

## **Media Coverage of Pak-India Standoff 2002: An Analysis**

**Dr. Muhammad Sajjad Malik and Dr. Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema**

### **Abstract**

The 2002 military standoff between Pakistan and India was triggered due to the attack on Indian parliament on Dec 13, 2001. For several month hundreds and thousands of soldiers stood eyeball-to-eyeball in one of the biggest military mobilization. There were moments when it was feared that the war was imminent. But better sense prevailed and the standoff, which has started in January, 2002, veered off by October same year. Thus, another potential war was averted between the nuclear-armed neighbors. Media aggressively covered the confrontation, especially when the tension was at peak. Through partisan coverage, media also sharpened the differences and crystallized the animosity. The study has gone through the selected English-language newspapers of both countries over selected days from January to October in 2002 to gauge the nature of coverage. It shows that the coverage in the mainstream media of both Pakistan and India was tilted towards national sentiments. If Indian media sought revenge against parliament attack, Pakistani media pushed for a matching response in retaliation to India's mobilization of army. The coverage increased during the height of tension but it decreased drastically when became clear that there will be no war.

**Keywords:** Pak-India, media, army, war, standoff, militants

### **Introduction**

Pakistan and India share a long history of conflict. They have fought at least three full scale wars in addition to a number of border skirmishes and even limited wars. The induction of nuclear weapons added a new dimension to the strategic map of South Asia, as many experts thought that the threat of total war may provide an element of stability on the pattern of MAD (Mutual Assured Destruction) between US and former USSR.

However, the Kargil conflict was turning point as Indian policy-makers starting thinking about a limited war in conventional terms even within nuclear umbrella. Indian defence minister George Fernandes tried to put it in perspective while addressing a conference when he said that wars had not become outdated due to nuclear weapons (Rajain, 369, 2005). The time to test this opaque doctrine into practice came soon in the wake of attack on the Indian parliament. The Indian government developed "a dangerous misperception regarding winning a nuclear war against Pakistan, especially during the military standoff of 2001-2002" (Khan, 80, 2005). It resulted in almost a year-long military standoff soon after attack on parliament of India when the two sides came dangerously close to a full-scale war (Chari, Cheema & Cohen, 153, 2007). The situation dangerous because with

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\* Authors are Associate Professor, Islamabad Model College, Islamabad and Former Dean, Faculty of Contemporary Studies, National Defence University, Islamabad

mobilization of about 1 million troops, the world saw with awe and fear the biggest movement of troops.

National Security Advisor Brajesh Mishra later said that the Indian leaders made a unanimous decision to move the army. “There was a unanimous decision to let Pakistan know this kind of thing would not be tolerated. A unanimous decision to mobilize. A unanimous decision to cross the Line of Control and the border” (Stolar, April 2, 2012). In an interview in 2006, Mishra said that the action against Pakistan was averted and postponed due to speech made by Pervez Musharraf on 12th January, 2002 in which he promised to take action those involved in militancy by using Pakistan soil and also opposed use of terrorism for the sake of Kashmir. Mishra also said in the interview that the two sides were close to war: “Whether surgical strikes or this or that - it would have been a part of the campaign.... it would have been all out war” (Stolar, March 10, 2008).

However, Jaswant Singh, then external affairs minister, said war was not imminent. “I know there wasn’t even a risk of a full-fledged war or crossing the boundary or the Line of Control” (Stolar, March 10, 2008).

The standoff was the first of its kind between Pakistan and India staged in front of the prying eyes of media of the two nations. The start of the 21st century coincided with the marvel in the advancement of communication technologies. The concept of 24/7 media is a luxury for viewers but a challenge to media managers. An event like mobilization of armies of two nuclear-armed countries was a feast for hungry news outlets.

The research paper is based on the study of media coverage of 2002 standoff. The confrontation started after the parliament attack and continued till October 2002. The researcher selected the first two days of each January, June and October in 2002 to see the coverage of standoff in the media of two countries.

Two English-language newspapers each from India and Pakistan have been used to scan the coverage on each selected date. Dawn and The Frontier Post have been used for study of coverage in January. But Dawn was paired with Daily Times to scan coverage in June and October. The change of second paper was to see the coverage in two different newspapers to maximize the impact.

However, in case of India, The Hindu and The Tribune were used for study of coverage on all selected dates. The decision to use The Hindu was taken as it is mainstream newspaper which also had a correspondent in Pakistan. The Tribune is based on Chandigarh and is mirror of northern Indian sentiments during conflict.

