

**PRESS AND FOREIGN POLICY WITH RESPECT TO THE  
KARGIL CONFLICT: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF  
NATIONAL AND VERNACULAR DAILES**

Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University  
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**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

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## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation "**PRESS AND FOREIGN POLICY WITH RESPECT TO THE KARGIL CONFLICT: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF NATIONAL AND VERNACULAR DAILIES**", submitted by **JOSEPH GEORGE** in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY** is his original work and has not been submitted for the award of any other degree of this or any other University.

This dissertation may be placed before the Examiners for evaluation.

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*to my  
ammamachi & martinappa*

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**New Delhi**

**Joseph George**

**July 21<sup>st</sup> 2001**

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# **Introduction**

***Foreign policy "isn't made by the media", but "in the Information Age, it can't be made without it." - Strobel***

The purpose of this study is to comparatively analyse the foreign policy coverage in selected national and vernacular dailies in India with special reference to the Kargil conflict (May 10<sup>th</sup> to July 19<sup>th</sup> 1999).

The significance of this study lies in the revolutionary role played by the media during the Kargil conflict. Reporting from the line of action, carrying live images into the drawing room of every Indian, both the print and electronic media produced/inspired nationalistic sentiments throughout the country in such magnitude that the phenomena is being termed as unique in the history of independent India and 'Kargil' is referred to as a media war.

## **Indo-Pakistan Relations**

The Islamic Republic of Pakistan was born on 14<sup>th</sup> August 1947, separated from British India on the principle of the 'Two Nation Theory'. The history of international relations between India and Pakistan has been one of political dissension and conflict, based mainly on religion and its role in Pakistan evolving as a nation state. Islamic identity became the cornerstone of

Pakistan's existence. India's effort, on the other hand, was to establish a society based on secular, socialistic and democratic principles.

For Pakistan, Kashmir is an unfinished agenda of partition. After unsuccessfully venturing several times in the past to militarily occupy Kashmir, Pakistan has taken upon itself the responsibility to provide material, political, moral and diplomatic support to the 'freedom fighters of Kashmir'. For India, Kashmir symbolises the very essence of its 'secular' existence. More so Kashmir has become an indispensable part of the country for both strategic as well as political reasons. India has often accused Pakistan of aiding and abetting terrorism in the valley.

There have been five armed conflicts between the two countries and four of them were due to Kashmir.

- The first conflict was in 1947-48 and was due to Kashmir. The dispute was taken to United Nations.
- The second war was fought for the control of Rann of Kutch in 1965-66. The war ended in a cease-fire.
- The third war took place between August 1965 and January 1968 again based on Kashmir. The Tashkent Agreement mediated by the Soviet Union became the basis for ending the war.
- The fourth conflict between India and Pakistan was in December 1971 over East Pakistan. The war resulted in the dismemberment of Pakistan and the Simla agreement was signed.

- Finally, during May – July 1999 was the Kargil conflict. The United States persuaded Pakistan to withdraw to the LOC thus bringing an end to the conflict.

Meanwhile in May 1998, India conducted a series of nuclear explosions and in retaliation Pakistan too went overtly nuclear. Following this, the Indian Prime Minister Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee and his counterpart in Pakistan Mr. Nawaz Sharif signed the Lahore declaration on February 21<sup>st</sup> 1999.

### **The Media**

“No Prime Minister of India can ever speak of secession of Kashmir and remain in office for a single day.”

- Principal Secretary to the Indian Prime Minister, Mr. Brijesh Mishra.

“Anyone, any leadership in Pakistan that makes any agreements, any deals where Kashmir is sidelined, I can say with full certainty, that declaration or that treaty will never go forward because the people won’t let it go forward.”

- Pakistani President Gen. Pervez Musharraf

These two statements made by officials of a democratic state as well as the leader of a military ruled state stresses the public factor that has become crucial in conflict resolution.

Understanding public opinion or the absence of it is crucial in determining the foreign policy behaviour of a particular state. Public opinion is an important

factor in influencing the course of events. The level of its importance can be determined based on the political institutions existing in the state and the nature of political participation of the general public in governing the state.

Media acts as an excellent linkage towards characterising the existing political psychology. Therefore the need to understand the role of media in shaping foreign policy.

The influence and impact of mass media on social phenomena is beyond doubt. It is however argued that mass media typically serve to reinforce existing conditions and that when they do function in the service of change it is because the normally functioning mediating factors are inoperative or because they themselves are impelling towards change. (Joseph Klapper: *The Effects of Mass communication*, The First press, 1960)

Wilbur Schramm and Donald F. Roberts in *The Process and Effects of Mass Communications*, (University of Illinois Press, 1971) opine that mass communications are seldom, if ever, the sole agent behind any change. Mass communication functions only as one element in a highly complex social system; its impact is moderated by numerous other factors in the system.

Schramm also points out the 'selectivity' of mass media. Mass communication, accordingly, engenders social consequences not only by reporting on changes in the environment and thereby reinforcing existing forces for change, but also by creating/shaping public impressions of various aspects of the environment through selective presentation and through emphasising and de-emphasising certain themes.

Melvin De Fleur in *Theories of Mass Communications* (McKay, 1970) explains "Cultural Norms Theory". The theory posits that 'because mass media are often the primary source of information, and because media coverage and presentation is considered valid, mass communications have the power to shape public impressions of many situations and conception of norms of behaviour in these situations'. Thus media constitutes the 'reality', which determines and guides action in confirmation and support of society.

Reality can best be expressed through a language significant to the receiver. Each one of us is a member of some cultural or sub-cultural group which makes us implicitly accept and share the conventions on which that language or culture is based, conventions which give meaning to the symbol. This communication via the significant symbol/language provides the recipients with the information necessary to define their surrounding environment, their world and define themselves within them.

Media functioning in a democratic set up works under the assumption that people have the right to know and that they must be provided with every information which might help them to formulate opinion and to influence the policies they wish their government to follow. Media responsibilities include the ensuring public participation in governance, informing the public with correct and complete news, not censored and not distorted. It is also the media's responsibility to ensure that information (power) gets diffused throughout the population. This is the media's function as the 'fourth branch of the

government', functioning as a check on the other three branches. (Douglas Cater: *The Fourth Branch of Government*, Vintage, 1965)

The Constitution of India, by emphasising on the freedom of speech, that is interpreted to include freedom of the press, has created a suitable environment for the fourth estate to function in India.

The newspaper industry has achieved tremendous growth since independence. The Press Commission of 1954 found only 330 daily newspapers in the whole of India with a total circulation of about 2.5 million copies, nearly 28 percent of which were in English. (Press Commission, 1954). The newspaper revolution along with growing literacy resulted in the phenomenal growth of the industry.

By 1998, the total circulation of the Indian press was 126,849,500 copies per day. The total number of newspapers and periodicals was 43,828 with dailies amounting to 4,890. As far as vernacular dailies are concerned newspapers were published in as many as 100 languages and dialects during 1997. Hindi has the highest number of newspapers while among the 17 principal languages only Kashmiri and Konkani has no newspapers. (Source: Manorama Yearbook 2001, p.594).

The growth of newspapers had a direct result in building up nationalism. As Benedict Anderson points out, "print-capitalism.... made it possible for a rapidly growing number of people to think about themselves, and to relate to others, in profoundly new ways" and that the 'language of power' enables vast dreams of nations to take place.

India being a vast and multi-lingual country was seen as "vulnerable to powerful segmenting forces, including language.... parochial political trends will gain in their vitality fed by inordinate parochialism of editorial standards in the regional language press. " (Selig Harrison, India: *The Most Dangerous Decade*, 1968)

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Robin Jeffrey (*India's Newspaper Revolution*, Oxford University Press, 2000) on the other hand has concluded that economic circumstances and the strengthening of 'all-India capitalism' has played a dominant role in unifying India. Jeffrey has pointed out that the revolution in Indian language newspaper has tended to promote rather than undermine the unity of the Indian State. Owners of the largest newspapers in Indian languages see themselves as members of an Indian elite.

As far as the secessionist movements in the Northeast and Jammu & Kashmir and Punjab is concerned, Robin Jeffrey has argued that secessionist movements have been common in those regions where local capitalism is least developed, where successful capitalist newspapers are least developed and where a 'national bourgeoisie' - people connected to and benefiting from the Indian Union - was either minuscule or missing.

The Kargil conflict was a perfect example of symbolism. It symbolised different things to different people: national integration, secessionism as associated with all problems related to Kashmir and some north-eastern states, terrorism, Pakistan as an 'Enemy State'. On the whole, Kargil symbolised nationalism and the media played its role as an agent of nationalism carrying images of the dead, warring and victorious soldiers and mourning widows. Collecting funds and overseeing relief, media worked on everything it possibly could.

Kargil conflict was a crisis situation involving every citizen of the country. My interest lies in looking deep into how national and vernacular print media objectively reported on the issue.

Underlying the study are the following assumptions:

1. The common man, including the rural poor, is hardly interested in foreign policy related issues.

2. During times of national crisis, the media successfully manufactures public opinion and creates nationalistic sentiment.
3. Issues related to Kashmir and Pakistan lie close to the Indian public sentiment. Hardly any significant public response was witnessed to the devastating floods in Orissa and Assam.
4. The Kargil conflict symbolised the following: Kashmir secessionist movements, in parts of north-eastern India, nationalism, enemy in Pakistan and to some extent China.
5. Peninsular India is believed to be less demonstrative towards 'nationalism' and 'assertive patriotism' as compared to North India.
6. For media, war sells and Kargil was not just another war, but the first 'media-war' in the country.

In order to analyse the above-mentioned issues regarding the Kargil conflict I find it necessary to compare the coverage given by selected national and vernacular dailies.

This research would try to answer the following questions.

1. What was the extent of newspaper coverage related to the Kargil conflict?
2. Was something more added at the local level or was the national propaganda simply passed on in the coverage of the vernacular newspapers?
3. What were the varieties of media opinion on the issue?

4. Was there deliberate selection and deletion of news?
5. To what extent did the newspapers reflect the official position?
6. Were the views of the opposition parties reflected?
7. What was the coverage of related foreign policy issues (of US mediation, Chinese stand and Pakistani standpoint)?

My hypotheses are as follows:

1. Vernacular newspapers added more weight to national sentiments by carrying the government viewpoint down to the grassroots.
2. The government view was reported while that of the opposition was shunned.
3. Foreign policy opinion relating to Indo-US relations and Indo-Pak relations increased while opinion on Indo-Chinese relations was neglected.
4. There was significant and deliberate selection and omission of news in media reports.

It is conventionally believed that policymakers consider print more important than broadcast news. Reliability is much more on data pertaining to the press than on radio and television news, due to difficulties in measuring the content of broadcast news. Although print news does not have the broad public reach, as enjoyed by the electronic media, the articles in print are considered much more detailed and technical.

The methodology used includes both quantitative and qualitative. The newspapers chosen among English language are *The Hindu* (Chennai) and *The Times of India* (New Delhi). The vernacular newspaper is *Prajaavani* (Bangalore) a Kannada daily. The selection of the above-mentioned dailies are based on the following criteria:

The *Times of India* is the largest selling English national daily with a circulation of 10,09,527 copies per day (Source: Audit Bureau of Circulations /July-December 1999). It is published from six centres across the country. The *Times of India* published from New Delhi has been chosen for this study.

*The Hindu* on the other hand is a Chennai based national English daily. It is generally considered as a more serious newspaper with detailed and in-depth analysis of foreign policy issues. The daily is published from nine centres in India and the everyday circulation of the newspaper amounts to 7,20,549 copies per day (Source: Audit Bureau of Circulations /July-December 1999). The present research is based on the Chennai edition of *The Hindu*.

Among the vernacular newspapers '*Prajavani*' was given preference to '*Kannada Prabha*'. While '*Prajavani*' is a completely regional newspaper with its regional English version called *Deccan Herald*, sold all over Karnataka, '*Kannada Prabha*' is the Kannada version of the national English daily *The New Indian Express*. '*Prajavani*' is the largest selling Kannada newspaper in Karnataka

with a circulation of 39.80 Lakhs per day. The total number of Kannada readership in the state is 70.42 lakhs (Source: National Readership Survey, 1999). The Bangalore edition of *Prajavani* was chosen for this analysis.

My analysis of the Kargil conflict has been divided into four different stages for better analysis of the press coverage.

a. The period of detection and communication of the threat.

May 3<sup>rd</sup> to May 13<sup>th</sup>, 1999

It is a known fact now that the first signs about the presence of infiltrators was received as early as on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, thanks to a few shepherds. However the first news report about the heavy shelling and the presence of infiltrators appeared in the dailies only on May 10<sup>th</sup>. It cannot be said that the magnitude of the situation was known immediately. Therefore the period between May 3<sup>rd</sup> - 13<sup>th</sup> can be considered as that of detection and communication of the threat.

b. The period of immediate relatively unorganised response.

May 14<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1999

As mentioned earlier, due to lack of understanding of the actual position on the occupied heights, several small patrols were sent whose fate are not clearly known. Therefore it would be correct to term the period between May 14<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> as the period of immediate relatively unorganised response.

