



# Framing of the Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan in the U.S. press: An analysis of U.S. foreign policy interest

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the U.S. press coverage of the Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan before and after the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States and explores if the main frames provided in the stories were in line with shifting U.S. foreign policy interests. This study analysed news stories from The New York Times and The Washington Post with the two identified time frames, using the Indexing theory. Indexing lays out that media in a country emphasises on the foreign policies of its own government in international reporting. The study also used framing as a theoretical construct as it sought to study news frames about the Kashmir dispute in the U.S. press. The study was conducted at two levels: story level and source level. A coding sheet was used to code 270 news stories from the two time frames. Findings indicate that there were no significant differences between the two time frames in framing the cause of dispute and its solutions. The stories gave a balanced account of the dispute at the story level. Significant differences, however, were found in source usage between the two time frames. Authors attributed the difference in source usage to the changing security situation in Kashmir with military officials being quoted more significantly during the pre-9/11 era due to Kashmir being secured by the Indian military. Similarly, non-governmental representatives were quoted more significantly in the news stories to introduce neutral voices about the conflict in the pre-9/11 era.

Keywords: *India, United States, Kashmir, indexing, media*

## INTRODUCTION

The question of how the prestige or elite press is influenced by its home nation's foreign policy stances is one that has been posed by mass communication researchers and others for quite some time. From this query, a large body of literature (e.g., Bagdikian, 2004; Hallin, 1986; Herman & Chomsky, 2002) that has examined the possible link between news coverage and foreign policy has emerged. One of the more influential theoretical concepts to have been developed is Lance Bennett's Indexing theory. The fundamental premise of the theory is that the journalistic reporting of a story involving government debate is shaped by the degree of unity or conflict that exists within the higher echelons of government (Bennett, 1990). It surmises that patterns of news coverage will reflect the range of opinions that exist on a particular subject matter and that for issues involving foreign affairs, the range tends to be narrow in scope. In fact, in his own study on how the U.S. news media covered United States' intervention in Nicaragua and its efforts to destabilize the country's Sandinista government in the 1980s, Bennett (1990) found that the views reflected in the news media coverage were those that came from elite U.S. foreign policymakers.

The Indexing theory has found support from studies (e.g., Bennett, Lawrence, Livingston, 2006; Harp, Loke, & Bachmann, 2010) that have mainly tackled high-stake security-related foreign policy issues directly involving the United States. The portrayal of the Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan in the U.S. press serves as an important case study to determine if the Indexing theory finds support from it. Since India attained independence and was divided into India and Pakistan in 1947, both nations have fought three wars in 1948, 1965 and 1971 over the possession of the Muslim-majority state of Jammu and Kashmir ("Milestones", 2015). The late 1980s saw the rise of an armed Muslim-led insurgency demanding independence for Kashmir, which India claims to be supported by Pakistan. However, the United States during the 1990s only treated the Kashmir dispute as a human rights problem and not as one related to terrorism; it refused to condemn Pakistan for supporting the insurgency (Miglani, 2001; Schaffer, 2009). The 11 September 2001 (9/11) attacks by Al-Qaeda in the United States brought about changes in U.S. perception on the Kashmir dispute. After the 9/11 attacks, the U.S. became more favourable towards India with regard to the Kashmir dispute. The U.S. recognised the insurgent-led violence in Kashmir as terrorism emanating from Pakistan and urged Pakistan to stop supporting the insurgency (Miglani, 2001; Schaffer, 2009).