The conflict for the sake of media coverage has been divided into three phases:

- 1- Escalation phase: Jan 1-2
- 2- De-escalation phase: June 1-2

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### **3- Termination of standoff phase: Oct 1-2**

The central question is related to the quality and quantity of media coverage in the selected period to see how media treated the 2002 military standoff.

The day-wise media coverage is given below. It has been analysed and is also followed by conclusion on the basis of content analysis of the selected newspapers.

### **2- Pakistani Media and Military Standoff**

Dawn has been used as the main source, while The Frontier Post and Daily Times as the second newspapers to get a more accurate picture of coverage.

#### **I- Dawn**

The day-wise coverage in Dawn during the escalation phase is given below:

#### **January 1**

The coverage began at high note as 15 news item were carried by the paper on January 1. The tension was running high but a somber news came from Kathmandu where foreign minister Abdul Sattar was present for the Saarc conference. He said that Pakistan will not be the first to start war. The paper reported from Washington that US officials saw a ray of hope for improvement after arrest of Hafiz Saeed of Lashkar-e-Taiba. Another report from the US showed that President George Bush appreciated action against militants. Jawed Naqvi filed from New Delhi that India welcomed the measures against militant groups. A report with dateline London showed that British media was giving more coverage to Pak-India standoff than the ongoing war in Afghanistan.

Other reports in the paper showed that though there were signs that the two country would scale back the buildup but the situation as still tense. Right-wing Jamaat-e-Islami leaders warned that war was around the corner, while a leader of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) showed concern at the situation. The Line of Control (LoC) was tense as the two sides were trading fire. Another sign of worry was closing down of the communication channel between the two countries and the paper reported that Samjhota train faced closure after about 25 years of service since it was started in July 1976. Domestically, health departments were preparing according to the 'war book' and ATMs operations were suspended in border areas. The paper also reported that army was keeping an eye on border tension and army chief Pervez Musharraf said he was satisfied with preparedness of air force.

On the positive side, the paper reported that Foreign Office (FO) announced to use all diplomatic channels to defuse the tension. It also reported that human right groups led by Asma Jahangir organized a peace march at Wagah border but it was dispersed by security forces.

**Table 1**

*Dawn Reports Jan 1*

S. No.	Reports
1	Islamabad will never initiate action: FM
2	War seems imminent, says JI leader
3	Thaw seen in frosty Pakistan, India ties
4	Pakistan welcomes Indian message
5	UK media attention shifted to South Asia
6	Boy injured in Indian shelling
7	The train that connected divided families
8	Health deptt preparing for 'war'
9	Tension on border leads to suspension of AMTs
10	Crackdown signals easing of tension
11	Bush hails action against extremists
12	Commanders review border situation
13	PPP leader slams Indian war hysteria
14	Peace rally at Wagah baton-charged
15	Musharraf satisfied with PAF readiness

**Source:** Author's PhD Thesis ([www.prr.hec.gov.pk](http://www.prr.hec.gov.pk))

### **January 2**

Dawn published 10 stories on January 2 related to the ongoing tension with India. There was a news about Pakistan's ongoing crackdown on Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad, as nearly 100 supporters of the two outfits were nabbed. The tension was continuing and Dawn published a news by Reuters that Vajpayee will not meet Musharraf in Kathmandu where the two were going to attend the summit. Similarly, Reuters reports about 15 people killed in Kashmir was also prominent. Separately, India sent special buses to retrieve passengers on Wagah border.

The paper reported that Musharraf talked on phone with various world leaders while Foreign Minister Sattar was reported as saying that Pakistan was working to normalize the situation. "The President and the Government of Pakistan are making their best efforts to de-escalate tension, preserve peace and avert use of force," Sattar reported said in an interview (Dawn, January 2, 202). In the middle of tension, the two countries exchanged list of nuclear facilities which is done every year under an agreement.

