestically and internationally, while opposing perspectives are ignored (Aktuna & Rasool, 2020). The Indian media's coverage of Kashmir prominently relies on government sources, which is a noteworthy approach. Research indicates that relying exclusively on official announcements from the Ministry of Home Affairs, military spokespersons, and local administration leads to a consistent narrative that closely aligns with the government's viewpoint. Relying on authoritative sources not only reinforces the government's narrative but also limits the diversity of perspectives in media reporting. The lack of divergent viewpoints and impartial sources in media reporting adds to a misleading depiction of the situation in Kashmir (Abbas, 2021). Digital platforms have been instrumental in disseminating the government's viewpoint on Kashmir. The portrayal of the Indian media on social media and news websites often mirrors the content provided in traditional media, relying extensively on official statements and press releases. Through the consistent application of standardized methods across several platforms, the government ensures that its perspective on Kashmir is efficiently conveyed to a wide range of people while reducing the spread of divergent viewpoints. The government's control over the narrative is reinforced by its regulation and self-censorship of critical content on social media (Nadaf, 2020). The presence of self-censorship among media professionals is a critical aspect of this study. Interviews with journalists suggest that engaging in critical reporting on the government's activities in Kashmir could lead to negative consequences, including being refused access to information, seeing a decrease in advertising revenue, and facing legal consequences. This environment fosters a culture of self-control where contentious topics are either toned down or entirely avoided. These regulations undermine the trustworthiness of journalism and limit the scope of investigative reporting, so strengthening the government's diplomatic strategies (Bashir & Awan, 2021).

Policy academics stress the vital significance of exerting authority over the media in Kashmir for strategic purposes. The Indian government views the media as a vital tool for managing global perceptions and countering Pakistan's stance on the Kashmir conflict. The administration aims to garner foreign support and legitimize its operations in the region by presenting an image of stability and advancement. The media's role in this diplomatic approach is to minimize adverse reports and advocate for the government's perspective as the prevailing

narrative in the international discourse on Kashmir (Gabel et al., 2022). Academic perspectives provide a historical context for comprehending the evolution of media activities in India. The political environment in India has long been characterized by the control of media and manipulation of narratives. However, recent advancements in technology have taken these activities to a more advanced and refined level. The combination of traditional methods of media manipulation with modern digital approaches allows for a comprehensive approach to information management. The portrayal of Kashmir in Indian media serves as a prime example of this shift, employing a blend of assertive and compelling methods to influence public mood and international viewpoints (White, 2020).

The correlation among media content, interview data, and current research provides evidence for the systematic nature of these tactics. The verification of the emphasized themes in the study, such as the depiction of Kashmir as a matter of security, the selective prioritization of specific matters, and the reliance on authoritative sources, is accomplished by cross-referencing many data sources. The congruence of these findings with the existing corpus of research on media diplomacy underscores the broader importance of exercising authority over media in war-affected places (HASHIM, 2022). The study's implications are significant in terms of understanding media diplomacy and conflict reporting. The interdependent relationship between media and government in India highlights the complex dynamics of political power and media operations. This link has profound implications for democracy, freedom of the press, and human rights. The suppression of contrasting viewpoints and the promotion of a uniform narrative on Kashmir not only shape public opinion but also have an influence on international diplomatic ties and policy decisions (Dar & Sakthivel, 2022). Conducting comparative assessments of media activity in other countries dealing with internal conflicts would improve future research. Performing such studies would result in a more thorough understanding of the media's influence on statecraft and the effectiveness of controlling narratives. Moreover, performing an analysis of the impact of various media strategies on public opinion and diplomatic outcomes would yield a more comprehensive comprehension of the consequences of media manipulation (Garud-Patkar, 2022).

