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Yousaf, Muhammad; Rahman, Bushra Hameedur; Yousaf, Zahid

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# Constructing Reality: Framing of the Kashmir Conflict in Dictatorial and Democratic Regimes in the Pakistani English Press

Muhammad Yousaf<sup>1</sup>, Bushra Hameedur Rahman<sup>2</sup>, and Zahid Yousaf<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,3</sup>University of Gujrat, Pakistan

<sup>2</sup>University of the Punjab, Pakistan

## Abstract

This paper examines the framing of Kashmir conflict in the editorials of three Pakistani English newspapers, *The Nation*, *The Nation*, and *Dawn* during dictatorial (Musharraf regime, 2005-2007) and the democratic regime (Zardari regime (2008-2010)). It argues that in case of conflict press conforms to the government policies, change in governments also has an effect on how the press changes its coverage on the conflict according to the policies of the government. The study utilizes a content analysis method to examine the use of framing techniques in the newspapers. Findings supported that the Pakistani press indexed the ruling elite's stance in both regimes. It was found that during the dictatorial regime, as Kashmir conflict was high on agenda, Pakistani English press gave more coverage to Kashmir conflict as compared to the democratic regime. The results also showed that during the dictatorial regime, the dialogue frame to resolve the Kashmir conflict between India and Pakistan was high, which was also in line with the policy of Musharraf's autocratic regime. Surprisingly, the press coverage in both regimes regarding the self-determination right for Kashmiris in the light of UNO resolutions, Pakistan's longstanding stance, was minimal. The implications of the results are discussed.

Keywords: Kashmir conflict, English Pakistani press, Framing techniques, dialogue frame, dictatorial-democratic regimes.

## Introduction

Kashmir Conflict has been a cause of a deep divide between the two rival nuclear countries, India and Pakistan since 1947, and both countries are always under the threat of nuclear war (Haider & Iqbal, 2002). The news media of both countries have been emphasizing the conflicting issues and disputes by framing them in a particular manner and constructing mediated reality (Ji, Hu, & Muhammad, 2016; Weaver, Graber, McCombs, & Eyal, 1981). It is argued that the Kashmir conflict, which the public sees through the media's eyes, is not the reflection of the real world, nor the true picture of the places, people, events and issues. This is the reflection of constructed reality refracted through the media (Tuchman, 1978). The media of both countries presents its version of the reality, a pseudo-reality of "background and setting in which a few objects and selected attributes are highlighted' at the cost of the others (McCombs & Gilbert, 1998, p. 4). Both Pakistani and Indian media frame Kashmir conflict to the public through their reality- construction- framework. They just don't

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Correspondence to: Muhammad Yousaf, Centre for Media and Communication Studies, University of Gujrat, 50700 Pakistan.

define for readers, viewers, and listeners what the significant events are but also provide a context on how to make sense of these events (Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke, & Roberts, 1981).

Although the relationship between media and Kashmir conflict is studied extensively, most of the research on Kashmir dispute has been confined to the role of the international press in the context of war and peace journalism (Ray, 2004; Siraj, 2008), the local and national press (Shabir, Khan, Adnan, & Safdar, 2014), or a comparative role of Indian and Pakistani media framing Kashmir conflict in terms of peace and war journalism (Sreedharan, 2009; Zia & Syedah, 2015). However, Kashmir conflict is framed differently in different regimes, and different media use different frames to construct reality about Kashmir dispute for readers, listeners, and the audience. Mostly this dispute is framed by both the Indian and Pakistan press through the war frame (Lee & Maslog, 2005). In this environment, journalists become a warrior. Their reporting intensifies the conflict rather than resolving it (Schechter, 1999). It is noted that the coverage of the Kashmir conflict is government-led and follows the war frame in both Indian and Pakistani newspapers (Sreedharan, 2009). However, what remains to be studied in the media-state relations is whether media endorse government officials' stance and pay little attention to public opinion (Bennett, 1990; Bennett, Lawrence, & Livingston, 2006)? Whether the media change its position with the foreign policy change of different regimes or remain consistent with its stance on the Kashmir conflict? This study, therefore, is a comparative study to explore the differences in the frames on Kashmir conflict in the Pakistani English Press during the dictatorial and democratic regimes.

