Media during the Time of Conflicts: A Comparative Analysis of *The Hindu* and *Dawn* with Reference to the After-math of 'Uri Attack'

*Keerthana Thankachan, **Dr. P. E. Thomas

* Doctoral Research Scholar, ** Professor and Head, Department of Communication and Media Studies, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore, India.

Abstract - **Understanding the role of media and its influence during conflicts as an agent of information have significant effects since conflicts can easily sell the news. A comparative analysis of one of the significant conflicts between India and Pakistan –'Uri attack'— from two different media perspectives (Pakistan and India), gives a clear image that there exists considerable stories with entertainment factors and hegemonic ideologies. The intervention of manipulative elites during the conflict and the dominance of the theme ancient hatred propagated in the media through the ages summarises how media nurture instability in the minds of people. The reports from an entertainment framework with a visible number of national stories tend to aggravate the conflicts. In order to judge the constructive and destructive roles of media in conflict the study applies a qualitative approach to content analyse The Hindu (Indian national newspaper) and Dawn (Pakistan national daily) on the types of conflicts, types of news stories, pictures and themes. The larger frame of the 'Uri attack' provides a disturbing picture of modern news media trends and their inconsistent approaches during times of conflicts which help institutionalise the conflict for personal and private benefits resulting in wide spread effects.**

Keywords – Media, Uri Attack, The Hindu, Dawn.

I. INTRODUCTION

As the world gets smaller into media outlets including their ways of living (Bain, 2002), conflicts are one of the defining factors of modern world (Puddephatt, 2006, p.5) to sell news. Keeping conflicts on one side and media on the other, it is clear that media often play a key role in modern conflicts in the form of reports, coverage, international diplomacy, hegemony, bilateral relations –in almost every area of conflicts. To identify the root cause of conflicts and how modern media cover up the issues that form nearly 80% of the modern reports, it is essential to classify conflicts on the basis of modern media trends. It is also necessary to understand the perspective of mass media outreaches for identifying and analysing the causes of Indo-Pakistan conflict and the influential role played by media in handling these conflicts.

II. AIM AND OBJECTIVES

Considering the background of Indo-Pak conflicts as they throughout involve all the conventional features of religious and political interventions, the study examines the way Indo-Pak conflicts are often portrayed by the media. Analysing the case of 'Uri attack', which has an impact on all prominent sectors including religion, politics, entertainment, sports, arts and so on, the paper figures out the media control exerted by both Pakistani and Indian

media to understand the areas highlighted them. Choosing *The Hindu* (Indian national English daily with the readership of 22.58 lakhs) and *Dawn* (Pakistan's oldest, leading and most widely read English language newspaper), a comparative analysis of the contents is carried out to understand print media interventions in 'Uri conflicts'[1].

Objectives

- To identify the role of media in conflicts by analysing the media contents of 'Uri attack'.
- To analyse the content and context of news stories in terms of the types of conflicts, types of news, presence of pictures and themes of the news stories on India and Pakistan
- To compare the print media intervention of Indian and Pakistani newspapers on 'Uri attack' to understand the constructive and destructive roles of media during conflicts.

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1: What are the constructive and destructive roles performed by media in their coverage of 'Uri attack'?

RQ2: Is there any difference in the contents and contexts projected by Indian and Pakistani newspapers?

RQ3: What is the importance given to the types, themes and pictures in the news stories regarding 'Uri attack' in both the newspapers?

RQ4: Whether differences or similarities exist in the coverage of the 'Uri attack' in *The Hindu* and *Dawn*?

RQ5: Whether a perceptible instigation of conflict occurs as a result of the rhetoric employed by *The Hindu* and *Dawn*?

IV.   LITERATURE REVIEW

From the innumerable approaches to divide and cluster the conflict based on its characteristics and nature, Oberschall's (1975) framework concept of categorising conflict under five major theories is adopted based on its coverage and appearance of these types in media fortunes. The theory of **Ancient Hatred** is one of the conventional nomenclatures used by media that refers to the age-old animosities that pass from generation to generation. The concept of **Identity Politics** deals with the inflation in the relationship to create a strong sense of politics through valued or defined identity using symbols, party emblems, religious frictions or nationality. If the theory of **Manipulative Elites** creates a fragmented social reality manipulating conflicts to induce fear, threat or by insecurities and insurgencies, **Contention for Power** misuse conflicts for power creation and accruing benefits out of power, demanding for a 'status quo'. The theory of **Economic Roots** looks at conflicts as a retarded development in society that wrecks the economy due to war, crisis, weak state or a failed economy.