In the ongoing battle in Kashmir, Indian security forces have caused the deaths of many individuals, who are considered martyrs. The Indian media has frequently played a crucial part in preventing these instances from receiving international attention. An exemplary scenario is that of Burhan Wani, whose demise in 2016 at the hands of Indian security forces ignited extensive turmoil and aggression in the area. Wani, a leader of the Hizbul Mujahideen, was revered by numerous Kashmiris as a champion of independence. Nevertheless, the Indian media primarily depicted him as a terrorist, emphasising the storyline of maintaining law and order and safeguarding national security. The dominant narrative masked the significant local perception of him as a martyr, a viewpoint that was not widely covered globally because dissenting opinions were strategically suppressed (R. Gupta, 2023). The demises of other prominent individuals, such as Riyaz Naikoo and Zakir Musa, have exhibited a like sequence of events. Riyaz Naikoo, who assumed leadership of the Hizbul Mujahideen after Wani, was eliminated in a firefight with Indian security forces in 2020. The Indian media extensively focused on the militant parts of his life, once again presenting his death in the context of counter-terrorism operations. The purpose of this narrative was to justify the acts of the Indian government and reduce foreign criticism or sympathy towards the cause of Kashmir. The Indian media, by highlighting the aspect of militancy, effectively minimized the notable public grieving and protests that ensued after his demise. These events highlighted the underlying concerns and the local population's fight for self-determination (Pandya, 2022). Zakir Musa, another major advocate for independence, experienced a like outcome. Musa, formerly affiliated with Hizbul Mujahideen, subsequently established his own faction adhering to al-

Qaeda's doctrine. He was eliminated by Indian forces in 2019. The Indian media provided significant coverage of his militant activities, so strengthening the narrative of combating terrorism. Nevertheless, the wider socio-political circumstances, encompassing the local backing he received and the consequences of his demise on the actual situation in Kashmir, were mostly disregarded. By suppressing these features, the world community's attention was directed towards India's story of counter-terrorism, rather than the local resistance and the underlying political difficulties (Cheema, Alvi, & Awan, 2023). The example of Qasim, a relatively obscure insurgent commander, further exemplifies the media's influence in shaping the narrative. Qasim, who was fatally targeted by the Indian Army in 2018. The Indian media once again depicted his killing solely in the context of national security, presenting it as a triumph in the battle against terrorism. The local response, characterized by significant funerals and protests, had little media coverage, resulting in the suppression of the true magnitude of local opposition and the humanitarian issues linked to the ongoing conflict. The deliberate choice to report only certain aspects of the war served the purpose of upholding a particular perception that aligned with the diplomatic objectives of the Indian government. This approach aimed to reduce the amount of foreign criticism and scrutiny received (Brunt & Farooq, 2021). The demise of Manan Wani, a former academic who transitioned into a warrior for independence, underscores the intricacies of the Kashmir conflict and the influence of the media in shaping public opinions. Manan Wani, a former PhD researcher who had joined the terrorist ranks, was assassinated in 2018. The Indian media prominently reported on his death, but they mostly emphasized his militant activity rather than his transition from an academic to a militant. This transition symbolized the profound disappointment and dissatisfaction among the educated youth in Kashmir. The subtle intricacies of his life and demise, which may have offered a more profound comprehension of the war, were predominantly repressed. Through narrative control, the Indian media ensured that the global conversation stayed in line with the government's stance on counteracting terrorism, rather than tackling the underlying reasons for the conflict and the widespread dissatisfaction in the area (Jan, 2022).

The study highlights the importance of doing a careful investigation of media content, especially in areas impacted by violence. Gaining an understanding of the strategies used to construct narratives is crucial for developing an informed and perceptive audience. Media literacy initiatives and autonomous journalism are essential for challenging the dominant narratives and promoting a fair and diverse representation of conflicts. In essence, the analysis of how Indian media handles Kashmir issues reveals a deliberate effort to align media representation with official narratives, therefore suppressing any dissenting views. This alignment comprises the framing of Kashmir as a question of security, prioritizing news that aligns with the government's perspective, and depending mostly on information from official sources. These approaches significantly influence the discourse surrounding Kashmir, both domestically and internationally, highlighting the pivotal role of media in the management and resolution of conflicts. The findings underscore the significance of being vigilant and critically engaged with media narratives, particularly in regions experiencing political and social turmoil.

Research Methodology

This study has adopted a qualitative approach and applied the methodology of content analysis to investigate the diplomatic measures employed by Indian media to restrict coverage of Kashmir concerns in the international arena. The study has concentrated on a deliberate selection of prominent Indian newspapers, television news channels, and internet news platforms from the previous five years. The process of data collecting was entailed gathering articles, news segments, and social media posts that are relevant to the topic of Kashmir. The analysis has employed coding methodologies to discern recurring themes, patterns, and strategies, including framing, agenda-setting, and the utilization of government sources. In

addition, conducting semi-structured interviews with media professionals, policy analysts, and academics offered a more comprehensive understanding of the underlying motivations and forces driving these methods. Triangulation has enhanced the dependability and accuracy of the results by cross-referencing media content with interview data and current literature on media diplomacy and conflict reporting.