## **Kashmir Conflict**

Kashmir, a mountainous region of about 87,000 square miles, bordering northeast Pakistan, northwest India, and southwest China, is an unresolved issue between India and Pakistan ever since the division of United India into India and Pakistan in 1947. There were 565 princely states in the subcontinent, and the Kashmir was the biggest of them at the time of partition of the subcontinent in 1947. "Before 15 August 1947, Jammu and Kashmir comprised three provinces: Jammu; Kashmir; the Frontier Districts" (Snedden, 2015). After the 1947-48 war between India and Pakistan over Kashmir, it is composed of five regions, namely: Azad ('Free') commonly known as 'Azad Kashmir'; Jammu; Kashmir; Ladakh; the Northern Areas. The Azad Kashmir and Northern areas are under Pakistan control; whereas, Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh are ruled by India (ibid). According to the 1941 Census data, the population of Kashmir was over 4 million; Muslims were 77%, and Hindus 21% of the total population (Majid & Hussain, 2016b).

Reviewing the real cause of Kashmir conflict, Bremmer (2016) observed that India and Pakistan had fought three wars, and two of them (1947 and 1965) have been fought over Kashmir. However, the war between India and Pakistan is not limited to the battlefield only. In this context, Schofield (2003) summarized that "India and Pakistan have fought over Jammu and Kashmir both on the battlefield and at the negotiating table; both countries wanted to absorb it within their borders" (p xi). Pakistan has been advocating since the partition that the Kashmir conflict must be resolved according to United Nations resolutions. On the other hand, India claims Kashmir to be her integral part. However, the Kashmir issue is still unresolved on the agenda of the United Nations. Successive governments in India and Pakistan have been engaged in negotiations to settle this issue. India and Pakistan are nuclear states now, and this issue has less regional and more global consequences (Raghavan, 2012). Therefore, the exchange of harsh words, allegations, and even firing on the Line of Control (LoC-border between Pakistan and India, which

divides Kashmir) is common. Soherwordi, Abbasi, and Javed (2015) observed that the Kashmir dispute has soured the relations between India and Pakistan and is a constant threat to regional stability and prosperity. The two South Asian nuclear-armed nations have been involved in four wars, including one undeclared war, and many border skirmishes and military stand-offs. The prophets of future Indo-Pak wars fear that these wars result in nuclear conflict between both countries, bearing consequences beyond the border of these two countries (Lyon, 2008; Haidar, 2010; Mahajan, 1963). Consequently, the peace process and trust between India and Pakistan are jeopardized due to unsettled Kashmir dispute (Adnan & Fatima, 2016). It is a very complicated issue- has ethnic, religious, territorial, human rights, and nationalistic dimensions (Majid & Hussain, 2016a). Though Pakistan and India have tried to manage their conflict through backdoor diplomacy, negotiations, mediation, and confidence-building measures to lessen tension, and avoid conflicts and enhance cooperation in different areas, yet they have failed to resolve their disputes and improve their relations (Javaid; 2010; Javaid & Sahrai, 2016).

During the dictatorial regime of President Musharraf, both Pakistan and India negotiated about Kashmir, compromising their traditional stances on this conflict. For this purpose, president Musharraf in Pakistan and prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in India and then Manmohan Singh attempted to reach a consensus to devise a framework for finding an acceptable solution for both countries on this issue. In this regard, Kasuri (2015) revealed that President Musharraf and Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee attempted to reach a consensus framework for the Kashmir dispute. Then a change of government took place in India, and Congress nominated Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to continue this dialogue process. Kasuri further disclosed in his book chapter titled 'Interrupted symphony: contours of the back-channel settlement on Kashmir' the outline of the proposed framework. In the first place, there is a need to mutually agree on the exact contemporary definition of Kashmir's territory. And the second element is the acceptance of the validity of elections to be held on either side of the Line of Control (LoC). The third is authentic autonomy for Muzaffarabad in Azad Kashmir and Srinagar in the Indian side Kashmir. And fourth, to move towards a calibrated demilitarization on both sides while constructing a joint mechanism for cooperation in trade, travel, and tourism: for possible later expansion to other spheres, e.g., security and defense (Ibid).