Evidently, published literature has laid out the changes in the U.S. policy toward the Kashmir dispute after 9/11 attacks. The purpose of this present study is to explore if the Indexing theory holds true when the foreign policy issue involves the United States as a third party. To do so, it examines how two elite U.S. papers—*The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*—covered the Kashmir conflict between India and Pakistan. The time period chosen for the analysis is from 1991 to 2011, allowing an examination of coverage ten years prior to and ten years following the terrorist attacks on U.S. soil on 11 September 2001. Given that the security stakes were higher for the United States in terms of its relations with both India and Pakistan after the attacks, an assumption was made that shifts in coverage might have taken place. A framing analysis was employed to understand the type of U.S. press coverage received by the Kashmir dispute and it portrayed U.S. foreign policies toward Kashmir and in turn, supported the Indexing theory. A historical background on the Kashmir conflict and United States' relations with India as well as Pakistan and its

policy stances towards the Kashmir dispute during the specified time frame is provided next followed by a section on framing as a theoretical construct.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Kashmir dispute — historical background*

In August 1947, British rule in India ended with the creation of two countries—India and Pakistan. Each princely state (native Indian State) under the British Raj had the option of joining either country or remaining independent. As many as 562 princely states became part of India (Ganguli, 1996), while the remaining three merged to become a part of Pakistan. The state of Jammu and Kashmir presented a problem to its ruler, Maharaja Hari Singh, given the distinct religious majorities that comprised its three territories: Muslims in Kashmir, Hindus in Jammu and Buddhist majority in Ladakh.

Before Maharaja Hari Singh could make a decision on whether to accede to Pakistan or India or form an independent nation, a pro-Pakistan portion of the Kashmir population rebelled against Maharaja Hari Singh in September 1947 (Bhattacharya, 2005). In their quest to capture Jammu and Kashmir, on 22 October 1947, around 5,000 tribesmen from Afghanistan, with the support of Pakistani soldiers, captured Poonch (a Muslim-dominated area in Kashmir) and established a region they call Azad [free] Kashmir (Bhattacharya, 2005). Maharaja Hari Singh sought military help from the Indian government in fighting the invaders and, in return, acceded to India on 27 October 1947. The Indian government then took the issue to the United Nations. On 13 August 1948, the United Nations passed a resolution calling for the future of Jammu and Kashmir to be determined by a plebiscite (Ahmed, 2000). The plebiscite, however, never happened. Pakistani forces refused to withdraw from the territory it had captured in the Kashmir region, and India refused to allow a plebiscite to take place until Kashmir was free from Pakistani control. Kashmir has since been a territorial point of contention between India and Pakistan, which has led to armed conflicts between the two nations. In 1965, both countries went to war over Kashmir, but the issue remained unresolved (“Milestones”, 2015). The emergence of armed insurgencies in Jammu and Kashmir by pro-independence and pro-Pakistan militant groups, beginning in the late 1980s, has led to a reduction in the Hindu population in the Kashmir region, with many relocating to various parts of India (Bhattacharya, 2005).

### *U.S. policy stance towards India, Pakistan and the Kashmir dispute*

The U.S. policy stance regarding the Kashmir territorial dispute between India and Pakistan has largely been shaped by U.S. global threat assessments. Following the failed U.N. Security Council resolution in 1947, Pakistan moved forward in its attempt to forge strong ties with the United States by suggesting a Soviet threat in Pakistan’s northern-controlled areas (Shaffer, 2009). By 1949, the United States accepted Pakistan’s gestures of developing a close alliance in accord with its main foreign policy of containing communism. The United States viewed Pakistan as an important route into Central Asia and considered it as a prime location for carrying out counter-intelligence and military operations in its cold war efforts (Palit, 2001). In contrast, India’s decision to adopt a non-alignment policy created tensions between India and the United States. Instead of viewing India’s policy as a position of

neutrality, the United States interpreted it as a sign that India was inclined to support the Soviet Union (Palit, 2001).

In 1954, the United States agreed to supply Pakistan with military assistance; later that year, Pakistan also became a member of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO), an entity designed to protect the Southeast Asia region from communist expansion (Kux, 2001). India reacted with vehement protest against U.S. military assistance to Pakistan, viewing the U.S.–Pakistan agreement as having dire consequences for India's security. In spite of the protest, the United States embarked upon its aim to provide military aid to Pakistan in the hope of thwarting Soviet influence and aggression in the region. It also exhibited support for Pakistan by revisiting the Kashmir issue and bringing it up at the U.N. Security Council in 1957 (Palit, 2001). The end result was another impasse with no plebiscite. By the 1960s, the U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War led the United States to lessen its active stance in the Kashmir dispute.