Data Analysis

This study investigates the diplomatic strategies utilized by Indian media to stifle the reporting of Kashmir issues in the global arena. The study employed qualitative content analysis to examine the framing, agenda-setting, and reliance on government sources in prominent Indian newspapers, television news channels, and internet platforms over the last five years. Engaging in semi-structured interviews with media professionals, policy analysts, and academics improves our understanding of these processes.

Data Collection and Coding

Newspapers

The researchers selected five renowned newspapers: The Times of India, The Hindu, Hindustan Times, Indian Express, and Deccan Chronicle. We have gathered a comprehensive dataset consisting of 1,500 articles specifically related to Kashmir from a variety of sources. These articles mostly focus on important occurrences such as the annulment of Article 370 in August 2019, continuing militant operations, accusations of human rights abuses, political progress, and socio-economic issues in the area. This extensive compilation was created to cover a broad spectrum of storylines and reporting tactics in order to conduct a thorough assessment of the media's framing and agenda-setting efforts on Kashmir over the previous five years.

Television News Channels

Television networks like as NDTV, Republic TV, Times Now, India Today, and CNN-News18 were incorporated. We conducted a comprehensive analysis of 300 news segments, specifically prime-time debates and special reports on Kashmir. Our main focus was on examining the construction and presentation of narratives to the general public.

Digital Platforms

The digital platforms analyzed encompassed key news websites and social media pages of chosen media organizations. We gathered a total of 500 pieces of content, which consisted of articles, video reports, tweets, and Facebook postings. Our objective was to study the online distribution of news linked to Kashmir.

Thematic Analysis

Theme 1: Presentation of Kashmir Issues

The investigation found that Kashmir is primarily portrayed as a matter of security. Articles and news segments commonly employ phrases such as "terrorism," "militancy," and "national security." The framing employed by newspapers and television stations was uniform, indicating a deliberate effort to undermine opposition and present the acts of the Indian government as vital for the preservation of national unity.

For example, the reporting on the abrogation of Article 370 mostly portrayed it as a significant action aimed at integrating Kashmir into India. The headlines and main reports focused on the advantages of growth and economic integration, while generally disregarding opposing opinions from within Kashmir. Television debates frequently included commentators who were connected with the administration and supported this positive portrayal, downplaying conversations about human rights or political consequences.

Theme 2: Agenda-Setting

The agenda-setting function was apparent in the selective prioritization of specific stories over others. Significant emphasis was placed on stories that showcased development projects, government initiatives, and security operations, often relegating critical findings on human rights abuses and local grievances to a less prominent position.

During the lockdown and communication blackout in Kashmir after August 2019, the media primarily focused on the government's narratives of restoring normalcy and battling terrorists. The reports regarding civic upheaval, economic hardship, and international condemnation were either insufficiently covered or presented in a manner that cast doubt on their authenticity.

Theme 3: Utilization of Government Sources

The coverage of Kashmir issues was predominantly influenced by government sources. Articles and news segments often cited statements from officials from the Ministry of Home Affairs, military spokespersons, and local administration. The extensive dependence on official sources led to a uniform narrative that closely accorded with the opinions of the administration.

The examination of digital information also uncovered a consistent tendency to rely on official statements and press releases as the main sources. Media companies frequently disseminated official perspectives on social media while refraining from sharing critical or dissident content. This trend was consistently noticed across several platforms, suggesting a wider attempt to manipulate the narrative on Kashmir in the digital realm.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Insights from Media Professionals

Media experts emphasized the challenges and limitations encountered when reporting on the situation in Kashmir. It was widely recognized that providing critical coverage of the government's policy in Kashmir may result in negative consequences, including as being denied official information, losing advertising revenue, and facing legal consequences. Editors and reporters observed a prevailing culture of self-censorship, wherein contentious subjects were either diluted or completely avoided.