A similar kind of voice is echoed in (Dulat & Sinha, 2015), who argued that 'the Vajpayee Way' is the way forward to resolve this dispute. Kashmiri's leadership also endorsed the Vajpayee approach for dialogue. The leadership of both countries, that is to say, Musharraf and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, tried to strike a deal on Kashmir issue. The main idea was to give self-governance to Kashmiris, softening up the border to make movement on both sides easy and devise a joint management mechanism to oversee affairs by India and Pakistan. However, this dialogue process was halted after Musharraf's departure from power in Pakistan.

## **Media Framing**

Framing theory helps to understand how Pakistani media constructed the Kashmir dispute in both regimes. What were the dominant frames used by the media while covering the Kashmir dispute? Which frame was dominant in the construction of the Kashmir dispute in the two different regimes? The media uses various framing mechanisms to frame issues. These frames make specific issues more important at the cost of others (D'Angelo & Kuypers, 2010). The frames, thus, explain how an issue is presented in the media (Tankard, 2001). Through these frames, the media serve particular interests. They provide a particular context to

understand an issue (De Vreese, 2005). At a broader level, the framing literature is categorized into two categories: aspects of a communication message or central themes of a communication message. In terms of an aspect of a communication message, how employing certain frames makes certain aspects of media text salient? In this regard, Entman (1993) summarized succinctly:

Framing essentially involves selection and salience. To frame is to select 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, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item. (p. 52)

On the one hand, frames, “call attention to some aspects of reality while obscuring other elements, which might lead audiences to have different reactions” (Entman, 1993, p. 55). Framing, thus, pushes the agenda forward and tells deliberate and selective partial truths, or facts, to support a desired “reality” about the issues or events (Entman, 2007). This is what media does when it treats certain frames of certain issues and events more favorably at the cost of others. Thus, it is assumed that different frames used to construct the Kashmir conflict will shape the public understanding of the possible solution to this conflict. While reviewing the framing literature, Tankard, Hendrickson, Silberman, Bliss, and Ghanem (1991) proposed a central theme for studying communication messages. They argued:

A frame is a central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration (p. 11).

This definition emphasizes that frames are organizing principles, and they help the audience to make sense of the issues. Media frames are usually unobtrusive and include principles of selection, emphasis, exclusion, and presentation customarily used by journalists to construct and organize discourse about particular issues (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Gitlin, 1980; Tuchman, 1973). Thus, the frames in communication text influence the reality construed by the media and shape public understanding of the issues (Ashley & Olson, 1998; Billings, 2004). Hence, framing conveys the preferred meaning of the events and issues to the public. Framing options influence public decision-making about different issues. The presentation of the issues affects their evaluation. Presenting an issue in terms of losses (Machina, 1990), and in terms of gains (Elster, 1990) influence opinion and evaluations of issues. Audiences consequently, pay attention to such preferred meaning in the text for the construction of their meaning (Potter, 2012). Thus, framing gives importance to particular aspects of an issue while ignoring the other aspects that affect public perception (Scheufele, 1999).

Framing techniques employed by the media can alter public opinion and consequent public understanding of an issue. In this context, frames are devices that provide a yardstick for the evaluation of events and issues for the public. “By promoting a particular frame, political elites, the media, and other players can alter how an issue is understood and thus shift public opinion (Billings, 2004, p. 186). Put it this way; political elites can effectively use frames to promote their political ends (Schnell & Frauke, 2001). However, Reese (2001) argued that frames are organizing doctrines that are socially shared by people and intend to help understand the social world in more meaningful manners. This definition puts frames in a more constructionist and critical perspective and helps us understand the framing at the sociological level; how media sets particular frames; who controls these frames? Researchers have used the perspective of the central frame proposed by (Tankard et al., 1991) to explore the frames employed in framing the Kashmir conflict. It is assumed that the frames function as a lens through which individuals analyze and

understand the information about the world around them, increase the salience of particular aspects of the issues, encourage the audience to meditate and adopt a particular way (Entman, 2004; Iyengar & Simon, 1993; Pan & Kosicki, 1993; Price, Tewksbury, & Powers, 1997; Reber & Berger, 2005). This reality construction function of framing is beneficial to understand how Kashmir has been framed in the two regimes.