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**Table 2**

*Dawn Reports Jan 2*

S. No.	Reports
1	India sees no peace talks at Kathmandu
2	Ramay fears India may occupy part of AJK
3	Islamabad, Delhi exchange lists on N-facilities
4	Conviction, punishment of Indian upheld
5	15 killed in Kashmir violence
6	World leaders laud Pakistan stance
7	Two buses to bring stranded people
8	100 LT, Jaish men held
9	Efforts on to defuse tension: Sattar
10	VCOAS visits LoC

**Source:** Author's PhD Thesis ([www.prr.hec.gov.pk](http://www.prr.hec.gov.pk))

### June 1

The de-escalation had started by June, 2002 after dangerous buildup. It was also visible by fewer stories as Dawn carried only four news related to India. An important news was about French foreign minister Dominique de Villepin separately calling Indian and Pakistani counterparts to defuse tension. But the conflict was not over yet and the paper reported that many western countries had decided to cut back on non-essential staff at missions in India. Separately, it was reported that Musharraf and Vajpayee would attend a regional summit in Kazakhstan where India would talk about cross border terrorism. However, Pakistan had urged India to hold talks on all issues including Kashmir to end tension.

**Table 3**

*Dawn Reports June 1*

S. No.	Reports
1	Foreigners urged to leave India
2	France pursues phone diplomacy
3	Delhi to take up 'incursion' issue
4	India advised to grab Almaty opportunity

**Source:** Author's PhD Thesis ([www.prr.hec.gov.pk](http://www.prr.hec.gov.pk))

### June 2

The newspaper published seven news. The coverage focused in conflict as it was reported that the UN was pulling foreign staffers out of Pakistan and India. Though, there was also a positive report about Musharraf interview with CNN in which he said that any nuclear conflict was unthinkable. A good news came from Singapore where Indian Defence Minister Fernandes told media on the sidelines of a regional

conference that he did not see any immediate threat of war with Pakistan. There were also a speculative news item about possible meeting of Musharraf and Vajpayee in Kazakhstan. Separately, Pakistan was critical of Russia for continuing defence supplies to India. The overall coverage showed that de-escalation had started.

**Table 4**

*Dawn Reports June 2*

<b>S. No.</b>	<b>Reports</b>
1	Nuclear war unthinkable: Musharraf
2	UN orders evacuation from Pakistan, India
3	Fernandes rules out attack
4	Islamabad criticizes Moscow
5	4 more die as India continues shelling
6	India will be responsible for war, says Ghani Bhat
7	Speculation rife about Pakistan, India talks

**Source:** Author's PhD Thesis ([www.prr.hec.gov.pk](http://www.prr.hec.gov.pk))

### **October 1**

By October it was clear that war clouds had lifted and the conflict had entered in the termination phase. The coverage also decreased considerably and Dawn published only three relevant news on Oct 1. The paper reported junior minister for foreign affairs Inamul Haque saying that tension had come down but the troops were still ready to deal with any situation. Other stories were about Kashmir and were related to routine peace time coverage of Pak-India ties.

**Table 5**

*Dawn Reports Oct 1*

<b>S. No.</b>	<b>Reports</b>
1	Abdullah favours dialogue
2	Tension has not eased much, says Inam
3	Three die in Indian shelling along LoC

**Source:** Author's PhD Thesis ([www.prr.hec.gov.pk](http://www.prr.hec.gov.pk))

### **October 2**

Table 6 below shows that nature of coverage had changed. One of the three stories published on the day reported that Japanese ambassador to Pakistan, Sadaaki Numata, addressing a farewell reception urged India and Pakistan to hold talks. Another report was about Assistant Secretary of State Christina Rocca's meeting with Musharraf. Her visit was symbol of end of the conflict. Also, a standard news from India showed that Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani accused that Pakistan was center of terrorism.

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**Table 6**

*Dawn Report Oct 2*

S. No.	Reports
1	Japan asks Pakistan, India to resume talks
2	Pakistan termed epicenter of terrorism
3	Rocca calls for India, Pakistan talks

**Source:** Author's PhD Thesis ([www.prr.hec.gov.pk](http://www.prr.hec.gov.pk))

### II- The Frontier Post

Daily Times (DT) has been selected as the second newspaper to gauge the coverage in the given period but since regular printing of the paper started on April 8, 2002, the escalation period is not covered by it. To fill this gap, another important paper of those days e.g. The Frontier Post (FP) has been used to scan the coverage in the escalation phase (Jan 1-2, 2002).

#### January 1

The Frontier Post published seven stories on the first day of January. The tension with India dominated the contents. The paper in its main headline reported that a meeting of Corps Commanders was held in Rawalpindi to discuss the security situation. Another report showed that Musharraf was briefed about preparations of air force. It was also reported that India was not interested in talks with Pakistan during Saarc summit in Kathmandu. Responding to reports that India demanded handing over of certain individuals, FO said it was not possible. Other reported showed that Indian businessmen would not participate in a trade show in Pakistan while Kashmir groups warned of disaster in case of war.