After determining the cause, effect and the future trends in reporting conflicts, a common set of variables used in conflict context by media organisations are identified. **Hegemony** especially media hegemony is an attempt of creating shared 'common sense' (Hallin, 1994:59) for public opinion (Magder, 2003:31) through political and cultural practices (Artz, 2003: 16-17) to normalise the interpretations that are best communicated via media. **Persuasion** is a beautifully moulded pot of manipulation that influences a wider audience through spreading ideas (Street, 2003). Direct persuasion during conflicts increases the intensity and wrath of a conflict. The **entertainment** value of media which has the capability of creating an attraction can be influenced by people those who have a hold in the industry for favourable outcomes (Nye, 2011: 84). It is a combination of attraction and persuasion that are socially constructed from political, religious and cultural backgrounds.

The extent and bias of the **conservatism** depends on the basis of how one defines the concepts of conservative and liberal approaches. When there are motives by media organisations during conflicts to prejudice the formal tendency (McCauley, 1995) as in the case of India and Pakistan, the reports usually have the element of exaggeration and there conservatism can occur in ideological level (Groseclose and Milyo, 2005). Media **diplomacy** –a newly coined term (Karl, 1982; Gilboa, 1998) saturated with the emerging technological advancement is considered as an opportunity offered by media to connect governments worldwide for development and encouragement. The role of media in **reconciliation** is critical (Bar-Tal, 2000; Galtung, 1998) to probe the waves of conflict resolution and management. From the period of dictatorship media was always a weapon for **public opinion** (Graber, 1993; Lippmann, 1922). The role of media as a mentor to activate people around them is often a strategy employed by religious and political leaders to acquire their benefits.

The identified variables are thus a link that can connect the theories and dimensions of conflict with that of the context and contents published in the reports.

V.   METHODOLOGY

A non-experimental research design with qualitative content analysis was conducted using systematic, objective and quantified data (Kerlinger, 1986) for scientific analysis. A comparative analysis of the contents collected for a month (from 18th September 2016—the day of the incident to 18th October 2016) of 'Uri attack' (including new stories, articles, editorials, opinions, cartoons and comments) published in *The Hindu* (Indian English language daily) and *Dawn* (Pakistani English national daily) was carried out with the focus on the contexts at which the stories are reported. The collected samples from both the newspapers (*The Hindu* N= 494 & *Dawn* N= 392) from their mother websites consist of political, religious, entertainment, sports and other beats that refer to 'Uri attack' and its aftermath. The collected samples were manually segregated, clustered and categorised on the basis of *types of conflict* (ancient hatred, identity politics, manipulative elites, economic roots and contention for power), *themes of the stories* (regional, national, international, editorial, article, interview, letters and opinions), *types of news story* (hegemony, persuasion, entertainment, diplomacy, reconciliation, conservatism and public opinion) and the extend of news *pictures*.

The identified variables are clustered based on its valance, attributes and characteristics to understand the role and intervention on the part of media resulting in a stand that escalates, descents or neutralise conflicts. Coding of the data has been done thereby based on the valance to conduct the frequency and percentage analysis.

VI.   ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Ancient hatred is the most prominent type of conflict with multiple occurrences of stories consisting of regional, national, international stories with opinions, articles and interviews in both the newspapers (*The Hindu* 37.2% and *Dawn* 47.4%). The projections of 'Uri attack' as a national level news story with wide coverage from all over India and Pakistan is one of the prime characteristics in reporting the conflict. The interventions of manipulative elites and a

strong contention for power are also dominant throughout the national reports and the pattern was similar in both the newspapers. Throughout the period of one month, international interventions and diplomatic relations were also active demanding attention from the world over. Hegemonic control over the news culture and ideologies in the form of verbal abuses, blaming, vehement accuses over the other party is also predominant in the reports. 'Uri conflicts' were well manipulated as a conflict of interest with entertainment factors (especially in *Dawn*) that resulted in potential effects like deporting the actors from Pakistan, cancelling the events that are to be held in both the countries, nullifying peace talks so on and so forth.

The rise of Uri conflicts as a result of heated contention was visible as an aftermath of the conflict whereas the scope of reconciliations through media is not extended. Though a little effort was there from the part of Pakistan newspaper with more peace stories and solutions the overall effort for peace and reconciliations were nullified due to external interventions from elites, political parties, religious leaders and power politicians. *The Hindu's* strategies in reporting 'Uri' as a conflict is more neutral with boosting the insurgencies, causalities, military mediations with facts and figures. Even-though from a deeper analysis the reports seem to be neutral, the dominant reaction of the overall reports is accusations of power politicians and manipulative elites over the other party which is comparatively fewer in the reports of *Dawn*.