The media framing of an issue influences how the public thinks about the issue (Ghanem, 1996). This reminds the way media tells its audience “how to think” instead of “what to think” about. This discursive articulation of reality by media subtly influences the audience on how to think about issues, events, and individuals is the second level of agenda-setting. As McCombs, Shaw, and Weaver (1997) summarized that framing and agenda-setting show convergence, that is to say, they explore the same thing. They argue that framing is the extension of the second-level agenda-setting. In this regard, Takeshita (1997) concluded that framing and agenda-setting are the same as they investigate the same phenomena, that is, “the real definition function of the media” (p. 24).

Regarding conveying the preferred meanings, Potter (2012) summarized that framing conveys the preferred meanings of events and issues to the audience, which, consequently, pays attention to such favorite meaning in the text for the construction of their meaning. Thus, frames work as a lens through which individuals analyze and understand the information about the world around them. To reinstate this point, the media framing of some issues increases the salience of particular aspects of these issues among the audience, encouraging them to meditate and adopt a specific way about these issues (Entman, 2004; Pan & Kosicki 1993; Price et al., 1997; Reber & Berger, 2005). It stresses that “different kinds of issues are interpreted by the media and by the public in different ways, and [that] communications theory must be sensitive to these differences” (Neuman, Just, & Crigler, 1992, p. 17). In other words, media content producers apply a range of persistent frames, and through these techniques, they possibly control the number of alternatives that are available to the receivers when they are constructing social reality (Reese, 2001; McCullagh, 2002; Pan & Kosicki, 1993; Potter, 1996).

Consequently, framing triggers specific ideas, thoughts, and interpretations in the minds of the news media audience (Iyengar, 1991). Put it this way; framing defines and constructs an issue for the public’s understanding. Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley (1997) maintained that “media frames influence opinions by stressing specific values, facts or other considerations, endowing them with greater apparent relevance to the issue than they might appear to have under an alternative frame” (p. 569). Notably, media conflict framing is often treated as a newsworthy, sensational, and source of increasing readership and ratings (Allen & Seaton, 1999). At a broader level, framing research is categorized into three types; critical framing researchers are concerned with how journalistic routine practices construct reality (Tuchman, 1978), and how elite control over framing constructs reality about social movements (Gitlin, 1980). At the same time, those who share social constructionist perspective argue how individuals, social groups and social institutions dominate the social worlds in advancing certain ways of seeing the social world (Gamson, 1989; Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes, & Sasson, 1992; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989); whereas, post-positivistic framing scholars are interested in investigating the effects of specific frames on the public (Scheufele, 1999). This study employed a social constructionist perspective arguing how social institutions such as the media dominate the social worlds in advancing certain ways of seeing the social world through the use of specific frames (Gamson, 1989; Gamson et al., 1992; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). In line with the social constructionist perspective, this paper intends to investigate how the Pakistani press constructed reality about Kashmir conflict during the dictatorial and democratic regimes.

## Media Framing of Conflicts

Media and conflict are interrelated, conflict coverage dominates the media most of the time, and the media becomes a platform where conflicts are fought (Wolfsfeld, 1997). Nevertheless, still, there is a fragmentation in the media and conflict literature (Hallin, 2005). The war and peace frames compete in the media. Galtung (1986) investigated that war journalism and peace journalism are competing for frames about conflict coverage. Ross (2003) found that *The New York Times* framed Palestinians as aggressors rather than victims of Israel's aggression. In other words, *The New York Times'* dominant frame for framing a Palestine-Israel conflict named Palestinians as aggressors than Israel. Likewise, (Lee & Maslog, 2005) reported that both Indian and Pakistani Newspapers gave dominant war frame coverage to Kashmir conflict in their study of coverage of regional conflicts by Asian newspapers.

It is believed that the media has more role in creating conflicts rather than resolving it as media organizations have war correspondents in the different parts of the world but no peace correspondents. The presence of the war correspondents in the different parts of the world means when "it bleeds it leads." The focus of the media, therefore, remains on conflict journalism than peace journalism (Galtung, 1986). However, the media not only escalate conflicts, but it also plays a crucial role in peace too. It can promote peace by highlighting its benefits and even can endanger this peace while showing competing interests and motives (Wolfsfeld, 2004).