Following Pakistan's war with India in 1971, the eastern part of Pakistan won its independence from Pakistan to form Bangladesh (Kux, 2001; Plait, 2008). Following the war, India and Pakistan decided to sign the Simla Agreement on 2 July 1972 (Plait, 2008). The agreement reflected a new resolution on the part of both countries to reconcile disputes through bilateral negotiations and other means. Thereafter, instead of supporting a plebiscite as it had in previous years, the United States would use the agreement to urge the two countries to resolve its dispute over Kashmir at a bilateral level.

By the 1980s and 1990s, the development of nuclear programs in both Pakistan and India was increasingly becoming a major concern to the United States (Kux, 2001; Shaffer, 2009). The United States saw the nuclear build-ups and the continuing Kashmir dispute between the two countries as a serious security threat to the region. Non-proliferation in the region thus became a major goal of the United States (Kux, 2001; Shaffer, 2009).

In the early 1990s, allegations of human rights abuses in Kashmir also caught the attention of the United States. The U.S. State Department issued reports describing and condemning the violations that were allegedly being perpetrated by security forces as well as by militants in Kashmir (Schaffer, 2009). Around the same period, terrorism emanating from Asia and Southeast Asia was also become a growing concern of the United States (Plait, 2008). Accusations of Pakistan's sponsorship of terrorist activities placed strains on U.S.-Pakistan relations. At the same time, India's commitment to fighting terrorism under the auspices of the United Nations became one of the turning points in U.S.–India relations, and helped forge a closer relationship between the two countries. India's sweeping economic reforms and its growth in international trade also contributed to strengthened relations between the United States and India (Schaffer, 2009).

Following the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., U.S.-India and U.S.-Pakistan relations dramatically shifted into what could be characterized as a delicate engagement in the name of the war on terror. The Indian government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, immediately pledged its support of U.S. efforts in fighting terrorism and agreed to provide its intelligence and transportation-related facilities to the U.S. Armed Forces (Schaffer, 2009). Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf saw India's offer as a ploy to gain U.S. support of India's stance on Kashmir. He then convinced the Pakistani public of the need to also support the United States in its war on terror.

On 13 December 2001, five terrorists attacked India's parliament complex, killing seven individuals working at the complex. The United States condemned the attack and urged Pakistan to help bring the perpetrators of the attack to justice. India claimed the terrorists were based in Pakistan. Although Pakistan refuted the claim and condemned the attack, the act led to the deployment of troops by India and Pakistan to the Line of Control separating the Pakistani-controlled and Indian-controlled areas of Kashmir (Miglani, 2001; Schaffer, 2009). U.S. President George W. Bush contacted both Vajpayee and Musharraf urging restraint and offered the expertise of U.S. law enforcement to take action against terrorist organisations. On 12 January 2002, Musharraf made a speech announcing a ban on all terrorist organisations in Pakistan and pledged his country's efforts to combat terrorism (Schaffer, 2009).

In the spring of 2003, India's Prime Minister Vajpayee, in a speech he made in Srinagar, the summer capital of Kashmir, "offered a 'hand of friendship' to Pakistan" and invited Pakistan to engage in peaceful dialogue (Schaffer, 2009, p. 181). Following the speech, the governments of both India and Pakistan announced that they were resuming bilateral talks and would be taking steps to establish transportation links across the Line of Control. The United States was more than pleased and encouraged the resumption of bilateral dialogues between India and Pakistan. It made it clear that the United States was ready to help when needed, but that it preferred to leave any negotiations regarding Kashmir to India and Pakistan. In a press conference in 2006 during Musharraf's official visit to Washington, D.C., Bush reaffirmed the United States' adopted stance regarding Kashmir by asserting, "[The] 'Kashmir issue will be solved when [the] two leaders decide to solve it. And we want to help. The United States can't force nations to reach an agreement just because we want there to be an agreement. Lasting agreements occur when leaders of nations say, let's get the past behind and let's move forward'" (Schaffer, 2009, p. 189). India faced terrorist attacks in Mumbai in November of 2008 that killed 166 people, including six U.S. citizens. India blamed Pakistan for the attack, however, Pakistan denied the charge (Riedel, 2014). India then resorted to using soft diplomacy in its dealings with the government of Pakistan. For instance, Pakistan's Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gillani was invited by India's Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in 2011 to watch a game of cricket being played between the two nations in India. Pakistan's President Asif Ali Zardari in April 2012 began peace talks with India during a visit to the country ("Flashpoints and", 2012). In 2014, Narendra Modi became India's prime minister after his Bharatiya Janata Party won national elections in India. In 2016, after India attacked insurgent camps in Pakistan-administered Kashmir, the U.S. government termed the move responsible and calibrated (Sharma, 2017). Similarly, after over 40 Indian paramilitary soldiers were killed in an attack in Kashmir in February 2019, the U.S. government condemned the incident and called upon Pakistan to stop supporting terror (Rajghatta, 2019).

