

To Analyze the News Contents of Electronic Media in Pakistan, Whether the Media is Terrorizing or Informing the Community

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Abstract

Drawing on war coverage and media studies, this article analyzes coverage of the May 7–11, 2025 interstate conflict that followed the Pahalgam attack in Indian-administered Kashmir and analyses the role of electronic media in India and Pakistan. With the help of Framing Theory and a qualitative content analysis, the study analyses if the media behaved responsibly with regard to informing people about possible pandemics, or irresponsibly by spreading false rumors and exacerbating people’s anxieties. The study tracks the narratives of six top news channels — three each from India and Pakistan — measuring the coverage tone, feelings it invoked, true-true and false-true (sensational) nature of content. The results show that the media of both sides played a role in creating a higher-nationalism and mutual-hostility environment through sensational or false report, but some attempts at fact-checking and balanced journalism existed as well. The paper concludes with the thesis that media was less a force for industrial democracy than a tool of polarization. The article concludes with proposals to reinforce journalistic responsibility, cross-border media collaboration, and media literacy for the public in the event of a crisis.

Keywords: Electronic media, India-Pakistan Conflict, Misinformation, Sensationalism, Media Framing, War Reporting, Media Ethic, Public Perception, Media Literacy, Framing Theory

Introduction

Over recent years, electronic media have become increasingly important in shaping public perceptions and discourse, particularly in areas where real-time updates can influence public opinion (McQuail, 2010). Due to advancements in

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technology, news about wars and crises can travel quickly and directly to a large number of people through television channels, online platforms, and social media (Seib, 2008). Because media content can reach a large audience, it can easily spark tensions or help people see all sides of an issue (Thussu, 2018). These dimensions can be studied well through a case study of the India-Pakistan conflict that occurred from May 7 to 11, 2025. The increase in hostilities was brought on by a big attack in Pahalgam, Indian-administered Kashmir, which India believed was carried out by militants operating from Pakistani soil (BBC, 2025). As a result, the Indian Air Force operated “Operation Sindoor,” asserting it was hitting targets involved in terrorism across the line of control (Indian Ministry of Defence, 2025). “Operation Bunyan un Marsus” was how Pakistan immediately retaliated, launching attacks on Indian army installations in a tense situation that lasted briefly, but caused many to fear the possibility of another regional war (Pakistani Ministry of Defence, 2025). As they unfolded, electronic media disseminated up-to-date information, statements, arguments, and intense emotions, leaving them essential for both domestic and global audiences.

It is essential to examine media actions during crises, as the way news is presented can either help people stay informed and feel safer or lead to more misunderstandings, concerns, and disputes among the population (Goffman, 1974). Therefore, the research aims to determine whether the electronic media in India and Pakistan were responsible for their reporting during the May 2025 conflict, or if they instead frightened and upset the communities with exaggerations and false information. Six prominent television news channels — Republic, India Today, News18 India, from India, as well as Geo News, ARY News, and Samaa from Pakistan — were compared, focusing on their content, presentation, and impact during the height of the crisis. It first provides details on the conflict and how media fits into that, then breaks down Indian and Pakistani news reports, and lastly compares the two sides to see how they are alike and different. Next, the study examines the stance the media took, whether it was responsible or contributed to the fear, and suggests ways to improve Indo-Pak crisis reporting.

Nationalist sentiments and hostility between India and Pakistan have grown strong over time because of political factors as well as influence from mainstream electronic media. Sometimes, during bilateral crises or when things escalate, media outlets in each country become involved in the events rather than standing aside (Rajagopalan, 2021; Yusuf, 2020). A steady stream of news, contentions, and reports

appeared on electronic news channels as the 7–11 May 2025 conflict broke out following the Pahalgam attack and the launch of Operation Sindoor by India (Al Jazeera, 2025). Even so, the media tended to report sensational stories, spread incorrect information, and tell broadly exaggerated tales (later proven to be incorrect), such as the statement by Indian media outlets that Indian forces had arrived in Karachi Port (Tech Policy Press, 2025). Rather than clarifying the situation, such news might have increased public fear, worsened national attitudes, and created new challenges for diplomats trying to mitigate the crisis (Stimson Center, 2025). The main question is whether the media provided people with information or caused fear and confusion during the country's period of turmoil.