**Table 7**

*FP Reports Jan 1*

S. No.	Reports
1	Army in top operational gear
2	India rules out talks during Saarc summit
3	Pakistan open to mediation, diplomacy
4	President briefed on PAF preparedness
5	Indian traders not to attend exhibition
6	Pakistan-India war to wreak havoc: JKLF
7	Indian court moved for Kashmir freedom

**Source:** Author's PhD Thesis ([www.prr.hec.gov.pk](http://www.prr.hec.gov.pk))

#### January 2

The paper captured the rising tempers with nine news items. An important news was about the joint meeting of Cabinet and National Security Council to ponder over the

security threats by India, while senior army officials visited the LoC to assess the situation. Once again it was reported that India was not interested in talks but Track II diplomacy experts and former foreign secretary Niaz Naik was reported as saying that a meeting on the sidelines of Saarc could be held. An important news was about exchange of list of nuclear facilities despite running tension which showed that a key bilateral agreement was still operational.

**Table 8**

*FP Reports Jan 2*

<b>S. No.</b>	<b>Reports</b>
1	Pakistan, India share nuclear info
2	Cabinet, NSC joint meeting to discuss border situation
3	Delhi says no talks with Islamabad
4	Yusaf visits LoC
5	Saarc summit revives hopes for peace in region
6	India deploys more troops along Kashmir border
7	Saarc ministers laud Pakistan's restraint policy
8	India blamed for violating Lahore-Delhi bus deal
9	Musharraf-Vajpayee meeting possible at Saarc summit: Niak

**Source:** Author's PhD Thesis ([www.prr.hec.gov.pk](http://www.prr.hec.gov.pk))

### **III- Daily Times**

The rest of coverage during the selected period has been given through Daily Times, which usually gave wide coverage to the issues between Pakistan and India. First, coverage for de-escalation period has been given below.

#### **June 1**

The paper published nine stories in the first selected day. Indian Defense Minister George Fernandes was reported saying that war was not imminent despite tension with Pakistan, while US asked its nationals in India to leave the country. A reports was published which quoted Christian Science Monitor that India was thinking for a limited 10-day showdown in Kashmir if "infiltration did not significantly drop" (Daily Times, June 1, 2002). The situation was tense on the LoC where an Indian drone crashed while the two sides exchanged heavy artillery fire. Daily Times also carried a report by Jane's Defence that India has 150 warheads as compared to Pakistan's around 50. Another report showed Pakistan was not happy with Russia for its uninterrupted weapons supplies to India. The paper also ran a report by Reuter that monsoon season will be crucial factor in case of war.



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**Table 9**

*DT Reports June 1*

S. No.	Reports
1	Border situation stable: Fernandes
2	Western states allow staff to leave India
3	India planning 10-day AJK assault
4	Unmanned Indian plane crashes near Pak border
5	Two Pakistani civilians, 2 Indian soldiers dead in LoC shelling
6	Indian nuke arsenal dwarfs Pakistan's
7	Pakistan raps Russia's arms supply to India
8	Weather a key factor if India, Pakistan go to war
9	India responsible if war erupts: APHC chief

**Source:** Author's PhD Thesis ([www.prr.hec.gov.pk](http://www.prr.hec.gov.pk))

### June 2

The coverage was low as compared to the previous day as the paper carried four news items. A positive news came via CNN as Musharraf told the channel that nuclear war was unthinkable (Daily Times, June 2, 2002). A report from US was published about assessment by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). The think-tank opined that another terrorist incident in India will trigger war (Hasan, 2002). There was also a report about tit-for-tat arrest of diplomats by India and Pakistan over alleged spying.

**Table 10**

*DT Reports June 2*

S. No.	Reports
1	Nuclear war unthinkable, says Musharraf
2	End to infiltration no guarantee India won't attack: CSIS
3	Indian 'spy' nabbed in capital, India alleges 'tit for tat' response
4	Qazi baiting govt to act against India

**Source:** Author's PhD Thesis ([www.prr.hec.gov.pk](http://www.prr.hec.gov.pk))

### October 1

The termination of conflict was greeted by the paper with just one story. It reported FO saying that Pakistan was ready to deal with any threat.