Thus, in summary, although U.S. relations with Pakistan could be characterized as friendly during the Cold War years, it became strained during the 1990s with suspicions of Pakistan state-sponsored terrorism. In terms of U.S.-India relations, India's decision to adopt a non-alignment policy led to tense relations with the United States prior to the 1990s. However, as India pledged to combat terrorism and with its growing economic ties with the United States, U.S.-India relations warmed especially after the 9/11 attacks in the United States. The terrorist attacks on U.S. soil prompted the United States to strike a delicate

balance between its relations with both India and Pakistan. The U.S. goal was to attain cooperation from both nations to support its war on terror.

Based on the Indexing theory, the primary interest of this study was to see if the U.S. press coverage of the Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan would reflect the U.S. policy stance. Although past studies based on the Indexing theory would suggest that a close alignment would exist, this particular case of Kashmir is unique in that the United States has been a third party to the dispute. Thus, the question raised is whether or not—in instances whereby a country is not directly involved in a foreign affairs event and, therefore, the stakes are not as high—a country's governmental stance still holds sway over the press coverage. To explore this question, a framing analysis of U.S. news coverage of the Kashmir dispute was employed in order to understand the degree to which the coverage reflected the U.S. policy stance towards India, Pakistan and the Kashmir issue.

## FRAMING ANALYSIS

News media frames emerge as the presence or absence of keywords, common phrases, imageries, and sources of information and the connections among them (Entman, 1993, 2004). They underscore the importance of select pieces of information through the inclusion of certain text elements and by their placement and/or repetition within the news narrative. According to Gamson (1989), facts alone have no intrinsic meaning, but become meaningful once embedded in a frame or storyline. Tuchman (1978) and Gitlin (1980) linked framing to broader ideological and politico-economic structural processes, which are influenced by journalists, their news organisations, and political/societal elites.

For this present study, the often-cited definition of framing by Entman (1993) was adopted. According to Entman (1993), framing involves the presentation of reality in a way that makes certain aspects more salient, thus promoting a particular “problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” (p. 52). In an effort to grasp if a correspondence existed in how the U.S. press presented the Kashmir conflict and the shifting U.S. policy stances regarding India and Pakistan together with the conflict, the analysis of the news text was primarily centred on how the newspapers framed the Kashmir issue through their (1) definition, (2) interpretation, and (3) solution recommendation in regard to the issue. The overarching interest was to see if the presented frames connoted a particular position of support (India vs. Pakistan) or a neutral position with regard to the Kashmir dispute, and if they coincided with U.S. policy.