According to a senior journalist, there is an implicit rule in the industry that one must not cross certain boundaries if they wish to remain active in their profession. Many others expressed the same concern, noting that even when opposing opinions were addressed, they were sometimes placed in inconspicuous sections of the articles or programs, far from the prominent headlines or prime-time slots.

Perspectives from Policy Analysts

Policy analysts provide insight into the strategic necessities that influence the media's approach. According to their explanation, the Indian government considers media to be an essential instrument in its diplomatic strategy, particularly in controlling global perceptions. Ensuring a favorable worldwide perception and opposing Pakistan's perspective on the matter are considered crucial reasons for censoring unfavorable reporting on Kashmir.

According to an analyst, the media in India functions as an unofficial extension of the state's diplomatic machinery in relation to Kashmir. The goal is to present a perception of stability and advancement, in order to counter any negative narratives that may arise on the global stage.

Academic Perspectives

Scholars emphasized the significance of historical background and the development of media practices in India. They emphasized that media control and narrative management are not recent occurrences, but have grown more refined with the progress of technology. The present strategies consist of a combination of conventional methods for managing media and contemporary means for exerting digital influence.

According to a media studies expert, the current situation involves a complex interaction between government instructions and the media's willingness to comply, influenced by both forceful and persuasive methods. The media's depiction of Kashmir serves as a prominent illustration of how narrative manipulation is exerted in present-day India.

Cross-Referencing and Triangulation

In order to guarantee the dependability and accuracy of the results, the study cross-checked media content with interview data and current literature on media diplomacy and conflict reporting. The triangulation approach validated the systematic character of the selected themes and strategies.

Consistency with existing Literature

The findings are consistent with the current body of research on the control of media and management of narratives in areas of conflict. Research has recorded comparable methods in different situations, wherein governments utilize media to influence public perception and global sentiment. The focus on framing, agenda-setting, and dependence on official sources aligns with well-documented tactics in media diplomacy.

Corroboration with Interview Data

The viewpoints obtained from media professionals, policy analysts, and academics supported the themes highlighted in the content analysis. The interviews offered comprehensive insights and contextualized the motivations and forces underlying the observed media behaviors. The integration of multiple data sources strengthens the reliability of the study's findings. The analysis uncovers a deliberate endeavor by the Indian media to synchronize its coverage of Kashmir with government narratives, stifling dissenting viewpoints and promoting a positive portrayal of the situation on an international scale. This approach entails primarily presenting Kashmir as a matter of security, establishing a priority for news aligned with the administration, and extensively depending on official sources. These findings have important ramifications for comprehending media diplomacy and the function of media in conflict reporting. The text underscores the intricate relationship between government authority and media operations, stressing the importance of critically engaging with media content in areas of conflict. Subsequent study has the potential to broaden its focus by incorporating comparative analyses of media behavior in other nations grappling with domestic issues. Furthermore, conducting an examination of the influence of these media tactics on public sentiment and global diplomatic results would yield additional understanding on the efficacy and repercussions of narrative manipulation.

Ultimately, the study highlights the crucial influence of media in molding the conversation around Kashmir, exposing the complex tactics used to control both local and global perspectives. Through a rigorous analysis of these behaviors, the research enhances our comprehension of the role of media in statecraft and conflict management.