Although by May 18<sup>th</sup> the government and the media became aware of the gravity of the situation there were conflicting versions of the incident as

there was no clear-cut policy by the government towards dealing with the crisis situation. Neither was the media able to make sense of anything as there were conflicting reports and confusion emanating from Srinagar and New Delhi.

c. The period of organised military, political and social response.

May 24<sup>th</sup> to July 11<sup>th</sup>, 1999

The first meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) was summoned only on May 25<sup>th</sup>. With the government announcing a two-track policy to deal with the issue on 24<sup>th</sup> May, and with the Air Force launching the air strikes on 26<sup>th</sup>, the country was fully aware of the fact that there was a war like situation and it had to be effectively dealt with. Though the Pakistan Prime Minister Mr. Nawaz Sharif following his meeting with the US President Bill Clinton announced the withdrawal of infiltrators in Washington on July 6<sup>th</sup> itself, the actual end of the conflict was seen only a week later. Thus the period from May 24<sup>th</sup> to July 11<sup>th</sup> can be considered as when the society responded at all levels in an organised manner.

d. The post conflict period.

12<sup>th</sup> July, 1999 to 31<sup>st</sup> July, 1999

The post conflict period can be described as the period during which normalcy has been restored in society, a condition necessary for an objective stock taking analysis.

The first chapter titled 'Theoretical Framework', discusses theoretical aspects related to media functioning. Special emphasis is given to theories of agenda setting, agenda building and agenda reflecting on which the present study is based. The chapter also discusses role of media in foreign policy with special reference to India.

The second chapter titled 'Coverage of Kargil Conflict in National and Vernacular Newspapers', is a quantitative analysis of the reportage in the three selected newspapers during the selected period of the conflict. Chapter three titled 'A Comparative Analysis of Media Coverage', discusses the analysis of the reportage in the three dailies. Finally is the conclusion

# Chapter One

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The influence and impact of mass media on social phenomena is beyond doubt. Skeptics argue that the media usually operates in ways that promote apathy and cynicism catering to the needs of capitalist forces through which the media in return stands to gain, rather than promote active citizenship and participation. It is also argued that mass media typically serves to reinforce existing conditions and that when they do function in the service of change, it is because the normally functioning mediating factors are inoperative or because they themselves are impelling towards change.<sup>1</sup>

Mass communications are seldom, if ever, the sole agent behind any change. Mass communication functions only as one element in a highly complex social system; their impact is moderated by numerous other factors in the system<sup>2</sup>.

Reality is best expressed through a language significant to the receiver. Each one of us is a member of some cultural or sub-cultural group which makes us implicitly accept and share the conventions on which that language or culture is based, conventions which give meaning to the symbol. This communication via the significant symbol/language provides the recipients with the

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Klapper, *The Effects of Mass Communication*, Glencoe, 1960, p. 14

<sup>2</sup> Wilbur Schramm and Donald F. Roberts, *The Process and Effects of Mass Communication*, Chicago, 1971, p.27

information necessary to define their surrounding environment, their world and define themselves within them.

Ideally it's the responsibility of the media functioning in a democratic set up to provide the readers with a realistic understanding of forces that affect the conditions of their everyday life. Media works under the assumption that people have the right to know and that they must be provided with every information which might help them to formulate opinion and to influence the policies they wish their government to follow.

The media's responsibilities include ensuring public participation in governance, informing the public with correct and complete news, not censored and not distorted. It is also the responsibility of the media to ensure that information gets diffused throughout the population. This is the media function as the 'fourth branch of the government', functioning as a check on the other three branches.<sup>3</sup>

The liberation theory sees media as freeing people from ignorance and inherited superstitions and thus enabling them to govern themselves by reason and individual conscience.<sup>4</sup>

Another viewpoint is that of the media serving the dominant forces of the society, acting as an arm of the ruling class, and a strong agency of social control. Here the responsibility of the media will be towards 'engineering consent', a means of social control.

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<sup>3</sup> Douglas Cater, *The Fourth Branch of Government*, London, 1965, p. 52

<sup>4</sup> Robert E. Krieger, *The Media and the People*, New York, 1987, p.37.

The cultural norms theory posits that 'because mass media are often the primary source of information, and because media coverage and presentation is considered valid, mass communications have the power to shape public impressions of many situations and conception of norms of behaviour in these situations'.<sup>5</sup> Thus media constitutes the 'reality', which determines and guides action in confirmation and support of society.

This chapter is an attempt to introduce a theoretical framework for the comparative content analysis of national and vernacular dailies. The purpose of the analysis primarily is to find out the difference in reportage of the Kargil conflict, if any existed; the broader analysis is to understand the effects the media has on society. This chapter would introduce a theoretical framework to understand the behaviour of the press. This would include the study of media functioning as 'agenda setting', 'agenda building' and 'agenda reflecting'.

Communication being a multi disciplinary area of study, what the psychologists and the sociologists will have to say about human communication behaviour will have very little to do with what the literary critics would. Henceforth in order to define the scope of the subject matter it is necessary to understand the underlying factors.

- a. Communication involves signs and codes. Signs are artifacts that refer to something other than themselves. Codes are the system into which signs

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<sup>5</sup>Melvin De Fleur, *Theories of Mass Communications*, New York, 1970,

are organised and which determine how signs may be organised and which determine how signs may be related to each other.

b. Communication involves transmitting and receiving the signals and codes.

c. Communication takes place from an individual/personal level to inter/intra-cultural levels. Communication is crucial to the development of any culture. Thus the study of communication and culture are integrated.

Therefore communication in general, can be defined as "social interaction through messages".

## **Two Schools of Analysis**

There are two main schools in the study of communication namely

1. The Process School and
2. The Semiotic School

The process school understands communication as a transmission of messages. It sees communication as a process by which one person affects the behaviour or state of mind of another.

For the semiotic school on the other hand, communication means production and exchange of meanings. It is concerned with how messages/texts interact with people in order to produce meanings. For the semiotic school, studying communication means studying text and culture.

The process school discusses the message as that which is transmitted by the communicator. Intention of the message is a crucial factor. 'The sender's

intention stated or unstated, conscious or unconscious must be retrieved by analysis.

For semiotics, message is the construction of signs, which through interaction with the receiver produces meanings. The emphasis here is on reading and therefore on what the reader receives. 'A reader through his interaction or negotiation with the text discovers meanings. He brings about aspects of his cultural experience to bear upon the codes and signs, which make up the text. Thus there is a shared understanding of what the text is about.

## Communication Models

### Shannon and Weaver's Model<sup>6</sup>

This is one of the main models out of which the communication studies have grown. It belongs to the process school.

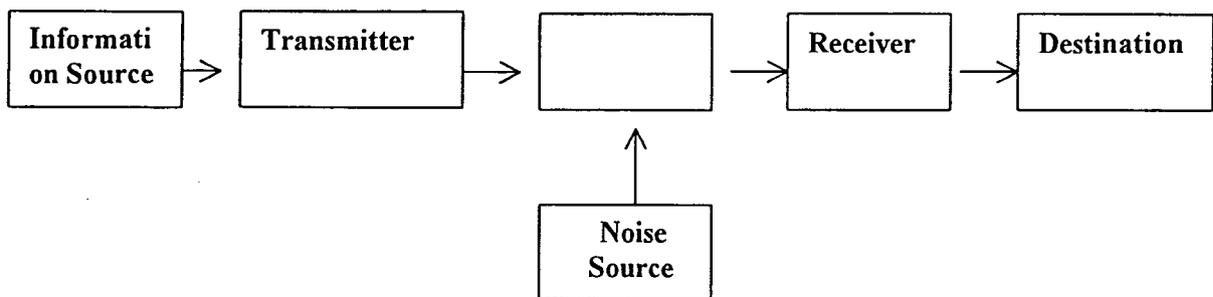


Fig: 1. Shannon and Weaver's Communication Model

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<sup>6</sup> John Fiske, *Introduction to Communication Studies*, Methuen, London, 1981, p.6.

The source in the model can be considered as the decision-maker. The source decides the message to be sent or selects from among a set of messages. The selected messages is then changed by the transmitter into a signal, which is sent through a channel to the receiver.

**Channel and Medium:** 'A channel is simply the physical means by which the signal is transmitted. Medium is the technical or physical means of converting the message into a signal capable of being transmitted along the channel'. Basically, media can be divided into:

- a. The presentational media
- b. The representational media
- c. The mechanical media

### **Lasswell's Model<sup>7</sup>**

Among several other process centred communication models Harold Lasswell has verbalised Shannon & Weaver's model. This model specifically deals with mass communications. According to the model in order to understand the process of mass communication the following factors have to be studied:

- Who
- Says what
- In which channel
- To whom
- With what effect

This model explains communication as the transmission of messages. It raises the issue of 'effect' rather than 'meaning'. "An effect implies an observable and

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<sup>7</sup> ibid, p.32

measurable change in the receiver caused by identifiable elements in the process"<sup>8</sup>. A change in one of the elements will change the effect.

### **The Semiotic School**

The Semiotic School as mentioned earlier lays emphasis not so much on communication as a process but on communication as a generator of meaning.

Semiotics or semiology is the study of signs and the way they work.

In the present context the message appearing in a newspaper article is created out of signs. The message stimulates its readers to create a meaning for him/herself that relates in some way to the meaning the news article generated in its message in the first place. The more the news article and its readers share the same codes, the more they use the same sign system the closer will be the two meanings of the message. The main areas covered in the study of semiotics are the study of the signs, the codes and the culture within which these signs and codes operate.

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### **Theory of Press Behaviour**

In order to analyse the impact of the press it is essential to understand the relationship between the press, the government and the public. The changing nature of the relationship between these agencies is the basis of the three schools of thought which describe the relationship and the role of the press in

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<sup>8</sup> ibid,

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any given circumstance i.e. in its coverage of the Kargil conflict specifically and its role in the making of foreign policy.

The three schools of thought are:

1. Agenda Setting
2. Agenda Building and
3. Agenda Reflecting

These theories describe the different role of media ranging from a major force influencing policy formulation to media merely transmitting the government policy.

According to the agenda setting theory, the media defines important issues of public concern and suggests the available policy options. Bernard Cohen who defined the theory, describing the functioning of the press under such circumstance points out that the press "may or may not be successful in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling people what to think about."<sup>9</sup> The press according to the school enjoys much greater power compared to other schools of media functioning.

The agenda building theory holds the view that media functions by building upon the agenda set forth by other agencies of social change. The difference lies in the fact that media does not play the primary and the most important role of formulating political agenda/setting policy framework.

Gladys Lang and Kurt Lang studying the effect of media, public opinion and government elite on the Watergate scandal noted that "the news media help to

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<sup>9</sup> Cohen, *The Press and Foreign Policy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963, p. 13

build issues by establishing the linkage between the polity and the public that facilitate the emergence of a problem as an issue".<sup>10</sup>

The media according to the theory of 'agenda reflecting' performs the role of informing the public of the information and policies put forth by the government or the state. It acts as a reflector of the government's policies.

Marc Genest terms this function as "agenda reflecting" which several sociologists have termed as "hegemonic theory" which states that the role of media as a mere transmitter of official policy is a by-product of capitalist values and practices.<sup>11</sup>

The basis of (the difference) is the policy-making power of the press. The difference can be assessed based on the following factors:

- a. The source of information: where the press got its information.
- b. The nature of presentation: the tone and manner in which the information is presented to the public and finally,
- c. The impact: the overall impact of the press coverage on the policies of the government and the public.

### **The Sources of Information**

Where the press gets its information from is an important element of media reportage. The source indicates whether the media is completely dependant on

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<sup>10</sup> Gladys Engel Lang and Kurt Lang, *The Battle for Public Opinion: The President , the Press, and the Polls During Watergate*, New York, p.61

the government for information, thus acting on par with the official dictates or if it pursues its own independent sources in order to pursue its own agenda.

According to the 'agenda setting' theory the press does not depend completely on official communication, data or sources while dealing with an issue. It pursues varied and alternative independent sources, which could probably be critical of the government policies.

The question here is the independence of the press. By using alternative sources of information or by simply relying on its own priorities as to what is news, the press has the power to act independently of the government or the public in enumerating and providing context for its news agenda.

Pursuing an independent agenda need not necessarily mean that media has to completely ignore government sources of information. Given a situation of war, involving issues relating to national security, it is quite natural that the dominant source is the state, i.e., the government and the military. The function of the press under such circumstances would be to balance the official coverage and agenda with additional alternative sources in order to pursue an independent agenda.

Thus, the media will be in a position to lay emphasis on an issue based on its choice rather than legitimising all government views and agenda. In other words, the press can de-emphasise what the official communiqué desires.

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<sup>11</sup> According to Genest the agenda reflecting theory "suggest that the media reflects or relates the government's agenda, transmitting it to the public". Marc Genest, *Negotiating in the Public Eye*, California, 1995, p.19

Based on the emphasis of the media on any particular issue that the public learns how much importance can be given to an issue. Thus the press sets the agenda for the public and thereby for the government which the latter or even the public would have otherwise ignored.