## Kashmir Conflict and Foreign Policy

The Kashmir conflict is a benchmark of Pakistan's foreign policy. Foreign policy is inherently biased and subjective construction of a nation for furthering and protecting their interests in the international arena. Media houses are supposed to follow a government stance on sensitive issues. In the context of Abu Ghraib prison story framing by Bush Administration, Bennett, Lawrence, and Livingston (2006) argued that media organizations employed indexing to frame Abu Ghraib prison story, thus supporting the narrative of the Bush Administration. However, Althaus (2003) found that in the reporting of the Gulf crisis, media showed more independence to cover oppositional voices rather than official indexing stance. Whereas investigating the press-state relationship, Bennett (1990) asserted that news indexes the stance of the government on a range of issues citing official sources compared to expressed public opinion. Thus, one assumption is that the Pakistani press would conform to the policies of the government in power to frame the Kashmir conflict. From this perspective, the framing of the Kashmir conflict is supposed to be different in the dictatorial and democratic regimes depending on the approach of the respective regimes to address this issue.

As Kashmir is not directly accessible to the public, therefore, readers, listeners, and viewers mostly depend on the media to know about this conflict. Media becomes their chief source of information and guidance about this issue; consequently, it influences their perception about this issue. It is, therefore, interesting to investigate what kind of discourses that Pakistani press by the selection, emphasis, exclusion, and presentation constructs and organizes about Kashmir conflicts for its readers. Keeping in view the above-reviewed literature about the role of the media in framing conflicts, we have formulated two research questions.

- RQ1: Is there a significant difference in the coverage of the Kashmir dispute during dictatorial and democratic Regimes in the three dailies *Nation*, *The News*, and *down*?
- RQ2: Were the dominant frames during the dictatorial regime regarding the Kashmir dispute in the press different from the democratic regime?

## Method

The method employed for this research is a quantitative content analysis of editorials of *The Nation*, *The News*, and *Dawn*. The newspapers were selected because they are the most widely read and influential English newspapers in the country. Among English language newspapers, *Dawn* is the most widely read newspaper followed by *The News International*, and *The Nation* (Yousaf, 2018). Furthermore, these English newspapers are widely read by the elites, opinion leaders, policymakers, and the well-educated class of society (Rahman & Eijaz, 2014). Secondly, the selected newspapers differ significantly from their editorial policy. *The Nation*, which is the sister newspaper of the Nawa-i-Waqt group, considers itself to be the custodian of ideology and usually boldly expresses it in its editorials too.

On the other hand, *The News* is a sister newspaper of the Jang group. It claims to have a very open and vibrant editorial policy, where even people from different ideological groups can express their opinion. *Dawn* is considered to be the most credible newspaper in the country, and its editorial policy is very balanced and critical. Thirdly, the reason for their selection was their national and international prestige and influence. They are not only read in the country but also have good readership abroad and are considered the true representatives of the Pakistani society.

The policymakers and elites in the country and abroad pay a lot of attention to the narrative and discourse constructed by these newspapers. The editorial page is considered as the most important page in the newspaper as compared to other pages as it advocates a certain point of view as compared to news, which is objective. It is considered to be the most authoritative page reflecting the policy of the newspaper and is destined to reform and preach of a particular cause. Consequently, the public pays attention to the issues lighted by these editorials (Leff, 2000; Ross, 2003). The universe of this study consists of five years period of both regimes: dictatorial regime (Musharraf regime) from January 1, 2005, to June 30, 2007, and the democratic regime (Zardari's regime) from March 28, 2008, to August 30, 2010. The unit of analysis for this study was an editorial related to the Kashmir dispute. To prevent missing any editorial on Kashmir, this study considers all the editorials published in *The Nation*, *The News*, and *Dawn*, respectively, from January 1, 2005 –June 30, 2007, and March 28, 2008, to August 30, 2010, about Kashmir dispute. In total, 204 editorials were published in three selected newspapers.