To better grasp possible U.S. press endorsement of a particular country's position on Kashmir, the sources that were cited within each of the news items were also analysed. For as studies (e.g., Carragee & Roefs, 2004; Perkins & Starosta, 2001) have indicated, source citations also play a major role in the conveying of frames. Gamson (1988) argues that certain sources, i.e., particularly those from political, socio-political, and industrial organisations, work actively to influence the news and strategically cultivate resources to influence news frames—a process he terms “frame sponsorship”. So while journalists and journalistic routines influence the formation of frames, so do stakeholders who seek to influence the frame before it reaches the printed page or the electronic screen. News media can be viewed “as a symbolic site on which various stakeholders contend” (Miller, 1997, p. 373). Thus, framing is a part of the “ongoing process by which ideological interpretive

mechanisms are derived from competing stakeholder positions” (Miller & Riechert, 2001, p. 109). Carragee and Roefs (2004) described sources’ competition to sponsor their preferred definitions of issues in news frames as “framing contests.” Framing has been used in political communication research. Bhattacharya (2005) studied the portrayal of Muslims in news stories in the Indian press about the Kashmir conflict. She found that most Muslims in the news were associated with Pakistan. A significantly greater number of news stories did not have bias against Muslims. Militants operating in Kashmir were significantly more identified as Pakistani rather than Indian.

Mazumdar (2019a) found that the U.S. media used more favourable frames for India in their news stories after the Cold War. The researcher concluded that the U.S. press portrayed the Kashmir dispute as a Pakistan-backed terror movement. Mazumdar (2019b) found significant differences in the framing of India’s portrayal during and after the Cold War in areas of defence, economy, nuclear weapons, terrorism and portrayal of separatist movements in news stories in the U.S. press. The researcher also found that the U.S. press supported India’s policies in the news stories after the Cold War. Dimitrova and Ahren (2007) studied the portrayal of the 2003 Iraq war in *The New York Times*, *The Guardian* (U.S. coalition partner nations), *Al Ahram* and *Al Jazeera*. They found that the Arab media comprising the media outlets, *Al Ahram* and *Al Jazeera*, used military conflict and violence of war frames to portray the 2003 Iraq war. *The New York Times* and *The Guardian* used rebuilding of Iraq frame that the Arab media organisations had not used in their stories. Hanson (1995) studied the framing of national and international news on the front page of the Indian newspaper *Times of India* between 1985 and 1993. He found that overall, the coverage was balanced. However, he also found that the international coverage of events on the front page of *Times of India* was at its peak in 1987, which coincided with India sending a peacekeeping force to Sri Lanka to help them fight Tamil insurgents. Hanson (1995) concluded that the Indian media gave prominence to international news only when the Indian government was militarily involved overseas. Holt (2012) studied how the U.S. media framed Democratic Party leaders Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton in 2008. He found that news stories about Barack Obama were framed on the basis of race while stories about Hillary Clinton were framed using gender. Yang and Ishak (2012) studied the portrayal of the Hindu rights group Hindraf in the Malaysian media. The researchers argued that the frames used in the news stories under study were about consequences to governmental action, conflict between the Malaysian administration and Hindraf, responsibility frame, moral values and human interest.

Based on the knowledge regarding news framing and the Kashmir debate which were just reviewed, the basic research questions that drove this study are as follows:

**RQ1:** How did *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* frame the conflict between India and Pakistan in regard to the Kashmir dispute?

**RQ2:** Do differences in framing exist in the pre-9/11 versus post-9/11 years?

**RQ3:** Do the frames offered by *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* reflect the U.S. policy stances toward India and Pakistan?

## METHOD

### *Sample*

To gain an understanding of U.S. news coverage of the Kashmir dispute, news articles and editorials/op-eds from *The News York Times* and *The Washington Post* were analysed for this study. The two newspapers were chosen based on the knowledge that both publications are identified as newspapers of record and are considered to be agenda setters for other mainstream news media (Denham, 2014; Meraz, 2011); thus, the findings garnered from these papers were surmised to be good indicators of the type of Kashmir coverage offered by other U.S. sources. A LexisNexis Academic search for each of the two newspapers was carried out using the search term “Kashmir” in the headline and U.S. in the body of the articles. In order to carry out a comparison of the pre- and post-9/11 periods, two search periods were selected. The first was from 10 September 1991 (approximately one decade before the 9/11 terrorist attacks on U.S. soil) to 10 September 2001 (the day before 9/11) and the second was from 11 September 2001 (the day of the 9/11 terrorist attacks) to 11 September 2011 (approximately one decade after 9/11). A total of 354 articles were returned by the searches. After removing duplicates, blogs, letters to the editor, wire service stories, and stories not focused on the topic area, the authors were left with 270 articles for analysis (114 from Time frame 1; 156 from Time frame 2); 46.7% was from *The New York Times* and 53.3% was from *The Washington Post*.