**Table 11**

*DT Reports Oct 1*

S. No.	Reports
1	Pakistan aware of India's warlike preparations: FO

**Source:** Author's PhD Thesis ([www.prr.hec.gov.pk](http://www.prr.hec.gov.pk))

## October 2

Interestingly, the coverage went up to five news items on the last day of the coverage period. But the elements of tension was considerably muted. Two stories were about Kashmir: one about elections and second about Kashmiri leaders saying in US that Musharraf and Vajpayee can bring peace. It can be termed as routine stuff. The only conflict related news was about Indian Air Chief Marshal saying that IAF can sustain its present level of deployment for one more year. There was also a story about Baghliar project.

**Table 12**

*DT Reports Oct 2*

S. No.	Reports
1	Kashmiris shun polls' 3rd phase
2	Pervez, Vajpayee can resolve Kashmir: Midways
3	India can sustain air deployment for another year'
4	India, Pakistan cited for lack of religious tolerance
5	India agrees to discuss Baghliar project

**Source:** Author's PhD Thesis ([www.prr.hec.gov.pk](http://www.prr.hec.gov.pk))

### 3- Indian Media and Military Standoff

From Indian side, The Hindu and The Tribune have been used for analysis of the coverage of the military standoff. First, coverage in The Hindu is presented.

#### I- The Hindu

The two-day coverage for escalation of tension period is given below.

#### January 1

The paper published nine relevant news items on the first day of the escalation period. The main story was filed by Atul Aneja, reporting about India's positive response to arrest of Hafiz Saeed and Masood Azhar and dozens of their supporters (Aneja, 2002). Another positive story was about possible meeting of Indo-Pak foreign ministers in Kathmandu where they had gone for Saarc meeting. Yet another pro-peace news was about Vajpayee willingness to do business with Pakistan if the latter was ready to take action against militancy. However, tension was still mounting as Pakistan said that Musharraf would not use India airspace to fly to Nepal for Saarc summit. Defence minister Fernandes warned Pakistan of tough action if diplomatic efforts failed, while ruling BJP supported the decision that Vajpayee should not meet Musharraf in Nepal. There was also a report that Samjhauta Express was being discontinued.

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**Table 13**

*The Hindu Reports Jan 1*

S. No.	Reports
1	Pak. arrests a step forward: Jaswant
2	A positive signal: Islamabad
3	Former Lashkar chief arrested
4	PM extends a 'hand of alliance' to Pak.
5	Musharraf to avoid Indian airspace
6	They leave for Pak. with misty eyes and memories
7	'Tough measures if diplomacy fails'
8	BJP backs PM's decision not to meet Musharraf
9	Four Pak. soldiers killed in firing

### January 2

The coverage was satisfactory as five stories were published. The paper reported that FM Jaswant Singh will not meet his counterpart from Pakistan in Kathmandu. A report from Washington showed George Bush urged India for giving an opportunity to Musharraf to work for peace. An interview of FM Abdul Sattar was also part of reports. Sattar had urged India for starting dialogue (The Hindu, January 2, 2002). The paper also reported that mobilization by India was complete.

**Table 14**

*The Hindu Reports Jan 2*

S. No.	Reports
1	Jaswant non-committal on meeting Sattar
2	Give Musharraf a chance, says Bush
3	Let us start a dialogue: Sattar
4	'No further troop mobilisation'
5	11 Pakistan soldiers killed

**Source:** Author's PhD Thesis ([www.prr.hec.gov.pk](http://www.prr.hec.gov.pk))

### June 1

The two days coverage in June is about the de-escalation period of the conflict. The paper published eight news items on the first day. There was a report from US that Bush administration was critical of Pakistan's ongoing support for terrorism beyond its borders. Another reports showed that defence minister Fernandes had rejected any immediate danger of war with Pakistan.

The paper also reported that ex-premier I K Gujral who supported a meeting between Vajpayee and Musharraf during a regional conference in Almaty. Other stories showed that tension was still high as India rejected any idea of talks with Pakistan, while Advani said that India will win in case of war with Pakistan. Two other reports

showed that BJP chief Jana Krishnamurthi wanted to teach a lesson to Pakistan while Congress leader Sonia Gandhi was concerned about the tension. An Indian soldier reportedly was killed by Pakistan fire.