Criticisms form a leading strategy of both the newspapers as it became one of the important factors for the rapid increase of the conflict. Conservative approaches by media charging the other side of the border as villain expanded antipathy among the people all over the country though there were no direct involvements. This resulted in violent responses from all over the country from Pakistan and India and ferocious mobs intensified the conflict in and out of the border resulting in adjacent attacks throughout the areas. Pictures aren't a prominent factor in 'Uri' reports. It had a very minimal space in reports as it always appears along with the text as a supporting figure. When analysing pictures and contents, the hostilities of the contents were rough and provocative than the pictures in both the newspapers.

Addressing the major differences in coverage of both the newspapers, the importance to reconciliation and diplomatic relations were given importance in *Dawn* than *The Hindu* whereas the same at times are ineffective with the reports that stress more on insurgencies especially in Kashmir. *Dawn* was much provocative than *The Hindu* in using words and the contexts at most instances circled on the previous attacks of the same that increase the ferocity of current conflict. *The Hindu* have a wider coverage from all parts of the country than the *Dawn* thereby even reporting very minute details that often consist of violent words and

hatreds from people of other states. This vast coverage have a hypodermic needle effect promulgating media's control over its audience resulting in immediate effects of violence or can be as good as a slow poison. The effort of *The Hindu* as a promoter of peace or as a diplomat for reconciliation was seldom visible during the times of conflict.

The challenge of conflict reporting especially when it is between countries like India and Pakistan is critical as this is the sole information for the readers. Identity becomes a key factor in a conflict like 'Uri' as the bases of Indo-Pak conflicts was ideological since independence. But as time passes, identities were overruled by differences, manipulations, interventions and power politics. Today, the reports of conflicts are more on hegemonic approaches developing a conservative attitude persuading audience to fight each other even though they are once the children of the same mother. The coverage of 'Uri attack' by both the newspapers is partial, subjective, and individualistic in approach which later on spreads its fire to expand to other fields like entertainment, culture, religion, defence, so on and so forth. Media played a key role in forming the public opinion and increase the vehemence of the conflict following a continuous dislike between the countries.

VII.   DISCUSSIONS

The constructive and destructive role of media contents and the stance of prestigious Indian and Pakistani newspapers in a conflict like 'Uri' determine the developmental facets of the countries. Blaming of one by the other and the denial of the same becomes the prominent news stories in modern conflict reports. Rather than opening the scope of fruitful discussions, today diplomatic talks serve the vehicles for new conflict. Media instead of becoming the path for reconciliation, it is a medium of propagating identities, propaganda, politics and power over the other party. The reports of 'Uri' are thus a strong contention for modern strategies of reporting without compromise in a horse-race manner. Since almost a similar pattern of reporting is identified from Pakistani and Indian media, media as a propaganda tool of hatred is well established in media.

The aggressions and animosities that have developed over the ages in the case of Indo-Pak conflicts are expanding day by day with the intervention of media and information overload. Today when information on conflicts is at our doorsteps, the effort of media as a peace promoter and neutraliser of a conflict are often overlooked for profits and gains. 'Uri' is a case analysis that can be referred even for ages to study how a conflict can be manipulated and expanded for personal and communal benefits with a media backup. The initial response and the aftermath of the conflict after a month shows extremities as it accumulated support from different sectors to expand it as a national emergency for both the countries with severe causalities. 'Uri' is always a chapter for analysing how a conflict

cannot be propagated and covered if a country like India or Pakistan is aiming to shake hands for peace and resolution.

VIII.   CONCLUSION

From the painful birth of India and Pakistan till date, conflicts have always been the intoxicant for both the countries. Whether ideological or geographical, conflicts between India and Pakistan had brutal casualties and wounds. 'Uri' was also one among those cruel inhuman acts where media has a significant part to play in its propagation. The vision of diplomatic imagination as a solvent of conflict for peace and reconciliation is yet farsighted but not impossible. If media can help to create a change in its coverage of conflict reports by promoting developmental and constructive stories, the parochialism between the two peoples of India and Pakistan can be abated. The extensive scope of media as a promoter of peace and harmony can bring about peace and promote serenity.

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[1] The 2016 'Uri attack' is one of the biggest attacks on security forces in Jammu &Kashmir on 18 September 2016 near the town of Uri leading to high casualties. Four heavily armed terrorists launched an attack on an Indian Army camp and the gun battle lasted about six hours following the death of 18 soldiers.

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