Review of the Literature

Studies have looked closely at the ways electronic media influences how people perceive the Indo-Pakistani conflicts, mainly concerning the 2016 Uri attack and the 2019 Pulwama-Balakot crisis. They demonstrated that the media played a significant role in shaping stories that exacerbated tensions between the nations. Media outlets in India displayed increased national pride and endorsed a robust military response following the 2016 Uri attack (Thakur & Malhotra, 2021). According to Thakur and Malhotra (2021), a review of news coverage of the Uri and Pulwama incidents highlighted how television channels emphasized national pride and the significance of the armed forces. As a result, policymakers made intense calls for aggressive tactics.

The 2019 Pulwama attack and Balakot airstrikes also meant an increase in jingoistic journalism. According to Shahid, Ashfaq, and Zubair (2021), print media in Pakistan have tended to emphasize stories related to conflicts, stressing national sovereignty and defense issues. In contrast, most Indian news outlets focused on revenge and national pride, while giving little room to those calling for a calming of events (Shahid et al., 2021). The way the media focused on these issues altered people's perceptions and impacted diplomatic relations between the countries. Shaju (2022) further studies this phenomenon by looking at the coverage of Indo-Pak relations in digital newspapers. Researchers have observed that media from India and Pakistan often prioritize their national stories, which sometimes means sacrificing accurate reporting (Shaju, 2022). The way the media portrays specific issues usually leads people to adopt certain viewpoints, which can then shape policy during challenging times.

Media platforms beyond the traditional ones are also contributing to tensions. The abundance of false information shared on social media networks has made it more challenging for us to distinguish real news from misinformation during emergencies. A report from The Guardian highlighted that false and manipulated stories that spread on Facebook and X (formerly Twitter) made the conflict in May 2025 more challenging, emphasizing the importance of developing better methods to verify facts and promote responsible reporting (The Guardian, 2025).

While previous studies provide valuable insights into how media behave in Indo-Pak conflicts, little has been done to compare reports in electronic media during specific events, such as the May 2025 crisis. The research aims to address this gap by analyzing how media in India and Pakistan reported events between May 7 and 11, 2025, to determine whether they provided accurate information or contributed to the spread of fear and false claims.

Theoretical Framework

This study relies on Framing Theory, which explores how media shapes its viewers' thoughts by presenting only selected information rather than everything. The theory was first proposed by Goffman (1974) and later expanded upon by scholars such as Entman (1993). It argues that how news stories are made using language, images, headlines, sequence, and emotion largely determines the public's understanding of the events involved. In 1993, Entman defined framing as the process of highlighting particular aspects of someone's reality to influence an opinion or argument (p. 52). When the nation is facing a crisis or conflict, media framing typically emphasizes patriotism, creates images of the opposing group, and reinforces the separation between the country and the enemy group. The ability of electronic media to present events instantly and to many viewers at once often leads to fear or hysteria, rather than helping people reason.

Framing Theory is clearly at work in the events of the India-Pakistan military escalation in May 2025. Indian TV news channels, such as Republic TV and News18 India, frequently highlighted war-related images, loud music, and statements like "Strike Back Stronger" and "Justice for Pahalgam" (The Indian Express, 2025). At the same time, Pakistani networks ARY News and Samaa News highlighted their news as part of "National Defence" and "Pakistan Stands Proudly," promoting retaliation as necessary and highlighting achievements (Geo News, 2025). Whether through

harsh words, clever camera work, or emotional debates, such a presentation supports the viewpoints of the state and can easily provoke widespread anxiety and even hate. With the help of Framing Theory, this study analyzes the role that the media played, emphasized, overemphasized, or omitted in shaping people's levels of awareness or fear during the short but intense attack (D'Angelo, 2002).

Methodology

For this study, qualitative content analysis is employed to investigate how Indian and Pakistani electronic media portrayed the military escalation of 7-11 May 2025. These six primary news channels were chosen because of their national influence: Republic TV, India Today, News18 India (India), Geo News, ARY News, and Samaa News (Pakistan). News clips, talk shows, and headlines from this period were obtained from official television websites, YouTube, and online archives. Articles were divided into two categories based on whether their focus was on providing positive, well-balanced information ("informative") or on instilling fear by presenting scary or deceptive information ("terrorizing"). Lines of action centre on language, how issues are presented, the emotional aspects, and the sharing of false information. The goal is to determine whether these sources informed the public about the crisis or heightened their fear, using reliable and publicly available information.