**Table 15**

*The Hindu Reports June 1*

<b>S. No.</b>	<b>Reports</b>
1	Infiltration still on: Powell
2	Shelling continues
3	Fernandes downplays threat of war
4	Gujral suggests PM, Musharraf meet in Almaty
5	Meeting ruled out
6	India will be victor: Advani
7	Sonia concerned over tension on border
8	Time has come for decisive action: BJP

**Source:** Author's PhD Thesis ([www.prr.hec.gov.pk](http://www.prr.hec.gov.pk))

## **June 2**

The paper carried four news on the second day of de-escalation period. A positive news was from Pakistan which showed that Musharraf ruled out any chance of nuclear war with India, and also rejected news that Pakistan moved missiles close to the border. Advani was still playing a bad cop and the paper reported him saying that India's response in future would be linked with Pakistan's anti-terrorism steps (The Hindu, June 2, 2002). Veteran India journalist, K. K. Katyal, wrote that it was not a myth but a fact that militants based in Pakistan were entering Kashmir. The paper had a report about peace activists from South Asians for Human Rights (SAHR) urging for peace and cooperation instead of wars between Pakistan and India.

**Table 16**

*The Hindu Reports June 2*

<b>S. No.</b>	<b>Reports</b>
1	Musharraf rules out possibility of nuclear war
2	'Our action will depend on Pak. conduct'
3	Infiltration not a myth
4	'War has never solved any issue'

**Source:** Author's PhD Thesis ([www.prr.hec.gov.pk](http://www.prr.hec.gov.pk))

## **October 1**

The paper published two relevant news stories, showing that conflict was averted. One report showed that Vajpayee said Pakistan should be made answerable for terrorism in

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India. According to the other report, Musharraf had likened the attack in Akshardham in Gujarat with the killing of Muslims but India rejected his assertion.

**Table 17**

*The Hindu Reports Oct 1*

S. No.	Reports
1	Pakistan must be held accountable: PM
2	'Musharraf statements on Akshardham unacceptable'

S. No. Reports

1 Pakistan must be held accountable: PM

2 'Musharraf statements on Akshardham unacceptable'

**Source:** Author's PhD Thesis ([www.prr.hec.gov.pk](http://www.prr.hec.gov.pk))

### October 2

The second day of conflict termination phase registered just one story. It was not linked to the conflict as US Commission on International Religious Freedom wanted designation of Pakistan and India as "Countries of particular concern" under International Religious Freedom Act of 1998.

**Table 18**

*The Hindu Reports Oct 2*

S. No.	Reports
1	U.S. panel for naming India, Pak. as 'countries of concern'

**Source:** Author's PhD Thesis ([www.prr.hec.gov.pk](http://www.prr.hec.gov.pk))

## II- The Tribune

The Tribune is the second newspaper used from India to analyze the coverage of military standoff of 2002. It is an important paper, which is published from Chandigarh. Its coverage of escalation period (January 1-2, 2002) is as follows:

### January 1

The Tribune published 11 stories on the day. The tone of stories showed that tension was running high. For example, it reported that India said arrest of Hafiz Saeed and Masood Azhar was not enough. India summoned Pakistan deputy high commissioner and handed over a list of 20 individuals for action. The paper also reported that Indian air chief said that air force was ready for action against militants in "Pakistan-occupied Kashmir" (The Tribune January 1, 2002). India was not in favour of any talks at the point and BJP supported idea that Vajpayee will not meet Musharraf in Kathmandu on the sidelines of Saarc. However, BJP also said it did not want war with Pakistan.

The paper in another story about the arrest of Saeed and Azhar reported that Jaswant Singh took it as a positive step and said if Pakistan stopped cross-border militancy, “you will find India willing to walk more than half of the distance to work closely” (The Tribune, January 1, 2002) to address difference through talks. Another report showed that Saarc nations supported India for a regional push to curb militancy. The support for reducing tension was also coming from the international community and the paper reported that Britain urged for restraint. There was also a report about suspension of Samjhuta train service.

**Table 19**

*The Tribune Reports Jan 1*

<b>S. No.</b>	<b>Reports</b>
1	India gives list of 20 terrorists
2	Step forward by Pak: Jaswant
3	PM ready to discuss any issue
4	SAARC backs India on terrorism
5	UK urges Pak, India to show restraint
6	Four Pak soldiers killed
7	22 families from Khalra shift to Patti
8	Sun sets on Samjhauta Express
9	IAF fully prepared: Air Chief
10	BJP against hot pursuit

**Source:** Author’s PhD Thesis ([www.prr.hec.gov.pk](http://www.prr.hec.gov.pk))

## **January 2**

The coverage peaked on Jan 2 as the paper published 13 news about the ongoing border tension and related issues.