When the press depends mainly on the official/government sources of news but utilise other independent sources in a limited way, adding substance and analysis to the official agenda, it can be said to be performing the task of an 'agenda building'.

The media's dependence on alternative sources under agenda building is lesser than that on government sources. Thus while the primary dependence is on what the government expects it to be, in tune with the official policy, media also incorporates a 'significant proportion' of alternative sources.

A mere reflection of the government's policy with nothing much to add to the presentation indicates that the media functioning as agenda reflector is completely dependent on the government as the vital source for news. The press under such a circumstance becomes a very dependent body. It would have no independent policy to pursue and would only aim at presenting a set agenda before the public. This is the press performing a supportive role as the fourth branch of government.

## **The Nature of Presentation**

The tone and manner in which the media presents the information it gathers from its sources to the public is another crucial factor in determining the nature of the role of press.

The agenda setting school since it has an independent source of information has the power and capability to be critical of the government and official policy and present alternative viewpoints.

It is according the agenda building school where the particular factor takes on a crucial role. The agenda building school depending on both official sources and to an extent independent sources of information less adversarial than the previous school. Despite the fact that the official/government source dominates the information, the press does not simply put across the government's agenda to the public. It uses the alternative sources to help interpret the official policy. It builds upon the official policy providing context, emphasis and tone. This capacity of the media in evolving a specific framework for debate is considered an important aspect of the agenda building school.

Media as an agenda reflector puts down the information as it is fed by the official concerned. It neither has its own agenda nor does it present a differential or critical analysis. Media plays merely the role of a transmitter of messages or news. This results in its complete dependence on the government. The government in turn uses the media as a platform to promote policy guidelines and set the agenda for the public.

## **The Impact**

The final and the most important factor of media functioning is the impact of the press on the government policies and the on public opinion. The media creates an impact base on all the previous factors combined together. The extent to which the impact is decisive determines the power of media in independently shaping the policies.

The impact of the agenda setting press is considerable. The very foundation of media acting as a watchdog of government is based on the belief that media can prevent the government from pursuing its agenda by introducing corrective measures. It was possible for John Kennedy to completely cut off information to the media (for a period of six days) during the Cuban missile crisis, giving himself sufficient time to negotiate and defuse the crisis without the constant glare of the cameras at the White House.

However, in present day circumstances with technology leaping towards real-term effects the government is forced to come out with a policy' framework during crises in order to avoid the media taking control over the event. The media has thus helped in drastically advancing the speed of decision-making, prioritising the issues and independently building a political agenda.

The impact of the agenda building press on policy making can be aptly described as "a mutual influence between the press, the public and the government". Lang and Lang describe the press functioning as an agenda

builder, as the most accurate description of the impact of the press on the decision-making process. "The press itself", they note, "[is] only one of the several movers. Agenda building - a more apt term than agenda setting - is a collective process in which media, government and the citizenry reciprocally influence one another."<sup>12</sup>

Thus the press becomes an intervening variable, emphasising certain issues as important and which need attention. However, it is left to the discretion of the public to determine whether to accept it or not.

Marc Genest describing the findings on the agenda building press points out, "... first, the media highlights a particular issue simply by supporting it. That issue is culled from a host of others choices, which itself implies uniqueness. The amount and type of coverage an issue or event receives will affect the range of its impact among the general public."<sup>13</sup>

The public takes the final decision and media helps in the process of establishing a linkage between the polity and the public that can transform an issue into a national concern.

The impact of the press functioning as an agenda reflector is towards educating the masses about its policies of the government. The role of the press is very much limited as it is a reactionary press that merely transmits news and issues. The very nature of its functioning rules out all options for the press to

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<sup>12</sup> Lang and Lang, *op. cit.*, p.58

<sup>13</sup> Genest, *op. cit.*, p.18

choose and select or lead the public. The agenda is dictated to the press rather than the press dictating the course of action.

The three theories explain the role of the press from being an independent variable (agenda setting) to more of an interactive variable (agenda building) to a completely dependent variable (agenda reflecting).

The press under agenda setting is an independent actor. It plays a dominant role in choosing and disseminating information as it deems fit and when it decides to.

The press functioning under agenda building theory interacts with the government and to an extent, influences the presentation by incorporating critical comment, reviews etc. Though the government has the ability to set the agenda and control the flow of information to the press, the latter decides how to deal with the information and acts on its own.

The press functioning as an agenda reflector is like a snake without its fangs. While it depends prominently on official sources it mainly reports or reflects government policies. Thus if at all there has to be any opposition to the government's set agenda which the press presents, it has to be due to public disapproval or popular rejection caused by other intervening variables in society.

## **Media and Foreign Policy**

Coverage of foreign policy is considered as a specialised area. The coverage of issues concerning foreign policy has always taken the backseat in Indian newspapers when compared to other issues of domestic concern. With the exception of Pakistan rarely has Indian media taken a keen interest in foreign policy issues, leave alone influencing policy decisions. The reasons for this lack of interest vary from an inactive public to lack of specialised personnel and resources and to a great extent India's own standing in world politics.

Firstly, foreign policy being a specialised area, requires trained correspondents. Very few newspapers in India employ specialised correspondents to report from foreign capitals. Many a times it is the news agencies that becomes the main source of news originating from outside. This to a great extent hinders the capacity of newspapers to selectively take up issues and propose a different policy other than what the establishment would.

Secondly, public opinion in a democracy varies with regard to the issues under consideration. Similarly the nature of public opinion differs from one country to another depending on factors like the existing political system, past history, the freedom of the press, and the economic and social conditions of the people.

In an economically advanced democratic country the attitudes and opinions of the public could be more active and globally oriented, while in a less developed country the public attitude towards foreign policy could be guided by several constraints.

National development becomes the utmost priority. Their pasts as well as their prospects are shaped by their impact of the global community on them. With the experiences of the colonial past looming over public memory, the economic dependence on aid, private foreign investment, multinational enterprises and international organisations mould the internal processes of the developing countries.

Robert Good is of the view that critical domestic factors of the nation create views on foreign policy. Anti colonialism as a matter of fact holds together domestic factions, it helps to establish the identity of these countries in their conflict with the major powers. Foreign policy serves to keep the dominant group in power and reduces foreign influence in internal politics.<sup>14</sup>

Thirdly, public opinion and media interests towards a neighbouring state, especially one with which there are economic interests or unresolved conflicts, are often high and significant. This naturally results in additional space in the media coverage. The political and economic situation in the neighbouring country, if unfavourable, becomes a cause of concern.

Fourthly, the public concern about those states with which there exists a direct conflict is high. This explains the keen interest displayed by the Indian public in anything that happens in Pakistan, while Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and even China occupies a comparatively lesser position when it comes to media coverage and public opinion in India.

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<sup>14</sup> Robert Good, 'State Building as a Determinant of Foreign Policy in the New States', *Neutralism and Nonalignment*, ed. Lawrence W. Martin, New York, 1962

However, considering western media, scholarly thinking on the role of media in foreign policy hold that media is either primarily agenda setting or agenda reflecting. Lloyd Cutler<sup>15</sup> argues that the press has a major impact on the foreign policy making process, reflecting an agenda setting function by the media. Lee Becker<sup>16</sup> on the other hand argues on an agenda reflector's line when he emphasises the pre-eminence of official experts over the press, especially when it concerns reporting foreign policy. "More than any other area of news gathering, the press is dependent on governmental source to provide focus for the information about world events" he notes and adds that since few newspapers have extensive foreign news staff, most rely on contacts at the national capital for information on international affairs.

Based on these factors it can be argued that

1. Press depends on the public
2. Active press shapes the public and policies
3. Government due to the very nature of policy making decides the timing and the extent to which the public should know (selective leakage). Thus the government decides the timing and substance of political debates over the policies.

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<sup>15</sup> Lloyd Cutler "Foreign Policy on Deadline", *Foreign Policy*, No. 56, Fall 1984, p. 113.

## **Chapter Two**

# **COVERAGE OF THE KARGIL CONFLICT IN NATIONAL AND VERNACULAR NEWSPAPERS**

This chapter tries to quantitatively analyse the reportage during the Kargil conflict in selected national and vernacular newspapers by using the three models: agenda setting, agenda building and agenda reflecting.

When a State is at war, each and every institution within the state becomes a party to the conflict. The military fights, the government guides and the public stand united in such hour of crisis. While war has resulted in nations crumbling, it has also given rise to new states, while altering the boundaries of several countries.

The evolution of the printing press has been contemporary with several wars fought during the course of history. Nationalism and the press went hand in hand, each contributing to the development of the other. Therefore it should not be surprising if suddenly during crisis one finds the media playing host to several nationalistic sentiments. War is always a big story and war sells.

It is based on these factors that this chapter would look into how the national and vernacular newspapers i.e. *The Hindu*, *Times of India* and *Prajavani*- the Kannada daily, reported Kargil.

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<sup>16</sup> Lee Becker, "Foreign Policy and Press Performance", *Journalism Quarterly*, 54, 1977, p. 364.

In doing so this chapter would try to answer the following questions:

1. What was the extent of newspaper coverage related to the Kargil conflict?
2. In its powerful portrayal of war did the newspapers set the agenda, thereby influencing the decision making or merely reflect and report the everyday news as dictated by the powers that be?
3. To what extent did the newspapers reflect the official position?
4. Were the views of the opposition parties reflected?
5. What was the coverage of related foreign policy issues (of US mediation, the Chinese stand and Pakistani standpoint)?

What would data from *Times of India*, *The Hindu* and *Prajavani* show using an agenda setting framework? One might expect the press to be more active during the early years. At this point the press would play an active role in setting the agenda and creating a favourable public opinion. It could also reflect the views of several non-governmental and independent agencies relating to the issue instead of completely depending on the government for dictating news events.

Alternative sources of information (including independent research and statistical analysis) can also point to an agenda setting function. The origination of the story is one clear way to determine the level of independence on the part of press with regard to source material.

If *Times of India*, *The Hindu* and *Prajavani* are dependent totally on official sources of information reflecting the government/military point of view as

opposed to objective analysis portraying the views and criticism of the opposition parties, the Pakistani perception and international opinion, it indicates a very dependent press

A high percentage of news analysis would also be indicative of agenda setting. Analytical news requires different sources of information and a certain amount of independent judgement or assessment on the part of the journalist.

The final dimension focuses on the news story as presented to its readers. In an agenda setting role the coverage need not always be highly critical of the government/administration. There should be pattern of a delicate balance that neither diverges or totally coincides with the administration's line. This pattern in the reporting will reveal whether the newspapers were interested in pursuing any specific independent agenda and attempting to pressure the administrative decisions on those lines or follow the agenda set by the administration.

As the case study selected pertains to reporting a military conflict (a war like situation), it would be unrealistic to expect a complete dependence on independent/non-government source of information. The dependence under situations of war would primarily be on the government agencies. However to what extent does the press accommodate other viewpoints which are differing from the establishment's point of view has to be taken into account. Thus for agenda building other than the origin of the story or the source of articles it is important to analyse the overall tenor and theme of the articles.

The press when it functions as an agenda reflecting agency becomes an instrument through which information is passed from the government to the

public. Information under such a situation is controlled by the administration. The situation where the media allows information to be the monopoly of the government without bothering to tap the available alternative sources can be aptly described as the media functioning as an agenda reflecting body.

The study is a comparative analysis of the three newspapers: a regional Kannada daily and two national English newspapers. The discussion that follows seeks to determine whether these dailies merely reflected the agenda or assisted the government to build an agenda or performed the remarkable job of setting the agenda:

Level of newspaper coverage

The sources the newspapers depended on and

The overall tone and balance of the news stories

## **Level of newspaper coverage**

### **The Hindu**

Figure 2a details the total number of news reports that appeared in *The Hindu* starting from May 10<sup>th</sup> to July 19<sup>th</sup> of 1999 - (815). During the first phase of the conflict i.e. from May 3<sup>rd</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> there was just one news item related to the impending conflict. The graph clearly portrays the dearth of news on the issue in the early period of the conflict.

The first news related to the issue, which appeared on May 10<sup>th</sup>, and reported by Shujaat Bhukari, was about heavy shelling in Kargil due to which the ammunition depot was badly damaged. This was the only report related to the issue in the day's newspaper.

Beginning the second stage on May 14<sup>th</sup> was the next report titled 'War like Situation in Kargil'. For the following week i.e. until May 22, the newspaper carried on with one or two reports per day on the events in Kargil.

It was only on May 24, that *The Hindu* published the lead news on the front page regarding Kargil - 'Govt. for Two-Track Action - Pakistani intrusion in Kargil'. Obviously the Indian government on May 24, came out with a detailed policy statement on the ongoing conflict in Kargil. Two days later the IAF started bombing the militant positions and the number of reports almost doubled.

The third phase of the conflict began with the government announcing the aerial bombing. For the public as well as for the media the war had just begun. There was an immediate rise in the number of news reports in *The Hindu* on Kargil. From one report on 20<sup>th</sup> titled, '400 infiltrators in Kargil', an agency news quoting a defence source, the number jumped to three and four on 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> respectively.