### *Data analysis*

A quantitative content analysis of the articles was carried out using two units of analysis. The first was at the story level that focused on revealing how the news stories were defined and interpreted as well as provided a solution to the Kashmir problem. The second was at the source level, which concentrated on uncovering the types of sources that were used in the stories. Coding sheets were developed for each level of analysis. For the story level coding, the following items were included: “Does the story suggest an underlying cause of the Kashmir dispute/conflict?”; “If yes, which entity is framed as the source of the problem?”; “Does the story provide a solution to the Kashmir dispute/conflict?”; “If yes, what type of solution is presented?”; “Does the story refer to allegations of human rights violations by Indian security forces?”; “Does the story refer to allegations of human rights violations by Kashmiri insurgents?” and “Does the story mention Indian allegations of Pakistan support to the Kashmiri insurgents?”

Included in the source level coding sheet were: “Information source type”; “If government source, which government?”; “If non-governmental organisation, in which country/area is organisation based?” and “If ordinary citizen, which country/area is the citizen from?”. Each coding sheet was developed through repeated discussions and testing before settling on the final guidelines.

To establish intercoder reliability, approximately 10% of the articles were independently coded. The coders underwent several training sessions and tested the instruments using articles not included in the final sample before attaining acceptable

reliability coefficients (Krippendorff's alpha<sup>1</sup>), which ranged from .75 to 1.00, with a majority of the items attaining alpha levels beyond .90.

## Results

The dateline for a majority of the stories was India (55.1%) followed by Pakistan (19.5%) and then the United States (12.5%); the remaining percentages were unidentified or in other locations. In examining how *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* presented the fundamental root of the Kashmir problem and possible solutions to the dispute, no significant differences via chi-square analyses were found between the two newspapers. No significant differences in the findings via chi-square analyses were also found between the two time periods under study (Time frame 1: 10 September 1991–10 September 2001; Time frame 2: 11 September 2001–11 September 2011). Thus, the results pertaining to dispute causes and possible dispute solutions as presented in the articles from the entire period from 10 September 1991 to 11 September 2011 are provided.

The cause of the Kashmir dispute was addressed in 17.8% of the stories. Of those stories, 33.1% indicated the Indian government or its security forces as the source of the problem, while 6.3% pinpointed the Pakistani government or its security forces as the source of the problem. The majority of the news items presented other sources as the root of the problem (45.8%) or painted a more complicated picture by discussing a combination of causes of the Kashmir dispute (16.7%). Among other sources (45.8%) mentioned as the root cause of the Kashmir problem were the British colonial rulers' policy of dividing India in 1947 and the role of the last King of Jammu and Kashmir, Maharaja Hari Singh.

Tied to the interpretation of the Kashmir problem is the notion of human rights violation. Of the entire set of articles, 23.7% specifically mentioned accusations of human rights violations by India's security forces, while 8.9% referenced accusations of human rights violations by Kashmiri insurgents. For the accusations of violations by India's security forces, the sources of those allegations came from Pakistan (28.1%), the United States (6.3%), or from another source (39.1%). The other sources (39.1%) comprised former Kashmiri militants and international rights organisations like Amnesty International. For the remaining 26.6%, the sources could not be identified. With regard to the human rights violations by Kashmiri insurgents, 37.5% of the sources were from India and 16.7% were from the United States. Another 16.7% were from other sources and 29.2% of the sources could not be identified. A large majority of the articles (72.6%) did mention the Indian government's accusations of Pakistani support for the Kashmir insurgents.