Media content was categorized into four frames using the media frame as a central theme using the definition proposed by (Tankard et al., 1991). The frames used by the Pakistani press for coverage of Kashmir dispute including "*self-determination frame*," "*autonomous Kashmir frame*," "*dialogue frame*," and "*human-right violations frame*." Any editorial concerned with the right of self-determination following the United Nations Resolutions was coded as a right of the self-determination frame. Editorials, which dealt with the need for a dialogue to resolve this dispute, have been coded as the *dialogue frame* while, on the other hand, the editorials, which voiced for autonomous/semi-autonomous Kashmir; independent from both India and Pakistan were coded under the *autonomous frame*. Editorials about human rights violation/ were put in the human rights violation frame; independent from both India and Pakistan were coded under the autonomous frame. A totality of an impression is used to assign the content to established categories/frames. Two graduate students were used as coders. The coders were trained to code the content to the assigned categories. To calculate the intercoder reliability, Holist's formula Reliability=  $2M/N1+N2$  was used. The inter-coder reliability level of 87% was achieved among the coders.



## Results

The results for the framing of Kashmir dispute by the Pakistani English Press are shown below. As a whole, *The Nation* contributes 54% (111), *Dawn* 24% (49), and *The News* 21 % (44) editorials on Kashmir dispute. Out of 204 editorials, 32 were published on the self-determination frame, 40 were about autonomous Kashmir frame, the 118 on a need for dialogue, and 14 on human rights violations (Table 1).

**RQ1:** Is there a significant difference in the coverage of the Kashmir dispute during dictatorial and democratic regimes in the three newspapers?

Of 204 editorials, 135 (66.17%) were published during dictatorial (Musharraf's regime), whereas 69 (33.82%) were contributed during democratic (Zardari's regime) (Table 1).

Table 1. Frequency and percentage of editorials coverage of Kashmir dispute in *The Nation*, *The News* & *Dawn* newspapers during dictatorial and democratic regimes (N=204).

| Regime      | Newspapers        |                 |             |             |
|-------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------|-------------|
|             | <i>The Nation</i> | <i>The News</i> | <i>Dawn</i> | Total       |
| Dictatorial | 62(45.9%)         | 38(28.1%)       | 35(25.9%)   | 135(100.0%) |
| Democratic  | 49(71.0%)         | 6(8.7%)         | 14(20.3%)   | 69(100.0%)  |

$\chi^2$  (2, N=204) =13.897,  $p < 0.01$ ; Cramer's V=.261,  $p < 0.001$ ,

A Chi-square test for independence indicated a significant difference between the two regimes and the content published by three newspapers  $\chi^2$  (2, N=204) =13.897,  $p < 0.01$ ; Cramer's V=.261. Overall, there is a significant difference in terms of publication of editorials between the dictatorial and democratic regimes, i.e., 135 (66.17%) were published during dictatorial (Musharraf's regime); whereas 69 (33.82%) were contributed during democratic (Zardari's regime). *The Nation* has given more coverage to Kashmir dispute than the other two newspapers during both regimes.

Interestingly, the three newspapers differed in terms of their coverage in both regimes. During the dictatorial regime, *The Nation* published 45.9% editorials, *The News* 28.1%, and *Dawn* 25.9%. Similarly, they also differed in the democratic regime, *The Nation* 71 %, *The News* 8.7%, and *Dawn* 20.3%. *The Nation* and *Dawn* have followed almost the same pattern of coverage in both regimes, whereas *The News* has given more coverage to Kashmir dispute during dictatorial regime (28.1%) than democratic (8.7%). Similarly, both regimes and content categories also have significant difference  $\chi^2$  (3, N=204) =14.007,  $p < 0.003$ ; Cramer's V=.262,  $p < 0.003$ . As right for self-determination and human rights violation has the same kind of coverage in both regimes. When we excluded these two frames and conducted chi-square between the dialogue frame and semi-autonomous Kashmir and both regimes, the results were again significant  $\chi^2$  (1, N=158) =6.126,  $p < 0.01$ ; Cramer's V= .213,  $p < 0.01$ . Out of 40 editorials on autonomous Kashmir, 35 (87.12%) were published during the dictatorial regime, and 5 (12.5%) were published in a democratic regime. On the other hand, out of 118 articles on the dialogue frame, 77 (65.3%) were published during the dictatorial regime, and 41 (34.7%) were contributed to a democratic regime. As expected, *The Nation* is an ideological newspaper, has given more coverage to the self-determination and dialogue frame than two other newspapers. Overall, it has published 54.54 percent editorials on the Kashmir dispute that is more than the combined editorials published by *The News* and *Dawn*.