The trend increased and by 28<sup>th</sup> there was a phenomenal jump to 16 news reports. This continued till July 16<sup>th</sup>. Beginning from 25<sup>th</sup> until July 11<sup>th</sup> the total number of news items published amount to 703.

The fourth and final phase is the most crucial part of the analysis. Firstly, reactions during the thick of happenings are normally heated. It is how the media continues to react when sanity is restored, rather if it has helped in restoring one that has to be enquired into. Secondly, to what extent does the media ensure a sincere stock taking analysis, investigating into the shortcomings and failures and pressurising for further action that demonstrates the power of media.

The number of news reports in *The Hindu* gradually reduced after July 18<sup>th</sup> to around 5 to 6 news reports every day. Though not mentioned in the graph this trend continued until the last week of July.

### **Times of India**

Figure 2b clearly indicates the total number of news reports that appeared in *Times of India* during the Kargil conflict (798). The Times too was no different and the first news item related to the conflict appeared only on May 10<sup>th</sup> a page one story titled, 'Unprovoked shelling by Pakistan in Kargil'. There was a follow up story the very next day. Thus two news reports appeared in *Times of India* from May 3<sup>rd</sup> to May 13<sup>th</sup>.

During the second phase there was no remarkable change in the reportage of *Times of India* as the total number of news reports until May 23<sup>rd</sup> was just eight. On May 17<sup>th</sup> the newspaper published a page one story titled, 'Army clears Kargil area of Pakistan infiltrators'. However *Times of India* on 21<sup>st</sup>,

much before the CCS (Cabinet Committee on Security) could meet, in its lead news article reported, 'IAF squadrons on alert as Kargil face-off continues'. The second phase had a total number of six Kargil related stories.

Even in *Times of India* the actual kick off started from 26<sup>th</sup>, the day the air strikes began. The number of news reports per day jumped from 0&1 to 5-12 per day. This trend continued and a total of 682 news reports were published until July 11<sup>th</sup>.

Lastly during the final phase of the conflict there was just a marginal decrease in the number of news reports published per day. The total reports published from July 11<sup>th</sup> number 107.

### **Prajavani**

*Prajavani* a regional daily had a total coverage of 437 news reports on Kargil conflict (fig 2c). Though there were preliminary news items regarding the emerging conflict in other newspapers on May 10<sup>th</sup>, *Prajavani* had its first news on the issue only on May 17<sup>th</sup>, a page one story describing the 'week long conflict'. Naturally there were no reports on the issue during the first phase.

Between 17<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> there were six news items reported on the issue, four of them reported on page one. However the actual thrust in the coverage started on May 26<sup>th</sup> following the air strikes. *Prajavani* in total published 382 news reports starting from 24<sup>th</sup> to July 11<sup>th</sup>. The fourth phase covered 49 news reports.

## **Sources of Information**

Data regarding the origination of news articles also assist in determining the functioning of the press. Majority of news stories when they are a result of independent/non-governmental source signify a very independent and agenda setting function of the press.

There were several reasons why Kargil had become a difficult story. Firstly reporting the everyday happenings in the battlefield is a difficult task without dependence on official briefings.

Secondly the heights at which the battle was taking place had made access to the vicinity almost impossible without the assistance of government or military forces. It is based on these factors that the source of news reports regarding Kargil have to be analysed.

Fig: 3 indicates a comparison of the dependence on government vis-à-vis independent sources in all the three newspapers as far as Kargil stories are concerned.

### **The Hindu**

Despite several hindrances there was a sincere effort made by *The Hindu* to present the overall picture of the Kargil war to its readers. During the first

phase of the crisis the only news was a purely official source as none had any idea of the happenings in the mountains of Kargil.

As days progressed along with the regular official briefings the happenings across the border and news datelined Islamabad were being carried. While it was Sridhar Krishnaswamy reporting from Washington, Amit Baruah covered Pakistan and Shujaat Bhukari was reporting from Kashmir and the battle zone to the extent he had access to.

Fig:4 indicates the source of news reports at each level of the conflict. As it clearly points out, the majority of the news coverage was based on official sources of information. The news report published on May 15<sup>th</sup>, 'Indian Posts Safe: Defence Ministry' clearly echoed the ministry's views and another report on May 17<sup>th</sup>, 'Infiltrators forced to flee' are two examples of complete dependence on official source of information.

While among the news reports published during the second phase twelve were based on communication by official source, five news reports were based on independent sources.

In the third phase, which contained most of the battle related news items, stories based on official sources numbered 530 while reports with non-governmental sources amounted to 173. In the final phase stories based on government sources amounted to 61 and those based on independent sources numbered 33.

While most of the news reports related to combat are through official sources there were also a few stories based on reports from the foreign media. As far as

the reports that are based on independent sources are concerned, most of them are views and criticisms about the government by the opposition parties - especially related to intelligence failure, and the delay and refusal to convene the Parliament (Rajya Sabha).

### **Times of India**

The coverage related to Kargil conflict in *Times of India* India's largest selling newspaper as fig-3A clearly portrays is primarily based on official communication. It began with articles mostly based on official sources. However on May 24<sup>th</sup>, a story authored by Dinesh Kumar, who was reporting the whole conflict from Delhi, for the first time set in the opposition's viewpoint: intelligence failure as the cause for Kargil. The trend hardly continued and most of the news that followed clearly propagated the administration's point of view.

While Askari M. Zaidi filed reports from the valley, Ramesh Chandran reported from Washington and several agencies took care of most of the news from Pakistan. There were also several reports and comments by experts such as K Subramanyam and Gen Shankar Roy Chaudury.

The total number of stories with government sources during the third phase stood at 566, those with independent unofficial sources at 84. On the other hand during the final phase the official sources numbered 92 and independent as 22.

## **Prajavani**

The most interesting factor about news reports in *Prajavani* is that almost all the articles are from agency reports like PTI and UNI. Fig: 3A points out the enormous difference between official and unofficial sources on which the newspapers depended on in its coverage of the Kargil conflict.

Almost all combat related reports, reports from Pakistan, and international opinion were chosen from agencies. From the above data it is very clear that more than 60% of the news related to the Kargil conflict were from official/government sources.

Due to the nature of the conflict and the very fact that states obsessively maintain secrecy as far as security issues are concerned, especially when the state is at war, it is quite natural for the state to try and obstruct dissemination of all such information that it considers a threat to national security. Using this as a pretext, it is quite possible for governments not to entertain uncomfortable queries which are critical of government policies and functioning.

Now for the press to disregard such important issues would be irresponsible. Based on the available information, including from alternative sources, a responsible and powerful press does a balancing act by highlighting a variety of issues. This pattern testifies for a more independent press.

## **Tone of Press Coverage**

This section would analyse how the media presents the available information to the public. Fig: 4 describe the amount of coverage on different aspects of the Kargil conflict in the selected newspapers. The figure also points out how each subject is covered in relation to the total number of articles devoted to the Kargil conflict.

### **The Hindu**

Looking only at the coverage in *The Hindu* from May 25<sup>th</sup> to July 16<sup>th</sup> it can be pointed out that a sincere effort was made for a balanced presentation. A majority of the news reports during the third phase were hard news items. While *The Hindu* was solely dependant on official sources in its coverage of combat related stories, there was a considerable amount of news reports on related issues which dealt with Pakistani perspective, the Opposition's criticism of the administration, and international opinion.

It is also evident from the figure that there was not much enthusiastic appreciation for the government's performance in newspaper's coverage. On the contrary, there were a quite a number of articles critical of government performance which were covered several times as page one stories.

*The Hindu* very clearly avoided portraying a nationalistic/jingoistic trend in its reporting. Even while it reported about the deaths of and mourning for several soldiers, the coverage had a delicate balance without all the usual hype. It, on

the other hand, was critical of those agencies that encouraged jingoistic sentiments. Reports from Pakistan often described that nation's viewpoints and criticism of India especially its demand of solving all issues through dialogue, Pakistan's rhetoric on the undefined LOC and Mr. Sharif's dilemma in dealing with the military. Most of the coverage on international opinion dealt with the support India received from several capitals and the stream of criticism that Pakistan received.

It is quite common for editorials and opinion articles to be critical of the administration and its policies. However, Fig: 5 is a representation of the stand taken in the editorials of the three selected newspapers, regarding the government policy on the Kargil conflict, and it shows that a majority of the editorials in *The Hindu* were highly critical of Pakistan, and its military. As far as its criticism of the Indian government was concerned it was mainly directed against the unwarranted statements of Defence Minister George Fernandes. While the editorials argued for "pushing ahead"<sup>17</sup>, the opinion articles reinvented Mr. Vajpayee as a war-time Prime Minister sometimes requesting him to think ahead.<sup>18</sup>

### **Balance in Coverage**

The concept of balanced news reports in *The Hindu* was visible when front page news was analysed. During the third phase of the conflict, which covered 47 days of action, on more than 25 days the lead story included updates both

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<sup>17</sup> "Keep Pushing Ahead", editorial in *The Hindu*, 16 June, 1999

from New Delhi and Islamabad. Be it Sartaz Aziz's visit to New Delhi, the release of Flt. Lt. Nachiketa, or the insistence of Islamabad for a dialogue, *The Hindu* carried them with a part of the lead story of the day along with a major story from New Delhi or Srinagar.

Though most of the Opposition viewpoints were packed in page 13 or 14, they provided a much needed balance in the Kargil reportage.

### **Times of India**

The Times of India's coverage of Kargil conflict clearly demonstrates the abilities of the media to pursue an official agenda, and as a 'force multiplier' especially in times of war. As fig-5 demonstrates the number of reports almost favouring the administration's policies are really large in number. Many a times influential personalities from within the administration themselves had authored some news reports.<sup>19</sup>

Reports critical of Pakistan are clearly large in number as far as *Times of India* is concerned (68). It became very common for the daily to carry statements critical of Pakistan as headlines on its front page. International opinion especially of the United States again was restricted mostly to report anti-Pakistan rhetoric.

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<sup>18</sup> Prem Shankar Jha, "Please think ahead Mr. Vajpayee", *The Hindu*, 29 June, 1999

<sup>19</sup> K. Subramanyam, 'Escalation not likely', *The Hindu*, May 27<sup>th</sup> 1999.

The newspaper made no efforts to prevent a trend of nationalistic/jingoistic reporting. Instead there were reports which argued for creating national consensus during the hour of crisis.

The stand taken by the editorials in the daily is evident from fig-5. There has been a judicious mix of cautious and supportive editorials. Even when there have been very critical writings they have been against Pakistan. Beginning from May 10<sup>th</sup> to July 16<sup>th</sup> of the total number of editorials that appeared in *Times of India* (26), only 4 editorials have been critical of the administration. The rest have been supportive and neutral.

### **Balance in Coverage**

There were no efforts made by the daily to balance its coverage. Most of the news reports published especially on page one concentrated on reports from India. The total coverage of opposition point of view especially the criticism on the front page number just 12. On the other hand there were several hawkish reports, non serious analysis, penned by glamorous individuals in society which were spared considerable space on page one.

### **Prajavani**

Analysis of the tone of newspaper coverage holds special significance as far as *Prajavani* is concerned. This regional daily of Karnataka, as mentioned earlier depended on PTI and UNI for most of its news coverage. Quite naturally most of

the news items were hard news, reporting combat and everyday policy statements and diplomatic reactions.

When it came to reporting opposition's viewpoints the newspaper report concentrated more on The Congress. Of the total number of 35 reports, 70% is related to Congress party's statements and opinions.

Articles which are critical of Pakistan, number 28. Most of these criticisms were based on the torture of Indian soldiers by Pakistani troops. The newspaper had very few reports, which appeared to be nationalistic/jingoistic in nature (3).

As far as editorials are concerned fig-5 details the number of editorials and the nature of its opinions. While the number of editorials critical of the administration numbered just four majority of the editorials were neutral arguing for a solution to the problem through dialogue.

### **Balance in coverage**

The occasions when the newspaper's coverage was balanced depended on issues/events. When the spotlight shifted to happenings in Islamabad, Nachiketa's release, Nawaz Sharif's statements, foreign Minister Sartaz Aziz's visit, the coverage was well balanced. However when it came to reporting opposition's perspectives though there was enough space allocated it was the Congress Party that was highlighted.

Based on these available data, and on the three models of agenda setting, agenda building and agenda reflecting, efforts would be made in the next

chapter to analyse the role the three newspapers played in its coverage of the conflict.