Shaping Perceptions: Media in the India-Pakistan Standoff

The events from May 7 to May 11, 2025, marked a significant and perilous moment in South Asian geopolitics, as hostilities between India and Pakistan intensified. On 22 April 2025, an attack on Pahalgam in Indian-administered Kashmir led to India starting "Operation Sindoor" against terrorist infrastructure in Pakistan (The Hindu, 2025). As a response, Pakistan launched "Operation Bunyan un Marsus," which entailed attacks on Indian military sites and increased tensions in their long, awkward, and nuclear-armed relationship (Dawn, 2025). As the four-day fighting was then put to an end by a ceasefire, it began to look like the whole region was in danger, and new questions were raised about what role information plays during war. Under these circumstances, the media, especially electronic channels, became key in influencing the beliefs of people not only in the countries involved but also around the world (Stimson Center, 2025; BBC Monitoring, 2025). News sites, television, and social media became platforms where people argued and shared

news, some of which was accurate and some of which was not. The risks were severe, as the things said and shared could either lessen fear and improve public understanding or raise anxiety, lead to false information, and increase hostility.

Indian Electronic Media Coverage (7–11 May 2025)

Nature and Themes of Coverage

Most Indian coverage focused on military victories, national pride, and the country's immediate and decisive response to the attack. For instance, Republic TV boldly stated during the height of the fighting, "India strikes back, Karachi is under pressure" (Republic TV, May 8, 2025). This showed a wider pattern: TV and newspaper reports habitually mentioned unchecked assertions of Indian troops entering Pakistan, particularly in Karachi and Islamabad. They also ran articles such as "Operation Sindoor: Indian Air Force Bombs Terrorist Camps and Aims at Karachi Port" (India Today, May 8, 2025), making the offensive appear to be unbreakable.

Misinformation and False Claims

Several pieces of false information appeared in these outlets at that time. Significantly, the popular Indian outlet had a video that claimed Indian jets attacked Karachi port. Later, Pakistani officials and independent fact-checkers revealed that the port in Karachi was still operational and the video was from a separate event (BOOM Live, 2025). Just as the Republic TV wrongly shared their findings on Twitter, News18 India also spread news that Indian forces had entered Pakistani military installations in Islamabad, which was later proven to be false by external sources. In addition to fabricated videos, they used altered photos and computer-generated images to make military movements look dramatic. In one instance, News18 India aired satellite images on television, claiming that India had gained new territory along the Line of Control (LoC). Still, independent researchers subsequently found this to be incorrect (FactCheck.org, 2025). The fake photos added to the feel of war and triumph, making opinions more divided among the public.

Sensationalism and Alarmism

Most Indian electronic media focused on exciting, sensational stories to attract viewers, putting facts aside. Republic TV, far from mild, aired language like

“Pakistan about to collapse” and “the Indian Army expunges the opposition” (Republic TV, May 9, 2025). They did not provide much evidence to support their claims, but succeeded in stimulating nationalism and gaining public approval. Posting false information repeatedly, using vivid language, led many to feel anxious and concerned. This approach to reporting often obscured serious journalism. It was also widely reported when the Indian government blocked over 8,000 Twitter accounts (now called X), which raised alarms about censorship and information control in the conflict (Washington Post, 2025).

Fact-Checking Efforts and Independent Voices

Even with all the attention given to dramatizing news, several Indian media groups and fact-checkers have attempted to correct misinformation. Among others, BOOM Live and Alt News worked to clear up misunderstandings by refuting baseless news on major media outlets and providing reliable evidence (BOOM Live, 2025). Sometimes, India Today advised readers to exercise caution when consuming unverified information on social networks and emphasized the importance of being media literate. At the same time, sensational channels dominated the news, while the efforts of public affairs channels were sidelined. Most of what people heard was inflammatory, making the public conversation centered on fear and unrest.

Due to Indian electronic media, people’s thoughts and feelings about the crisis shifted to intense patriotism, mixed with worries about the conflict’s escalation. Online, many people shared reports of Indian military victories and news of Pakistani troop losses, which encouraged more citizens to back the government but also caused a lot of distrust and hostility toward Pakistan. Constant stories about conflict and mistakes in reporting caused many Indians to worry about a larger war and made people’s opinions more divided. Misinformation amplified made it harder for diplomats to soften the conflict, since most citizens now preferred tough solutions.