Discussion and Conclusion

The study's analysis reveals that the Indian media actively strives to align its reportage on Kashmir with official narratives. The purpose of this alignment is to suppress dissenting viewpoints and promote a favorable portrayal of the Kashmiri issue on a global scale. The research sheds light on the diplomatic strategies used by the Indian media to impede foreign coverage of Kashmir-related issues, through a comprehensive analysis of framing, agenda-setting, and reliance on official sources. The deliberate framing of Kashmir as largely a security issue is done with a specific goal in mind. The media reinforces the government's stance and presents the Indian government's actions as crucial for preserving national unity, including terms such as "terrorism," "militancy," and "national security," among others. The framing of the August 2019 repeal of Article 370 was particularly evident in the news, as it predominantly disregarded or downplayed the voices of dissent from Kashmiris, instead focusing on highlighting the benefits of economic progress and integration. Television debates frequently featured commentators who endorsed the government's position, so downplaying discussions regarding human rights and their political consequences. The media's agenda-setting power became evident through the selective prioritization of certain stories. Development projects, government initiatives, and security operations took precedence, often relegating important news about human rights breaches and local issues to a secondary position. The media extensively propagated the government's official account of restoring normalcy and combating terrorism during the period of lockdown and communication blackout in Kashmir after August 2019, which was particularly noticeable due to its biased nature. The reports that exposed social unrest, financial hardships, and global condemnation were either inadequately covered or presented in a manner that raised doubts about their truthfulness. The media's frequent utilization of official sources was a prominent characteristic of their reportage. Articles and news segments frequently cited statements from local government officials, military spokespeople, and Ministry of Home Affairs officials. The dependence on authoritative sources resulted in a cohesive narrative that closely aligned with the government's perspective. On digital platforms, media outlets often shared press releases and government statements, but they rarely shared opposing or critical content. The uniformity observed across all forms of media indicates a broader endeavor to control the online discussion over Kashmir. Media experts provided their perspectives on the challenges and limitations involved in reporting on Kashmir. Consensus was reached among all individuals that disclosing critiques of the government's conduct might potentially result in adverse consequences, such as being refused official document access, experiencing financial losses from advertising, and facing legal repercussions. This environment fostered a culture of self-restraint in which controversial topics were either minimized or altogether disregarded. Media workers assert that there exists an underlying consensus within the industry that transgressing certain boundaries could jeopardize one's professional trajectory. Even though alternative opinions were occasionally mentioned, they were often relegated to less prominent sections, away from the main focus and outside of peak viewing hours. Policy analysts provided further perspective by explaining the strategic factors that influenced the media's approach. The Indian government views the media as an essential tool in its diplomatic armory for shaping global impressions. The censorship of unfavorable news is primarily carried out to uphold a favorable global perception and counter Pakistan's perspective on the Kashmir issue. Analysts assert that India's media functions as an unofficial expansion of the government's diplomatic machinery concerning Kashmir. Its purpose is to present an image of stability and advancement, aiming to counter any negative perceptions abroad. Academic perspectives emphasized the development of media practices in India, along with their historical context. Media control and narrative management have undergone evolution alongside technology advancements, while these concepts are not novel.

Modern strategies combine modern digital influence techniques with traditional methods of media manipulation. The link between media conformance and government demands involves the utilization of persuasive and coercive methods. The media's portrayal of Kashmir exemplifies the strategic manipulation of narratives in contemporary India.

The study ensured the validity and correctness of its conclusions by comparing media material with interview data and existing literature on media diplomacy and conflict reporting. This triangulation validated the systematic character of the themes and tactics discovered. The findings are consistent with prior research on media governance and manipulation in regions of conflict, where governments utilize media outlets to influence public perception and international sentiment. The focus on agenda-setting, framing, and reliance on official sources aligns with well-established media diplomacy tactics. The viewpoints acquired from scholars, policy analysts, and media professionals confirmed the themes identified in the content analysis. These interviews provided a greater understanding and contextualization of the reasons and dynamics that drive the observed media habits. The study's reliability was enhanced through the incorporation of many data sources, which yielded a comprehensive comprehension of the media's impact on the narrative surrounding Kashmir. The inquiry uncovers a conscious effort by the Indian media to align its reportage on Kashmir with official narratives, suppressing dissenting viewpoints and promoting a favorable image internationally. This strategy involves portraying Kashmir primarily as a matter of security, prioritizing government-sanctioned news, and relying heavily on official sources. These findings have significant implications for our understanding of media diplomacy and the role of the media in reporting on wars. The study underscores the intricate connection between media operations and political authority, underscoring the significance of critical media content engagement in regions affected by violence. Further inquiries could be expanded by conducting comparative assessments of media practices in other countries addressing domestic issues. Moreover, doing research on the impact of these media strategies on public opinion and the outcomes of international diplomacy would provide further insights into the pros and cons of narrative control. Ultimately, the research emphasizes the significant role of the media in shaping the discourse surrounding Kashmir and reveals the intricate strategies taken to manipulate viewpoints both within the country and on a global scale. This research emphasizes the significance of being watchful and critically analyzing media narratives in disputed areas. It enhances our comprehension of how the media contributes to statecraft and conflict resolution by thoroughly examining these practices.

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