**Fig:2(a). Coverage of Kargil Conflict in The Hindu**

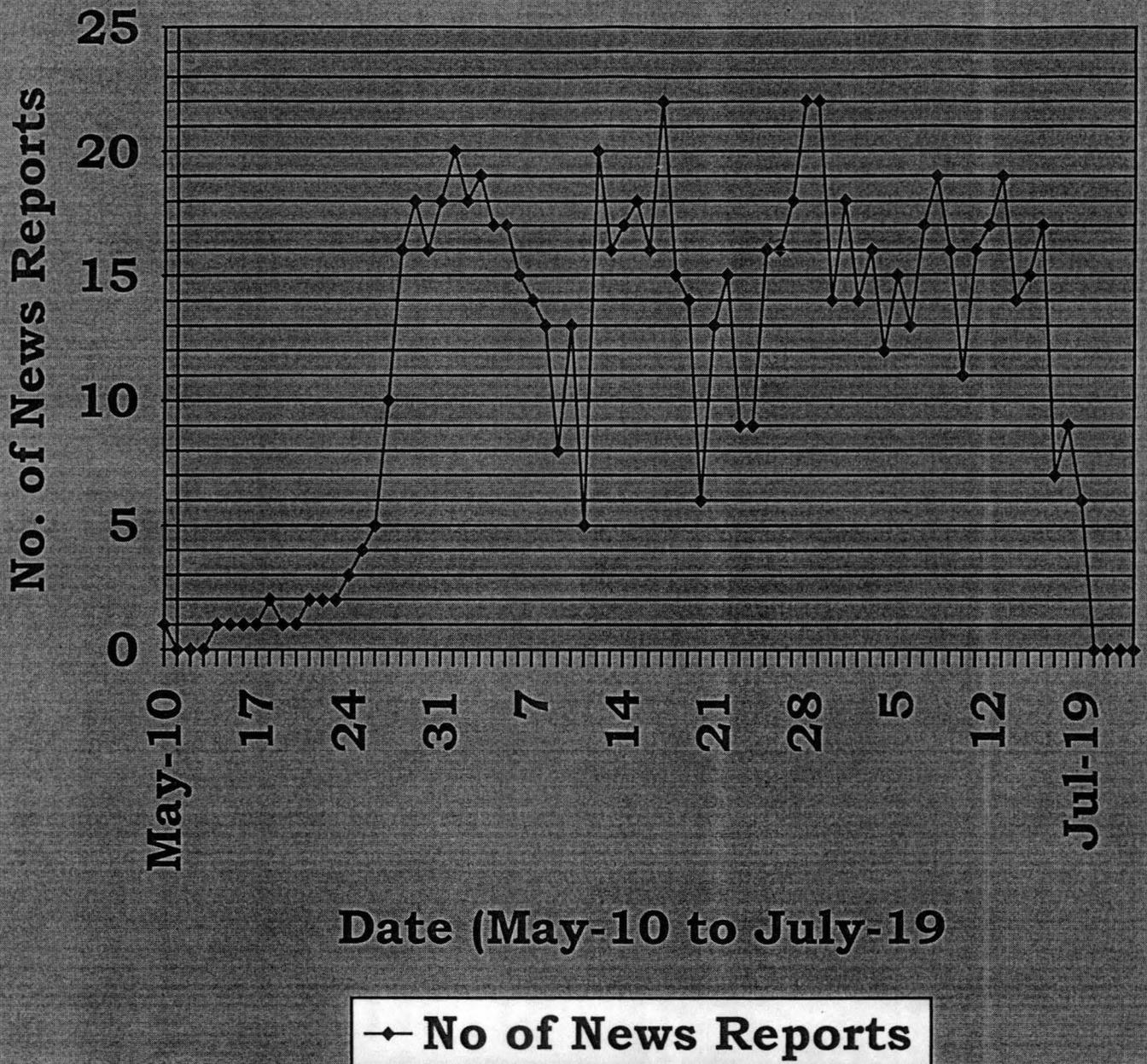


Fig:2(b). Coverage of Kargil Conflict in *The Times of India*

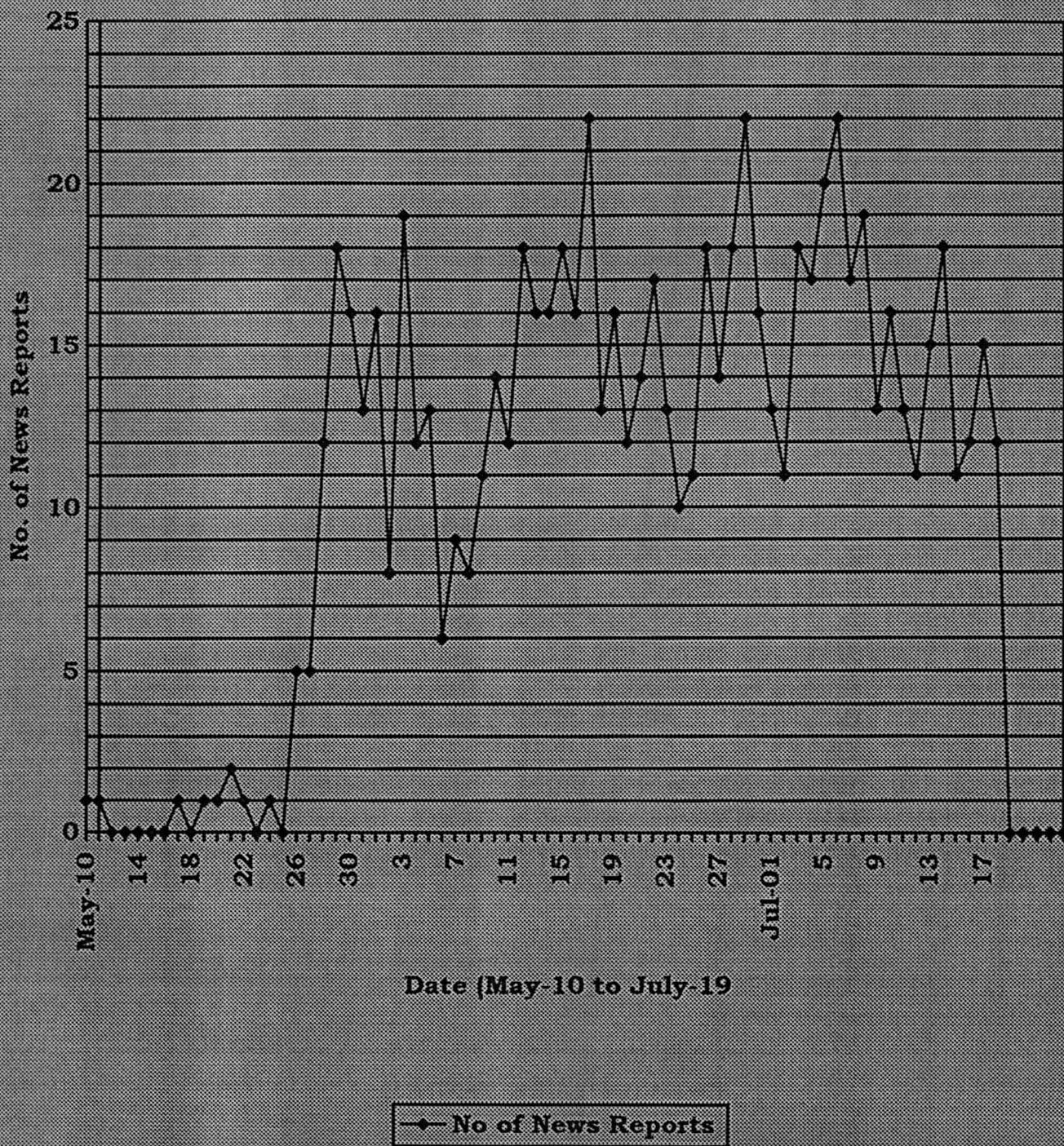


Fig:2(c). Coverage of Kargil Conflict in *Prajavani*

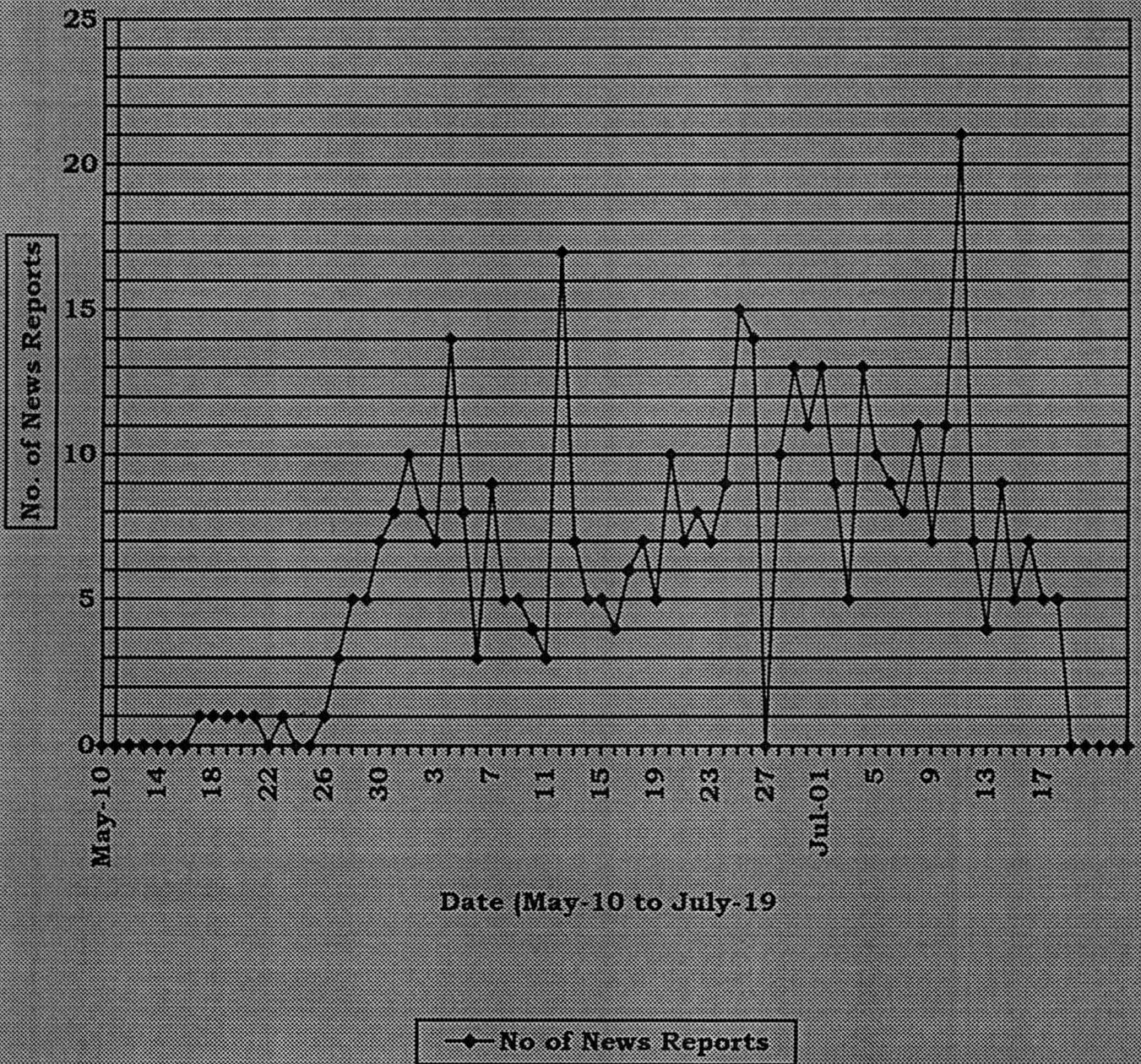
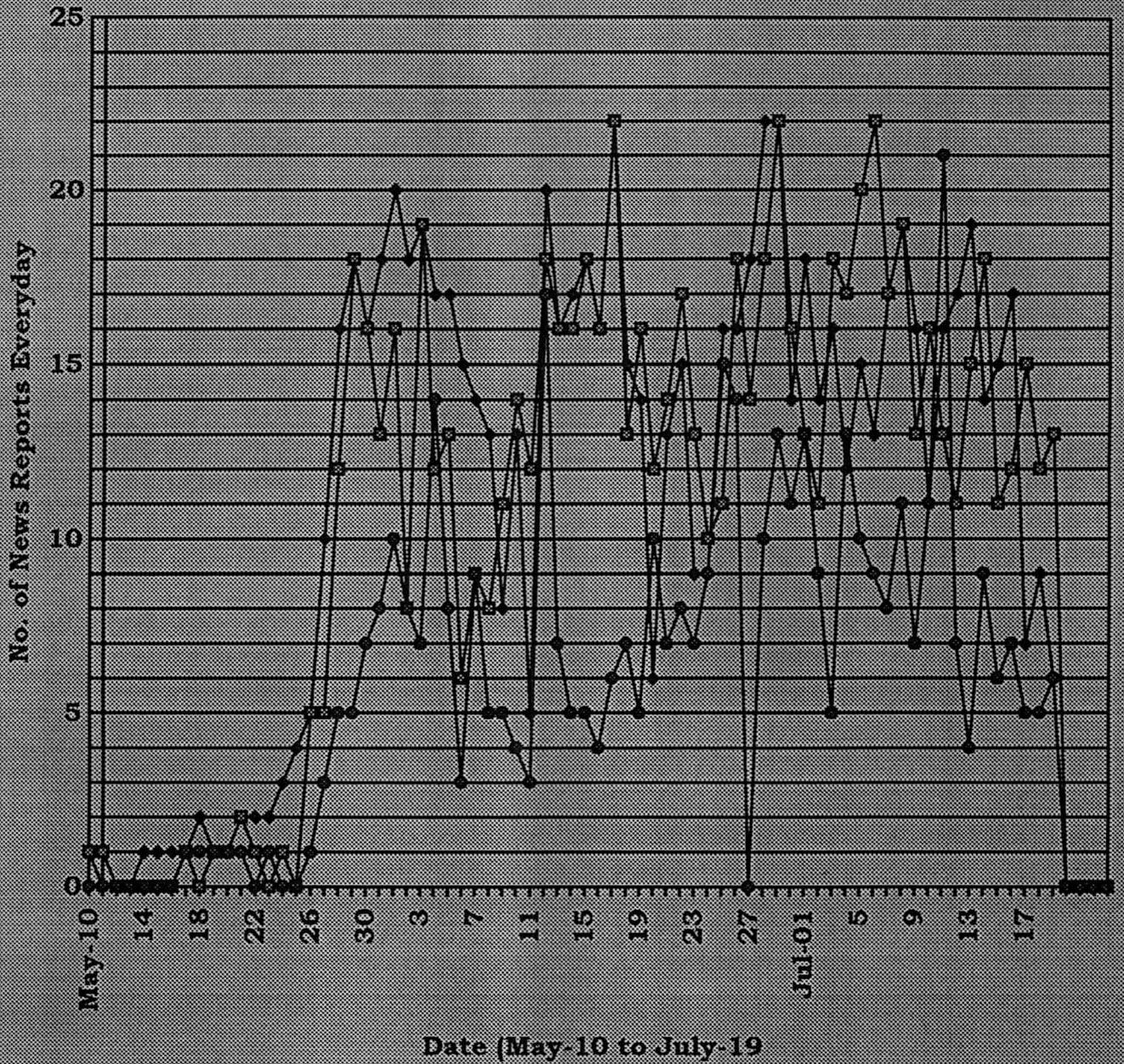