Pakistani Electronic Media Coverage (7–11 May 2025)

❖ Dominant Themes and Narratives

Most of the reporting in Pakistan portrayed the story as a conventional war aimed at preventing an Indian invasion. The military strikes in the Bunyan un Marsus operation were shown as a symbol of Pakistan’s strong sovereignty and army.

Headlines such as 'Pakistan retaliated strongly; Pakistan's befitting response to India (Bharat ko Mu Tor Jawab)' served to emphasize the country's capabilities and determination (Modern Diplomacy, 2024). It was typical for politicians to appeal to people by focusing on national unity. Samaa News aired patriotic phrases like "Pak Sarzameen Shad Baad" (Long live Pakistan) and highlighted the strong will of ordinary people in the face of conflict (Samaa News, May 9, 2025). ARY News would regularly show interviews with members of the military talking about how Pakistan is ready and objecting to Indian actions.

❖ **Misinformation and False Claims**

At that point, numerous cases of misinformation emerged, indicating that propaganda and the confusion of war played a significant role in the spread of false information. A notable example was when Samaa News and Pakistan's Information Minister Attaullah Tarar reported that Indian troops raised a white flag on the Line of Control, indicating that they were surrendering or pulling back (Samaa News, May 9, 2025). Many analysts and Indian officials stated that the claim was invalid and lacked reliable evidence. Geo News said that Pakistan shot down a total of five Indian fighter jets, such as the advanced Rafale planes, in the air battles. Nevertheless, these reports were not verified by anyone outside and were denied by Indian officials (Geo News, May 9, 2025). Fact-checkers and international teams described the claims as overblown ways to gain public confidence. A further false claim was made, stating that Pakistan's JF-17 Thunder had destroyed India's S-400 system. After further checks, no evidence of such an attack was found, and the Indian foreign secretary, Vikram Misri, denied Pakistan's claim of destroying the S-400 system.

❖ **Sensationalism and Emotional Appeals**

There were strong signals in Pakistani electronic media of sensationalism and attempts to engage the audience emotionally. These channels used strong words, calling Indian troops' moves "barbaric" and extolling the "unyielding" spirit of Pakistan (Geo News, May 8, 2025). Although it was intended to bring people together, this rhetoric could instill fear and foster harsh views against India. Samaa News and ARY News showed images of buildings destroyed during the fighting and civilians who had to leave, attempting to move viewers to understand and back the military. There was considerable reporting on conflict matters; however, the way these matters were reported often made it difficult to distinguish between facts and emotions.

❖ **Efforts at Verification and Balanced Reporting**

Although there was sensationalism and misinformation, certain parts of the Pakistani media made an effort to adhere to journalistic standards. The Geo News and Samaa News Fact-Check campaigns challenged incorrect information shared on social media and explained the truth. As an example, officials denied rumors that many people had died or that the country would break apart during the fighting (Geo News Fact Check, May 11, 2025). Additionally, some programs on ARY News examined the war's details with the input of expert guests. Nevertheless, the presence of neutral content was less frequent than the frequent nationalistic themes.

Comparative Analysis of Both Sides' Electronic Media

❖ **Patterns of Misinformation and Sensationalism**

Misinformation and exaggerated accounts were spread widely by both Indian and Pakistani media. Indian channels reported many supposed strikes on various Pakistani sites, like the Karachi port and military bases in Islamabad, which turned out to be false once verified by BOOM Live (2025). Pakistani media also claimed that Indian troops had surrendered at the Line of Control and had bombed and destroyed numerous Indian fighter jets, but these reports were doubtful (Geo News, 2025). Due to this pattern, it appears that both sides utilize media in a coordinated manner to support their respective populations and legitimize their military actions. Doctored videos, images created by AI, and misleading maps appeared in almost all their posts, with the primary goal of attracting attention. "Operation Sindoor: Indian Air Force hits terrorist camps, Karachi port targeted" and "India hoisted white flag at LoC" are details taken from India Today and Samaa News, and these examples illustrate the intense and biased reporting.

❖ **Tone and Language: From Patriotism to Fear-Mongering**

On the campaign trail, people in power often exchanged messages of belonging and messages of fear. Indian channels boasted of India's military strength and national pride, using phrases like "India strikes hard" (Republic TV, May 8, 2025). In contrast, Pakistan's channels stressed resistance, made emotional calls for unity, and accused India of barbaric behavior (Geo News, May 8, 2025). The patriotic way news about the war was presented was often joined with exaggerated warnings that further unsettled society. News coverage from each side continually portrayed the other as a grave threat, which pushed people to become hostile. Indian media showing

images of Karachi under attack and Pakistani media saying Indian troops had surrendered, strengthened negative feelings and distrust between India and Pakistan.