**RQ2:** Were the dominant frames during the dictatorial regime regarding the Kashmir dispute in the press different from the democratic regime?

Table 2. Frequency and percentage of editorials frames during dictatorial and democratic Regimes ( $N=204$ ).

| Regimes       | Newspapers               |                          |                |                         | Total     |
|---------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|-----------|
|               | Self-determination Frame | Autonomous Kashmir Frame | Dialogue Frame | Human Rights Violations |           |
| 1.Dictatorial | 17 (12.6%)               | 35 (25.9%)               | 77 (57.0%)     | 6(4.4%)                 | 135(100%) |
| 2.Democratic  | 15(21.7%)                | 5(7.2%)                  | 41(59.4%)      | 8 (11.6%)               | 69(100%)  |

$\chi^2$  (3,  $N=204$ ) =14.722,  $p < 0.002$ ; Cramer's  $V=.262$ ,  $p < 0.003$

Fisher's Exact Test showed a significant difference between the frames used to describe Kashmir dispute and two regimes  $\chi^2$  (3,  $N=204$ )=14.722,  $p < 0.002$ ; Cramer's  $V= .262$ . Excluding the human rights violation frame, when we conducted a chi-square test of independence, the difference between the remaining three frames and two regimes is also significant  $\chi^2$  (2,  $N=190$ ) =10.633,  $p < 0.005$ ; Contingency Coefficient  $\phi=.230$ ,  $p < 0.005$ . In terms of self-determination frame, the *democratic regime* gave 21.7% coverage to it as compared to the dictatorial regime's 12.6% coverage. On the other hand, the autonomous Kashmir frame gets 7.2% coverage in the democratic regime than 25.9% in the dictatorial regime. Interestingly, the dialogue fame 59.4% receives more coverage in the democratic regime than a dictatorial regime where it gets 57.0% coverage. The human right frame also follows the same pattern as the dialogue frame (Table 2).

## Discussion

This study provides quantitative insight into Pakistani Press coverage on Kashmir dispute during dictatorial and democratic regimes. Our results offer evidence that during the dictatorial regime (Musharraf's regime), the dialogue frame remained dominant in the coverage of the Pakistani press regarding Kashmir dispute followed by the autonomous Kashmir frame. Conversely, in the democratic regime (Zardari's regime), although the dominant frame was the dialogue frame, however, it was followed by the self-determination frame to resolve the Kashmir dispute according to the wishes of Kashmiri people, and the autonomous Kashmir frame in the dictatorial regime was almost negligible.

### Ruling Elite Control of Kashmir Framing

Why did media frame Kashmir conflict in terms of the dialogue frame followed by the autonomous Kashmir frame in the dictatorial regime and dialogue frame supported by the self-determination frame in the democratic regime? From where the media has borrowed this vocabulary for framing Kashmir conflict differently in two different regimes. It follows that these journalistic practices don't exist in isolation instead find parallels worldwide and are aptly conceptualized by Gamson (1989), who argued that framing might be an intentional and conscious act by journalists [media organizations] than an unconscious practice of journalistic norms, values, organizational cultures and deadlines (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Tuchman, 1978). And from a constructionist perspective, media reality construction function is multi-layered interaction and competition-based phenomena among political elites, interest groups, and media organizations (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). From this view, the construction of the Kashmir conflict was dominated by the ruling elites of the time, and the press was promoting the same frame used by the elite for

the description of Kashmir in the respective regimes. As a result, the media was acting as a loudspeaker for the ruling elite in the respective regimes rather than a critical observer of their actions and policies regarding the Kashmir conflict.

Another probable reason that the news media followed the ruling elites frame is the sensitivity of the Kashmir issue and subjectivity of foreign policy on this issue. This line of argument is supported by another study that found how media coverage in Pakistan has aptly been managed by the power hunters to gain and strengthen their control over society and even in the region. The authors conclude that the resourceful media cells and skilled spokespersons ...powerful state official information sources—including Press Information Department (PID), Directorate General Public Relations (DGPR), Directorate of Information and Public Relations (DIPR) and Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), Foreign Office, etc.—are powerful enough to influence press coverage to promote a particular point of view (Kamboh & Yousaf, 2019). In this sense, keeping in view the sensitivity of the Kashmir conflict between India and Pakistan, the powerful government sources of information influence the press coverage in advancing certain ways of seeing the social world through the use of specific frames regarding Kashmir conflict. Put it this way, as media has to depend on these powerful sources of state for information on Kashmir conflict; thus, they promote frames forwarded by these sources to construct Kashmir in the minds of readers.