Fig:2(d). Comparative coverage of everyday news in *The Hindu*, *Times of India* and *Prajavani*



◆ No of News Reports in The Hindu  
 ■ No of News Reports in The Times of India  
 ● No of News Reports in Prajavani

**Fig-3. Sources of News reports in The Three Newspapers**

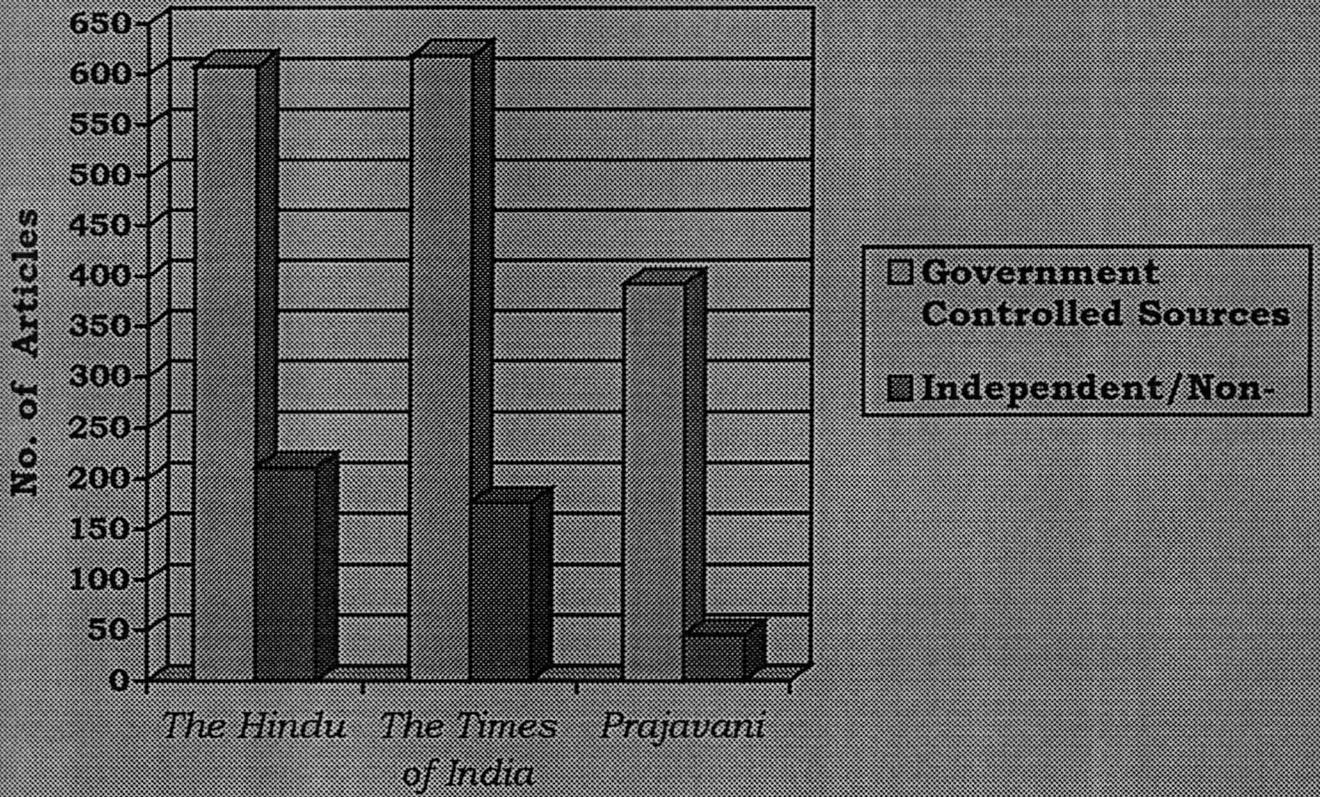
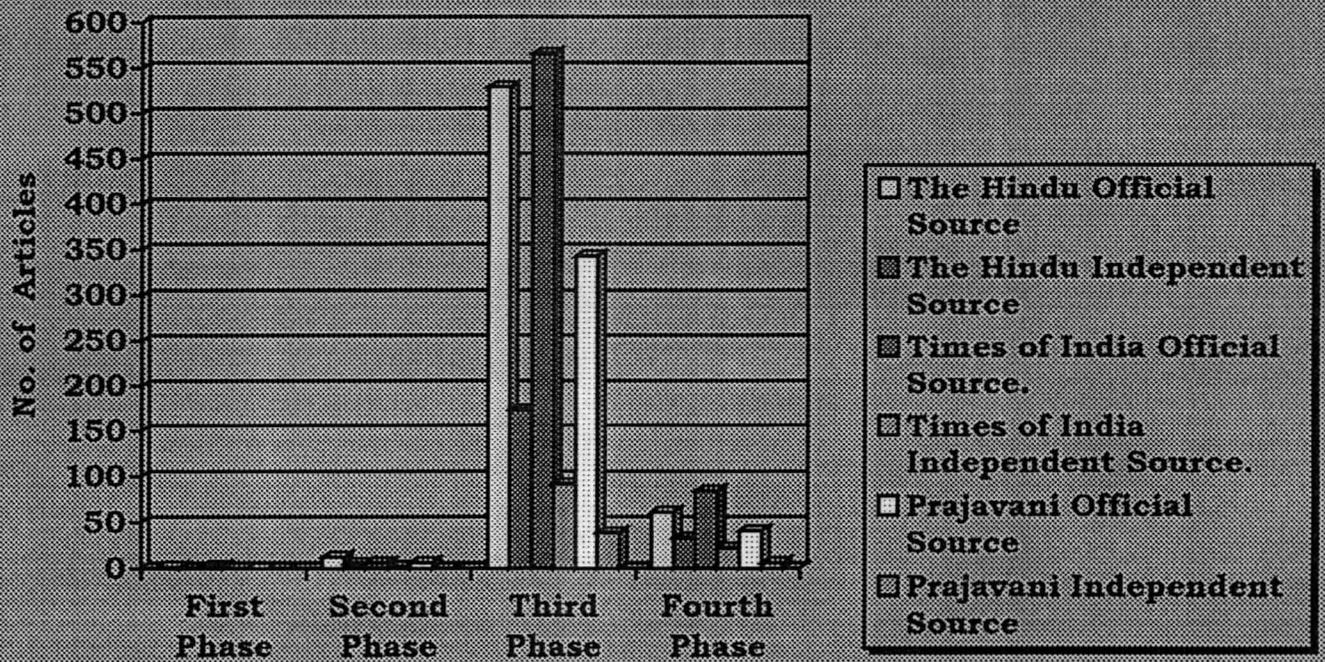
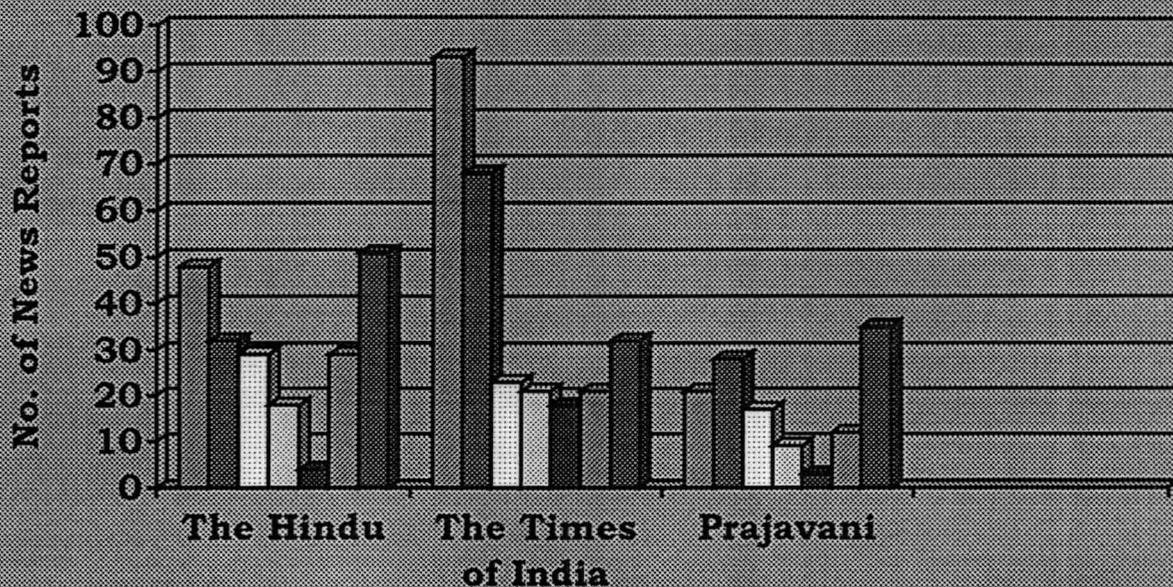


Fig-3A. Phase level Analysis sources of News Reports

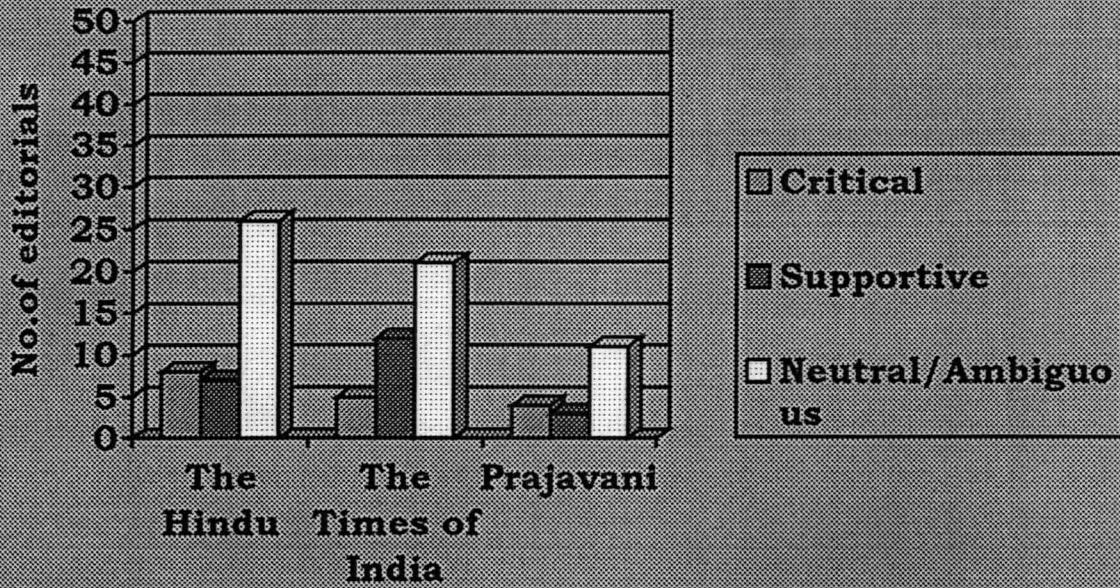


**Fig: 4. Coverage of different aspects related to Kargil conflict in the three dailies**



- Pro Government Policy
- On US Mediation
- Jingoistic reports
- Opposition view point
- Critical of Pakistan
- Safe Passage to militants
- India crossing the LOC

**Fig: 5. Criticism vs Support for Government policy in the Editorial**



## Chapter Three

### A Comparative Analysis of Media Coverage

This chapter presents an analysis of the coverage in the selected Indian vernacular and national dailies based on the quantitative analysis in chapter two. While the effort would be to determine the role played by media based on the theoretical framework of agenda setting, agenda building and agenda reflecting, in a broader perspective the enquiry would be to understand media's role in foreign policy making – whether it amounted to merely reporting or influencing.