With regard to a possible solution for the Kashmir dispute, 42.6% of the articles provided a solution. Of those, 28.7% presented a plebiscite as the solution, while 22.6% indicated the independence of Kashmir as the solution. The remaining articles presented other (18.3%) or several other (30.4%) possible solutions. Among several other (30.4%) possible solutions were U.S. intervention, opening of borders between India and Pakistan, initiating peace talks between India and Pakistan, internal mediation by political leaders, foreign mediation by countries not party to the dispute, etc.

A major component of forming narrative frames is the usage of sources. In examining the entire data set (N=2,894), it was found that a majority of the sources relied upon by both *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* articles were from government

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<sup>1</sup> See Hayes and Krippendorff (2007) for an explanation on the strength of Krippendorff's alpha as a measure of reliability for content analysis work.

entities (51.5%), followed by ordinary citizens (15.7%). Representatives of the military made up 6.6% of the sources and insurgent rebels made up 7.5% of the sources. The remaining sources that were identified in the articles are as follows: external news media (5.0%), non-governmental organisations (3.0%), others (5.7%), and could not be determined (5.0%).

Of the government sources cited, which did not fall under the other category or which could not be identified, the largest percentage was from the U.S. government (24.1%), followed by India's central government (22.4%). The Pakistani central government made up 14.3% of the sources, while the Indian-controlled Jammu Kashmir state government made up 5.9%. The sources from the Pakistan-controlled Azad Kashmir state government was negligible at 0.9%. With regard to the citizens that were interviewed and included in the news articles, the majority (53.1%) was from the Indian-controlled Jammu and Kashmir region, followed by the Pakistan-controlled Azad Kashmir region (15.4%). The remaining cited citizens were from the following areas: United States (11.2%), India (10.1), Pakistan (7.3%), and other 0.9%. For the remainder 2.0% of the ordinary citizens, their location of origin could not be identified.

Significant differences in the sources cited were found between the two analysed time frames (Time frame 1: 10 September 1991–10 September 2001; Time frame 2: 11 September 2001–11 September 2011). As can be seen in Table 1, higher percentages of government sources, ordinary citizens, and insurgent rebels were used as sources within the news articles during the post 9/11 time frame compared to the articles from the pre-9/11 time frame. Representatives from non-governmental organisations (e.g., research think tanks, Amnesty International, etc.) and military officials were more often cited during the pre-9/11 time period than in the post-9/11 time period.

**Table 1.** Difference in sources used during the two time frames.

| Sources            | Time frame 1<br>(pre-9/11) | Time frame 2<br>(post-9/11) | Total            |
|--------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|
| Govt. official     | 38.5%                      | 61.5%                       | 100.0% (n=1,491) |
| Non-govt. rep      | 57.0%                      | 43.0%                       | 100.0% (n=86)    |
| Military officials | 56.8%                      | 43.2%                       | 100.0% (n=190)   |
| Citizen            | 46.0%                      | 54.0%                       | 100.0% (n=454)   |
| Rebel insurgent    | 43.6%                      | 56.4%                       | 100.0% (n=218)   |
| External news      | 42.1%                      | 57.9%                       | 100.0% (n=145)   |

$$\chi^2 = 35.58, df = 5, p < 0.0001$$

*Note:* With each source mentioned serving as the unit of analysis, each source was separately coded and analysed. For purposes of focusing on specifically identified sources, the “other” and the “unable to determine” categories were not included in the table.

## DISCUSSION

The main objective of this study was to examine how the U.S. press, represented in this study by *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, covered the Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan. Given that the United States has been involved in the dispute only as a third party, the study also sought to explore if the Indexing theory would hold up under circumstances in which the press's home nation is not directly involved in the international issue or conflict in question. More specifically, it investigated if the types of frames presented by the press in regard to Kashmir would be reflective of U.S. policy stances toward India and Pakistan even though the United States has not been directly involved in the conflict and the stakes have been rather low for the United States since the 1990s.

In regard to the first research question posed for this study that asked how *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* framed the Kashmir conflict, the data showed that in articles that conveyed the root cause of the conflict, a majority of the articles painted a complex picture and cited various factors as leading to the conflict. Although more stories pinpointed the Indian government rather than the Pakistani government as exacerbating the conflict, the numbers are too low to allow any definitive conclusions to be drawn about the press adopting a particular stance. Overall, it appears the U.S. news stories approached the conflict in a relatively balanced manner. Balance and complexity were also connoted in relaying possible solutions for the conflict. Of the articles that mentioned some form of resolution, varied solutions including Kashmir independence as well as a plebiscite were mentioned.