## The Difference in Framing Techniques between Dictatorial and Democratic Regimes

Why did press coverage differ in the dictatorial and democratic regimes? The findings of this study are significant in the sense that dictatorial regimes have been free even to talk about alternative solutions about the Kashmir dispute. In contrast, democratic regimes have always been advocating to resolve the Kashmir dispute following UNO resolutions. One of the reasons for this different approach towards Kashmir dispute by the democratic regimes is their fear of losing popularity amongst the public. On the other hand, as the dictators have their origin from the military, they feel confident to even explore other options than self-determination to resolve this dispute, which otherwise is considered a sensitive issue to be solved by the democratic governments. Our findings support the previous findings on press-state relations, where press indexes government officials' stance and pay little attention to public opinion (Bennett, 1990; Bennett, Lawrence, & Livingston, 2006). In conclusion, it is summarized that Kashmir dispute coverage in the Pakistani English press has been intentional and conscious and media organizations to some extent have followed government stances on Kashmir dispute in both democratic and dictatorial regimes. The vocabulary of exploring different options about Kashmir conflict had been introduced by Musharraf's administration, and the analysis of this study found the presence of this vocabulary on Kashmir conflict in the press more in his tenure.

The difference in the coverage of the newspapers during democratic and dictatorial regimes also reveals their commercial interest. The almost similar coverage by *The Nation* and its emphasis on the self-determination frame in both regimes is an indication of its pro-government stance beside its ideological bias in favor of Kashmir issue; whereas, *The News* and *Dawn* have accorded more coverage in the dictatorial regime than the democratic regime as both organizations have their commercial interests and they don't want to infuriate the powerful military ruler. This makes neo-liberalism and media marriage debate relevant as well. As Herman and Chomsky's insightful summary about media and elite's symbiotic relationship explicates how the media accords an extensive coverage to

officialdom—because of its dependency on powerful inside information sources and advertising revenues, which is blood for media, thus, this implicit control and use of media by the ruling elite manufacture consent in a given society (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). Likewise, Yousaf and Rahman (2014) elaborated that liberalism orientated media business practices make media more business-oriented industries serving and advancing the version of those who own means of production. As it is evident that a significant share of the media revenue comes from government advertisements, thus, to a larger extent, the media's version of the reality is biased in favor of the ruling elite. To put in another way, media organizations and the ruling elite were working in a multi-layered complicated relationship to influence and control the framing techniques employed to construct reality regarding Kashmir conflict. The unique aspect of this study is that it revealed the different role of Pakistani media for constructing Kashmir conflict in the dictatorial and democratic regimes.

This study has limitations, as well. It is based only on the content analysis of the three most circulated and influential newspapers of Pakistan. It tells us the story of how media frames Kashmir dispute. Further research, coupled with respondents' survey, can provide insight into how this framing influences readers' perspective about this issue. Furthermore, the analysis can be extended to all democratic and dictatorial regimes since the creation of Pakistan for a more comprehensive picture of the way this conflict has been covered in different regimes. Future researchers can also compare television and newspapers in terms of frames employed to cover the Kashmir dispute.

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**Muhammad Yousaf** (Ph.D. in Communication Studies) is an Assistant Professor in the Centre for media and Communication Studies at University of Gujrat, Pakistan. His research interests include media and public opinion, political communication, cross-cultural communication, and media and development.

**Bushra Hameedur Rahman** (Ph.D. in Communication Studies) is a Professor in the Institute of Communication Studies, at University of the Punjab, Lahore. She is the editor of the Journal of Media Studies. She is also vice-president of Islam and Media Group at the International Association of Media and Communication Research (IAMCR). Her research interests include media and gender, conflict journalism, and critical discourse analysis.

**Zahid Yousaf** (Ph.D. in Communication Studies) is an Associate Professor and Chairperson in the Centre for Media and Communication Studies at University of Gujrat, Pakistan. He is interested in minority press in Pakistan, political communication, and media ownership.