Kargil conflict involved several issues crucial to the very core of states' existence in the subcontinent. Perceiving it merely as a territorial aggression/violation of the Line of Control (LOC), by militants in association with Pakistani troops would be a myopic view of the entire problem and an exercise in futility.

As Praveen Swami, a journalist who extensively covered the conflict notes:<sup>20</sup>

“There is something fundamentally repugnant about the idea of a post-mortem of the Kargil war, premised as it is on the assumption that the

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<sup>20</sup> Praveen Swami, “*The Kargil War: Preliminary Explorations*”, in FAULTLINES - Writings on conflict & resolution, Vol. 2, August 1999.

conflict has died. In reality, the war of the summer of 1999 is just part of a much wider conflict, driven by forces which are far from spent.”

For Pakistan, Kashmir is an unfinished agenda of partition. After unsuccessfully venturing several times in the past to militarily occupy Kashmir Pakistan has taken upon itself the responsibility to provide political, moral and diplomatic support to the ‘freedom fighters of Kashmir’ For India, Kashmir symbolises the very essence of its ‘secular’ existence. More so Kashmir has become an indispensable part of the country for both strategic as well as political reasons. India has been often accusing Pakistan of aiding and abetting terrorism in the valley.

Caught between the crossfire are Kashmiri citizens, who are leading a desperate movement for their right to self-determination.

The analysis of newspaper coverage on Kargil conflict would look into these and other related factors to understand the actual role the newspapers played in reporting Kargil conflict. Media as an agenda setter, agenda builder or agenda reflecting agency.

Towards this firstly the agenda of the government related to Kargil conflict need to be mentioned.

- The primary objective of the government was to completely clear the Kargil heights of infiltrators. The status quo ante as far as the LOC is concerned had to be restored.
- Secondly, the government wanted to ensure the sanctity of the LOC. It was a clear-cut policy that India would not escalate the conflict by being

provocative. The agenda of the government was to ensure the sanctity of the LOC. Several suggestions to ease the pressure on the armed forces by opening up a second line of defence was rejected.

- To initiate airstrikes against militant positions and assisting then ground troops.
- Create safe passages for the militants to wothdraw from their occupied poditions if desired so.
- To foil pakistani designs towards internationalising Kashmir dispute by refusing to officially accept third party mediation .
- To effectively raise nationatilistic sentiments among the general public to portray Pakistan as an untrustworthy rogue neighbour and use Kargil as an election issue.
- To avoid stock taking analysis of the failure which resulted in Kargil conflict. The government agenda was to discourage criticism during the conflict with the morale of the armed forces as an excuse. The government also discouraged the Rajya Sabha from discussing the issues involved by refusing to convene the Upper House.
- Finally the government agenda was to portray that the actual problem of Kashmir was that of cross border terrorism sponsered by Pakistan. And not as argued by certain elements as a movement for self determination .

Having stated the government policy/agenda during the Kargil conflict one needs to look into how the media perceived, analysed and reported the conflict.

Was it in tune with then government agenda or did the newspapers set the agenda for the government.

## **THE HINDU**

The analysis of news coverage related to Kargil conflict in *The Hindu* points out that the newspaper faced several constraints in functioning as an agenda setting agency. The newspaper on the other hand played the role of building the agenda on certain occasions while merely reporting them on the other.

The coverage in *The Hindu* can best be described as balanced and to use the present theoretical framework, that of agenda building. The agenda setting function can be clearly ruled out as the newspaper could hardly meet the required criteria. By being balanced the newspaper was critical of the administration at times, and also supportive of several government policies. Several reports in *The Hindu* concentrated on explaining the foreign policy decisions of the government and guiding the administration by motivating public (elite) debate into the issues involved.

There were several reports critical of the serious lapse in the intelligence gathering without which the intruders could have been detected much earlier. However due to non availability of relevant facts and the repeated response from the government agencies assuring a detailed investigation into the shortfalls which led to Kargil, there a was shift into other areas. The report

published by the Shujaat Bhukari on 24<sup>th</sup> May clearly criticises the government for its lack of clear cut policy in dealing with the situation. <sup>21</sup>

As far as the semantic and strategic importance of terming the developments as 'war like situation', 'conflict' or even 'war', was concerned the following analysis in the newspaper explains it all:

"Is there a war in Kargil?<sup>22</sup> When the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, a few days ago referred to the "war-like" situation, and not a war, in Kargil, he had good reasons, mainly diplomatic, for saying so.

In presenting the Pakistani aggression as an "armed intrusion", the government had created the impression of a "limited border skirmish" in Kargil....."

The impression of a limited conflict in Kargil the newspaper pointed out had also resulted from the Indian decision to restrain itself. "By deciding not to cross the Line of Control and attack the supply and control points on the Pakistani side and ruling out punitive attacks on Pakistan elsewhere, India has prevented the escalation of the conflict into a full-blown war".

As far as the government action was concerned the newspaper noted that the Indian options in such a provocative situation need to be worked out at different levels simultaneously. The positions held by the intruders inside Indian territory would have to be speedily undone. Allowing them time would

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<sup>21</sup> Shujaat bhukari, "Conflicting versions on Kargil skirmishes", *The Hindu*, May 24<sup>th</sup> 1999, P-13.

<sup>22</sup> C. Raja Mohan and Atul Aneja, Janus Faced Pakistan, *The Hindu*, June 13<sup>th</sup> 1999.

only enable them to get stronger by the day. Also giving reasonable time to ensure that unnecessary Indian casualties are not incurred. It suggested that diplomatic efforts be intensified to reassert the commitment of both sides to the LOC

Regarding air strikes launched against the infiltrators, an editorial pointed out that in responding decisively, by the use of its Air Force to clear the occupation, New Delhi was clearly courting the dangers involved of straying into Pakistani air space. The crisis would snowball reinforcing the Pakistani argument that Kashmir is the world's foremost "nuclear flash-point" and that the international community must intervene to resolve the problem.

Having launched the built-in risks of the air operations, India, the editorial argued has no option but to stay the course. It's objective must be to vacate the aggressors as quickly as possible.

On the other hand 'India must also strain every nerve to minimise the danger of crossing the LOC. It will also have to consider early ground operations to force the pace of pushing the infiltrators back'.

Even an occasionally display of aggressiveness urged for a peaceful resort. 'The challenge now lies in keeping the military operations against the intrusions firmly at the low-intensity conflict threshold. Any attempt by Pakistan to replicate the "Brasstacks" build-up would have to be countered through effective and pro-active diplomacy'.<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> V. R. Raghavan, The Kargil Conundrum, *The Hindu*, 28<sup>th</sup> May 1999.

The newspaper was comparatively less critical regarding the defence minister Mr. George Fernandez's statements firstly assuring that the occupied territory in Kargil would be vacated within weeks and then his exonerating Pakistani prime minister and the ISI. Instead the nationalistic and the jingoistic statements of home minister Mr. L.K Advani and a section of the society attracted a lot of criticism in the newspaper.

"The calls for hot pursuit and for proactive military initiatives in areas of our own choosing are more likely to muddy the waters. Perhaps the most important need would be for the political leadership of the government to evolve a code for public pronouncements, an area in which its record has been indifferent at best and chauvinistic, at worst."<sup>24</sup>

Commenting on Mr. Fernandes's statement a report noted: 'There is speculation here that the statement by Mr. Fernandes at the end of the crucial meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security this afternoon was a carefully calculated move to sharpen the differences between civilian and military elements in Pakistan'<sup>25</sup>.

However the issue was through official sources clarified that any dialogue on "safe passage" with Pakistan would have to revolve around two aspects. First, Pakistan would have to initiate a request for a safe passage. Second, India on its part would then "consider" this request. The newspaper also quoted Mr. Jaswant Singh stating that "safe passage " meant "movement backwards" from

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>25</sup> C. Raja Mohan, Onus on Islamabad, *The Hindu*, 29<sup>th</sup> May 1999.

the LoC. "There is no question of stopping military action till the intrusions end." He had argued.<sup>26</sup>

The news of the opposition was given due weightage and their criticisms were mainly published both on front as well as inside pages. In *The Hindu* the number of news items reflecting the opposition perspective was greater than the number of news items reflecting pro-government policy.

The newspaper reported that the Government's decision to engage Pakistan in a dialogue while pressing ahead with the military operations had been endorsed by the Congress (I). Quoting Mr. K. Natwar Singh, who heads the party's external affairs department, *The Hindu* pointed out that the Congress (I) wanted the dialogue to succeed and Pakistan to agree to withdraw to its side of the Line of Control.

The opposition's criticism for the decision by the Defence Minister, Mr. George Fernandes, to provide a special military briefing on the situation in Kargil to a meeting of the National Executive of the BJP was also given due weightage. The stated point was that it was inappropriate of the ruling combine for asking military officers to make presentations at a forum of the ruling party.

The newspaper also gave considerable weightage to reports from the Western capitals especially from the United States. The opinion of the US administration regarding the conflict was given high priority. The centre of the discussion however rested on the probability on United States acting as mediator to solve the Kargil conflict.

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<sup>26</sup> "Withdraw intruders, India tells Pakistan", *The Hindu*, June 3<sup>rd</sup> 1999,

Reporting the US efforts in resolving the conflict, *The Hindu* noted that by ensuring the diplomatic isolation of Pakistan in the international arena and exerting considerable direct pressure on the military brass and the political leadership in Islamabad, the Clinton administration had left the Pakistan Prime Minister, Mr. Nawaz Sharif, with no choice but to end the Kargil misadventure.

This clear affirmation by the United States the newspaper observed had brought a rare harmony between the political objectives of New Delhi and Washington on any issue relating to Jammu and Kashmir over the last many decades.

Commenting on the US role, Raja Mohan, the Strategic Affairs editor of *The Hindu* noted that 'with the sole exception of China, the U.S. has the biggest political influence over the political and security establishments in Pakistan'.<sup>27</sup>

The biggest gain for Indian diplomacy he pointed out was Washington's surprisingly positive attitude and stressed the statement from a senior official of the National Security Council, Mr. Bruce Riedel, insisting that the Pakistani forces withdraw to the LOC had in many ways altered the international dimensions of the Kargil crisis.

Stating that the U.S. position had undercut one of Pakistan's principal assumptions in embarking on the misadventure, he noted that if Islamabad's expectation was that it could get the U.S. to intervene on its behalf by raising the military temperature in Kashmir, it had failed miserably.

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<sup>27</sup> C. Raja Mohan, The US and Kargil, *The Hindu*, June 10<sup>th</sup> 1999.

The newspaper also carried regular happenings in Pakistan. Amit Baruah, reporting from Islamabad in an article captured the mood in the Pakistani capital following US involvement in Kargil conflict by stating that: 'Pakistan's friend and benefactor, the United States, has turned against it'.

*The Hindu* carrying reports from the Pakistani newspaper *Dawn*, noted that, "There has been a marked diplomatic failure on the part of Pakistan to present and sell its policy on Kargil.... The way the Pakistani officials tried to conceal portions of President Bill Clinton's letter to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, from their own people and the media by not disclosing that Clinton had asked him to respect the LoC, has lowered Islamabad's credibility in Washington a notch further".<sup>28</sup>

There was hardly any hawkish reporting except for a few opinion articles like the one below which argued for a total destruction of forces inimical to reason.<sup>29</sup>

"In the long-run, New Delhi must come to terms with the possibility that there will be no peace with Pakistan until its army is destroyed. Fortunately, this may not require an all-out war. A systematic and long overdue rebuilding of India's war machine will push Pakistan into efforts to match it that will destroy its economy and cause the nation to disintegrate."

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<sup>28</sup> Amit Baruah, US Plainspeaking irks Pakistan, *The Hindu*, June 17<sup>th</sup> 1999.

<sup>29</sup> Prem Shankar Jha, The Mind of the Pakistani Army, *The Hindu*, June 17<sup>th</sup> 1999.

Based on the analysis, it can be argued that *The Hindu* mainly performed the role of an agenda building agency. There were hardly any agenda the newspapers tried to pursue on its own.

## **Times of India**

The *Times of India* in its reportage of Kargil conflict was clearly propagating the government agenda and to be precise was taking things a step ahead of the government. There was hardly any criticism of the government policies except for having trusted Pakistan. The policy of the newspaper it appeared was to postpone critical analysis of the government and its policies as long as the war was in progress. Opposition was advised to stand united with the administration lest the army lose its morale. Be it reporting the conflict, the opposition perspective or western opinion, the coverage was selective.