❖ **Media as a Double-Edged Sword: Terrorizing vs Informing**

At the same time, the newspapers informed people and caused them distress. Information from experts was sometimes included, but it was often drowned out by fear-inducing and polarizing stories spread on the channels. Claims of enemy victories (usually unsupported), large death counts from battles, and dramatic pictures of damage caused concern and anger among civilians. For example, TV statements from India repeated stories about Karachi being under siege. At the same time, Pakistani channels repeatedly claimed Indian troops had surrendered, all of which scared people and led to an exaggerated sense of who was thriving or losing. Alternatively, informative methods emerged when some outlets attempted to provide reliable news and support fact-checking initiatives during the chaos. BOOM Live and Alt News from India, as well as Geo News Fact Check in Pakistan, worked diligently to set the record straight on both sides (BOOM Live, 2025; Geo News Fact Check, 2025). Additionally, reports from analysts and globally recognized media highlighted perspectives that extended beyond the drama reported at home. Despite this, almost all media focused more on terrifying content because fear-filled stories were more popular and set the tone for public discussions. The skewed way facts were presented hindered the community's faculty from reviewing them carefully, and it led to further divisions and suspicion in society.

❖ **Impact of Electronic Media Coverage: Balancing Fear and Awareness**

Public opinion, social life, and stability in both countries were significantly impacted by the way the electronic media reported the May 7–11, 2025, conflict between India and Pakistan. Blending factual reports, media organizations actively influenced people's feelings and political preferences during tense times. One obvious result was that people experienced greater fear because of the war. The many claims by Indian media of having hit the Karachi port made people feel proud and a little tense about further escalation. In Pakistan, people's fears of an existential threat became stronger as they were exposed to vivid descriptions of destruction and negative images of India, and this also led to more hostility. These stories exacerbated problems near the border and heightened concerns among the people. Mistakes in information destroyed public trust. Disputed accounts from Pakistan, saying that India surrendered, along with Indian claims of entering Pakistani territory, made

many doubt the reliability of the information published. Because people question the news, they are less likely to engage in political discussions, which ultimately weakens democracy.

Unrealistic reporting by certain media outlets hardened people's opinions, making it harder for governments to be flexible in negotiations and increasing the danger of conflict worsening. It was widely observed that worries generated by the media within countries made it difficult for politicians to focus on peace negotiations. The press still offered some reassurance to people. Truth-checking groups like BOOM Live and Geo News Fact Check from India and Pakistan removed false information and gave needed context. Although these efforts often received less attention due to sensationalism, they made a significant contribution to spreading accurate knowledge. In addition, the amount of unreliable and fearful information on electronic media meant they mainly achieved the opposite of their goal in the community. Suspicion and tension grew as a result, which complicated the process of achieving peace.

Conclusion

Media coverage during the May 7–11, 2025, India-Pakistan conflict highlights the close connection between the portrayal of news and information in electronic media and the escalation of conflict. Channels in both India and Pakistan mainly sensationally reported the crisis by publishing fake news, making military events appear larger than they were, and using aggressive language. Indian channels shared allegations of significant impacts on Pakistani soil, and the Pakistani media, in response, promoted stories about achievements in battle and Indian forces giving up. Although fact-checking was attempted, it did not have a significant impact, as sensational stories often dominated public perceptions. Political messages alternated between patriotism and fear, making people in both countries more nervous and angrier. Because of this, the media played a mixed role as both a news source and a source of fear; the scary aspect usually outweighed its informative aspect, creating more polarization, less confidence in the government, and further challenges in resolving disputes diplomatically.

Moving forward, the results emphasize that modifying how news is produced in conflict zones can help stop the harmful impact of fake news and overly sensational stories. The highest priority for media institutions should be upholding accurate,

impartial, and accountable journalistic ethics. Officials should strike a balance between the country's safety and protecting press freedom, so they do not unintentionally block fact-checking. Ensuring that more people are media literate encourages audiences to think critically about the news, distinguish real information from false rumors, and resist being easily swayed by scare tactics. International media cooperation and dialogue across countries enable more fair reporting and understanding, which helps to reduce tensions that arise from one-sided reporting. Electronic media can only play a positive role and contribute to peace if they show strong responsibility in their practices.

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