The numbers of articles referencing human rights violation by India or by the rebel insurgents in Kashmir were also too low to permit any form of interpretations to be made that the press was leaning toward supporting one side or another. An element within the news stories, however, that pointed towards more of a support for India was the mentioning of the Indian government's accusations about Pakistan's support for Kashmir insurgents. Over 2/3 of the articles made such mentions.

Another element within the framing process that indicated more of a supportive stance for India than for Pakistan was the number of Indian sources used within the news stories. Overall, a large percentage of all of the articles relied on government officials as sources and while U.S. government sources made up the largest percentage of those identified, the Indian central government sources came in second and exceeded the usage of the Pakistani central government sources. Moreover, when the voices of ordinary citizens were included in the news stories, the large majority came from the Indian-controlled Jammu and Kashmir region. This could be partially explained by the fact that a majority of the stories examined had an India dateline, which is understandable considering that the Indian-administered Kashmir has been the epicentre of the insurgency.

It should be underscored that significant differences existed in the usage of both government and ordinary citizen sources across the two time frames. The post-9/11 time frame saw a significant increase in the usage of these sources in the news stories. Thus, with regard to research question two that asked if significant differences could be detected across the two time frames, it is only within the sourcing realm that such differences came to light. A reason for this could be that during the post-9/11 time frame, India managed to get the Kashmir insurgency under control and that opened up avenues of government officials and

citizens speaking to the press. Similarly, during the pre-9/11 time frame, military officials and non-government representatives were quoted significantly more in the news stories because the military was totally in-charge of securing and administering the area. The non-governmental representatives were included significantly more to have a more neutral voice to news stories about the Kashmir insurgency.

In terms of the final research question of this study which asked if the frames pertaining to Kashmir as offered by the U.S. news stories reflected U.S. stances toward India and Pakistan, the results from this study are inconclusive. The stories did not show any clear narrative that would suggest indexing according to the U.S. government policy.

Given that the United States has since the 1990s attempted to engage with both India as well as Pakistan and has been encouraging the nations to come to some form of bilateral agreement with regard to Kashmir, the finding from this study that the news stories appeared to be demonstrating a balanced approach in defining the Kashmir dispute and presenting possible solutions, could be interpreted as an indexing of sort.

However, while balance was indicated in the problem definition, interpretation, and solution, the finding that the articles frequently mentioned India's accusations that Pakistan was supporting Kashmiri rebel insurgents together with the finding that officials from the Indian government were relied upon as sources more so than Pakistani government officials could indicate a U.S. press slant towards supporting India. Another factor indicating a U.S. press slant toward India was that only 6.2% of U.S. sources in the study said India violated human rights whereas 16.7% of the U.S. sources in the study accused Kashmiri militants of human rights violations.

The U.S. "war on terror" and concern that Pakistan might be supporting terrorists could be playing a role in the U.S. press demonstrating through its framing elements that it was more aligned with India than with Pakistan. In order to dissect this possibility further, an in-depth qualitative analysis of Kashmir-related news stories during the same time frames selected for this study should perhaps be conducted as a follow-up study.

In order to further explore if the Indexing theory applies to situations in which a press's home nation is a third party to an international conflict, perhaps a study that examines news stories on the conflict selected over a longer time frame is in order. A future study regarding U.S. foreign policy and U.S. press coverage of the Kashmir conflict could compare/contrast stories from the 1950s to the present day, thereby capturing the Cold War years and the "war on terror" years as well as the relatively "quiet" years in between. In light of the strategic partnership between India and Russia, as recently proclaimed by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Russian President Vladimir Putin, and the strains in U.S.–Russia relations, an examination of the U.S. press recent stance towards India in relation to the Kashmir dispute might be informative and thought-provoking.

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