Reports in *Times of India* were particularly critical of Pakistan and its army. Accusing Pakistan of betraying India an editorial noted that 'while Mr Vajpayee and Mr Sharif were busy exchanging Jhappis in Lahore, the first infiltrator was already on his way to Kargil. The first reactions across the border suggest that Islamabad was in the know'<sup>30</sup>.

Another editorial criticised the Pakistani army for the genocidal killings and rape it had indulged in Bangladesh and termed it as the beginning of its brutalisation followed by the suppression of civil liberties and oppression of its

own people during the long period of martial law. Other than involving itself with the bloody conflict in Afghanistan, Russian prisoners during the Afghan war were subjected to the kind of brutalities now being inflicted on Indian soldiers.

The editorial thus pointed out that it is only because of India's extraordinary generosity and commitment to peace that civilised courtesies were being extended to Mr Aziz and talks being held with him.<sup>31</sup>

The newspaper clearly exposed its pro-government approach when it absolved the ruling coalition of the criticism that Kargil was a result of its adventurous nuclear tests of May 1998.

Giving a rationale for Pakistan strategy in Kargil on the basis of Professor Stephen Cohen's argument: "A Pakistani nuclear capability paralyses not only the Indian nuclear decision but also Indian conventional forces and a brash, bold Pakistani strike to liberate Kashmir might go unchallenged if the Indian leadership was weak or indecisive" the editorial argued. If India had not gone explicitly nuclear in 1998 -- a full nine year after the assembly of the first Pakistani bomb -- the morale of the Indian armed forces fighting in Kargil would not be as high as it is today.<sup>32</sup>

It further stated that, a demoralised, non-nuclear Indian government would have had no alternative but to yield to Pakistani and international pressure

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<sup>30</sup> "Pakistan's Perfidy", Editorial in *The Times of India*, May 27th 1999.

<sup>31</sup> "Uniform Disgraced", Editorial in *The Times of India*, June 12<sup>th</sup> 1999

<sup>32</sup> "Nuclear Follies", Editorial in *The Times of India*, July 2<sup>nd</sup> 1999.

under such circumstances and India's so-called conventional superiority would have been of no avail.

Defining the role for the opposition parties the newspaper pointed out that the Prime Minister should meet the leaders of all parties and brief them comprehensively. 'This is not the time for the opposition parties to play politics. Like all other citizens, they should demonstrate total national solidarity in support of our *jawans* and airmen. They should do well to remember the Pakistani army leadership is tempted to act whenever they sense political weakness in this country'<sup>33</sup>.

When a mature democratic country faces external aggression, another editorial requested all political parties to sink their differences and join together to reassure the men and women who are risking their lives for the national cause that they have the total support of the nation.

Today the Indian armed forces are battling in a terrain under conditions unprecedented in history. There is a wave of emotional integration sweeping the country as our TV screens show the instances of supreme sacrifice made by men in the prime of their lives. All political parties have also pledged to hold national security above party politics even as the country is to face an election in the next ten weeks. At the same time, the divisions among the parties are also prominently visible. One can justifiably argue that some differences can be kept aside to be discussed

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<sup>33</sup> "Heightened Conflict", Editorial in *The Times of India*, May 28<sup>th</sup> 1999.

at a later date after the campaign is over, but there are other issues on which the present government has to take decisions and a national consensus needs to be built.<sup>34</sup>

Criticising the Defence Minister for his statements the newspapers reported that due to George Fernandes' statements, there was a strong impression in India that the Pakistani Prime Minister is not in control of his armed forces. In which case the newspaper found it legitimate to ask whether there was any point in carrying on negotiations with Sartaz Aziz, and whether he was in a position to deliver the goods at all<sup>35</sup>.

Clarifying the government position another report quoting the defence minister noted:

"It is Pakistan's proposal to send him here; we've simply agreed he can come. What he wishes to say will be known only when he comes here. If he wants to discuss how the intruders are to leave, we can discuss their safe passage..... Compromise on territory for which we are fighting is unthinkable and we are going to take it all back".<sup>36</sup>

In an occasional article critical of the government, it was asked to explain to the nation several shortcomings. "So far it has waffled. Intelligence failures have been cited. The media have been taken to task for raising too many questions. The opposition parties have been reviled for seeking to exploit the

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<sup>34</sup> "Sovereign Decisions", Editorial in *The Times of India*, June 29<sup>th</sup> 1999

<sup>35</sup> "Talking Terms", Editorial in *The Times of India*, June 1<sup>st</sup> 1999.

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people of J&K will sink further into a quagmire. Then the rumblings of a nuclear calamity will begin to sound all too real.

As if providing answers to these questions in one of his regular articles K. Subramanyam argued that Pakistan after the secession of Bangladesh had no more any rights to quote the two-nation theory. 'In the 1940s and 1950s, Pakistan claimed Kashmir on the basis of itself being the homeland of all Indian Muslims. Today India has more Muslims than Pakistan'.

While Indian Kashmir he argued had a democratic government, the Pakistani Supreme Court he pointed out has castigated Islamabad for denying fundamental rights to millions of people in Pak-occupied Kashmir.

Stating that the locus-standi of Pakistan on Kashmir will have to be challenged on the basis of 50 years of Pakistani history he reminded that 'Pakistan has put us on alert. Let us not continue our reactive policy. Let us be proactive for a change'.<sup>38</sup>

In another article he pointed out that the world had to be explained that 'Kashmir is only a symptom of fundamentalism and ethnic cleansing underlying the two- nation theory'<sup>39</sup>.

The newspaper in its reportage as far as the western opinion was concerned followed two distinct policies. While it freely quoted western fears of Islamic

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<sup>38</sup> K. Subramanyam, "Pakistan's Next Move- Only Checks, No Mates", *The Times of India*, June 29<sup>th</sup> 1999,

<sup>39</sup> K Subrahmanyam, "Kargil Balance Sheet", *The Times of India*, July 26<sup>th</sup> 1999.

fundamentalism and India as the victim of Islamic militancy, it was highly sceptical about a probable western mediation in solving the Kashmir issue.

Quoting a report in the *New York Times* datelined Srinagar *Times of India* reported that the current fighting in Kargil and neighbouring areas was only the "most visible face of an effort by Islamic militants to turn Kashmir into a religious state". It added. "Militants from various countries appear to have chosen Kashmir as a prime target to bring the World's Muslim regions under religious rule. The campaign is in part a legacy of the proxy war that the US waged against the Soviet forces in Afghanistan in the 1980s."<sup>40</sup>

In another editorial the government was warned against being thrilled about the outcome of the Cologne summit by stating that, "while New Delhi has every reason to be satisfied with the outcome of the summit, there is no need to feel overly triumphant. If the G-8 has decided not to internationalise Kashmir - at least for now - it is not so much out of sympathy for India's position than out of frustration at Pakistan's capacity for dangerous brinkmanship."<sup>41</sup>

## **Prajavani**

*Prajavani* to be precise had a very modest reporting of the whole conflict. While most of the news reports were from agencies the only selection/choice the newspaper could make was choosing out of the available reports and positioning them in their layout.

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<sup>40</sup> Ramesh Chandran, Kargil a Pointer to Bigger Designs, *The Times of India*, ---

<sup>41</sup> Pakistan on Notice, Editorial in *The Times of India*, June 1999

people of J&K will sink further into a quagmire. Then the rumblings of a nuclear calamity will begin to sound all too real.

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<sup>39</sup> K Subrahmanyam, "Kargil Balance Sheet", *The Times of India*, July 26<sup>th</sup> 1999.

However two aspects clearly stand out in the newspaper's coverage of Kargil conflict. *Prajavani* clearly was opposed to the ruling coalition the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and significance was clearly given to the statements and reports by Congress (I). Most of the stories related to the party was published on the front page.

Secondly there was a strange importance given to highlighting reactions by the Muslim community in response to the conflict.

In the very first editorial published on May 27<sup>th</sup>, the newspaper argued that Kargil could take place despite the 'circus' Prime Minister Vajpayee undertook to Pakistan while the editorial stresses the need for the armed forces to immediately vacate the Kargil heights of Pakistani infiltrators it wondered if a caretaker government could actually take up the enormous task at hand.<sup>42</sup>

Almost all the other editorials stressed mainly on one aspect, that India no matter what the pressures are should continue to talk to Pakistan, should keep the diplomatic channels open, and ensure that Pakistan's designs of internationalising the Kashmir issue should be foiled.

While there were several criticisms on irresponsible statements made by Defence Minister George Fernandes, provocative statements by other members of the cabinet and 'self-styled advocates of nationalism', the newspaper also argued that the situation can never be termed as war and that it was merely freeing the occupied heights by mercenaries.

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<sup>42</sup> Militants' menace in Kargil, editorial in *Prajavani*, May 27<sup>th</sup>, 1999.

Another editorial<sup>43</sup> accused the prime minister of creating panic among his countrymen by describing the situation as 'war like'. Referring to Mr. Advani's statements of 'a fitting reply to the violators of LOC' on the one hand and George Fernandes' statements of providing safe passage to the militants, the newspaper argued that the government was speaking in two different voices and requested the administration to evolve a proper policy in dealing with the crisis. It also criticised the government for creating confusion among the soldiers with such irresponsible statements.

Urging talks between the two prime ministers the newspaper noted that the government had already committed the nation to severe economic crisis through sanctions imposed following the nuclear tests of May 1998.

The government was also criticised for making use of the army for political purpose by inviting the army top brass to brief the ruling party.

The government was also criticised for not convening the Rajya Sabha for a discussion on the crucial issue despite the opposition parties requesting the administration several times.

Almost all the opinion articles were by by Kuldip Nayar describing infiltration, the designs of Pakistan army etc.

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<sup>43</sup> "Talks must to resolve the conflict", Editorial, *The Hindu*, June 3<sup>rd</sup> 1999.

## Conclusion

The media in India was stunningly successful in performing its primary responsibility, i.e. of informing the public. There were regular briefings by the armed forces and the government. Thus the public knew whatever the army and the authorities wanted them to know. There were other alternative sources like the international media and the governments abroad through which the media in India had access to news.

The analysis of news coverage in *The Hindu* on the Kargil conflict points out that this newspaper faced several constraints in functioning as an 'agenda setting' agency. Firstly access to information was limited as war reporting quite commonly is controlled by information provided by the authorities. Fig:(a) clearly indicates that there was a phenomenal increase in the number of news reports based on events. Thus the events dictated the importance and the number of news items, and not a particular policy of this newspaper.

The coverage in *The Hindu* can best be described as that of 'agenda building'. By being balanced, the newspaper was critical of the administration at times while supportive of several government policies. Several reports concentrated on explaining the foreign policy decisions of the government and guiding the administration by motivating public (elite) debate into the issues involved.

The *Times of India* in its reportage of Kargil conflict was clearly propagating the government policies and to be precise functioning as an 'agenda reflecting' agency. There was hardly any criticism of the government initiatives. The policy

of the newspaper, it appears, was to prevent critical analysis of the government and its policies until the end of the war. Opposition was advised to stand united with the administration lest the army lose its morale. The coverage in the newspaper was selective towards the opposition perspective or western opinion. Henceforth it can be concluded that the *Times of India* played the role of reflecting the government agenda better than the government itself would have done.

*Prajavani* had a very modest reporting of the whole conflict. While most of the news reports were from news agencies, the only selection/choice the newspaper could make was from the available reports. However two aspects clearly stand out in the newspaper's coverage of the Kargil conflict. The newspaper was clearly opposed to the NDA and importance was clearly given to the statements by the opposition parties especially Congress (I). Most of the stories related to the party was published on the front page. Secondly, the newspaper took a clear-cut stand against terming the Kargil conflict as a "War like Situation". It also continuously persisted on suggesting continuous dialogue with Pakistan. There were hardly any jingoistic reports that could have increased nationalistic sentiments.

The media reports on Kargil contributed towards stirring up the whole nation into action with tears and donations flowing uninterrupted for those who died fighting. What the media failed while reporting is in not addressing certain basic issues: starting from the failure of the state and central government towards formulating a rational policy to counter terrorism, to brutal use of

force, custodial killings and rampant violation of human rights. Neither was the government nailed for its lack of defence preparedness.

The government's argument refusing to accept Kashmir as a disputed territory and covering up the fact that the people there are fighting for self-determination is expected. The strategic and political basis for such an argument can be understood. But the Indian media, given a democratic environment where freedom of the press is guaranteed, refused to address crucial questions involving the minority public.

The present study does not directly address the question of the loyalty of Indian media. However the analysis indicates that media as an institution remains bound to the forces of the state. This is especially true in a state where the functioning of media rests on capitalist forces that are forever dependent on the state.

When the media refuses to address or cater to the in-depth feelings or needs of the people of the state, it is evident that the media is failing in its responsibility in enabling the people to govern themselves by reason. Instead media as an institution caters to the needs of the dominant forces of the society, acting as an arm of the ruling class where the responsibility of the media will be towards 'engineering consent'.

Given such a situation, as Padgaonkar in his article states there is a real danger that India, Pakistan and, above all, the people of Jammu and Kashmir will sink further into a quagmire. Then the rumblings of a nuclear calamity will begin to sound all too real.

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