It reported about 10 deaths of Pakistani soldiers across LoC firing. Another report quoted officials that India had not dropped idea of limited strikes (Kaura, 2002). Two reports showed that India was not for talks between top leaders in Kathmandu, while UN chief Kofi Annan urging Pak-India leaders to use the summit for reducing bilateral tension. A report showed that India banned over-flights from Pakistan and Musharraf would have to take a long detour to enter Nepal for Saarc. The paper also reported that India was suffering due to the ban imposed by Pakistan on use of its air-space. Ruling BJP was trying to use anti-Pakistan card for upcoming elections in several states, according to the paper.

There were two other important stories. One was about exchange of nuclear list despite tension between the two countries. It showed that an important bilateral agreement was intact. The second was about a peace rally on Wagah border that was dispersed by the security forces.

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**Table 20**

*The Tribune Reports Jan 2*

S. No.	Reports
1	10 Pak soldiers killed in Poonch
2	Limited strikes not ruled out
3	India refuses talks with Pak
4	Jaswant awaits confirmation
5	Pervez feels pinch of airspace ban
6	Last PIA flight leaves for Karachi
7	Terrorism on top of SAARC agenda
8	Talk peace at SAARC, Annan tells India, Pak
9	Britain wants talks between India, Pak
10	Pak police breaks up peace rally at Wagah
11	Snapping of air link to cost Rs 50 crore
12	Offensive on Pak to be BJP poll plank
13	India, Pak exchange nuke lists

**Source:** Author's PhD Thesis ([www.prr.hec.gov.pk](http://www.prr.hec.gov.pk))

### June 1

The Tribune published three stories which showed that the conflict had already peaked in early months of 2002 and started to de-escalate by June. Indian air chief was reported saying that his force was ready to face any threat. Another report showed that India army could not be cowed down by Pakistan's nuclear threat. An interesting report was about a survey in Kashmir that a vast majority of 61 percent was happy to live with India.

**Table 21**

*The Tribune Reports June 1*

S. No.	Reports
1	61 pc of Kashmiris want to remain with India
2	N-threat will not deter Army
3	Pak missile show 'Diwali'

### June 2

The coverage was thin as just three relevant stories were carried. One report was about alleged killing of 13 Pakistani soldiers in the LoC fire, while another reported that Kashmiris will live in peace if cross border militancy stopped. The paper also reported that India demanded payment to share data on floods "thus sending a chilling diplomatic message to the Musharraf regime" (Sharma, 2002).

**Table 22**

*The Tribune Reports June 2*

S. No.	Reports
1	13 Pak troops killed, bid to blow up Srinagar-Leh highway
2	Kashmiris want peace via war
3	Pay for flood data, India tells Pakistan

**Source:** Author's PhD Thesis ([www.prr.hec.gov.pk](http://www.prr.hec.gov.pk))

**October 1**

The threat of war was over by October. It was witnessed by just two routine stories. One reports showed that Vajpayee wanted Pakistan to stop terrorism, while in the other report India had urged Pakistan to look at its domestic affairs instead of cross border interference.

**Table 23**

*The Tribune Report Oct 1*

S. No.	Reports
1	Hold Pak accountable: PM
2	Pervez 'interfering' in Indian affairs

**Source:** Author's PhD Thesis ([www.prr.hec.gov.pk](http://www.prr.hec.gov.pk))

**October 2**

The threat of conflict had considerably decreased. The Tribune printed just one news item, showing the active phase of tension was over. The report was about Advani saying that the hub of militancy was Pakistan and not Afghanistan (The Tribune, October 2, 2002).

**Table 24**

*The Tribune Reports Oct 2*

S. No.	Reports
1	Terrorism's epicenter now in Pak: Advani

**Source:** Author's PhD Thesis ([www.prr.hec.gov.pk](http://www.prr.hec.gov.pk))

**4- Analysis**

Media coverage was quite extensive because in the 12 days of selected period spreading over first two days of three months, the selected newspapers published 138 stories about conflict and its various aspects, including hostile nature of relations. Thus, on average more than 11 stories were published per day, which is quite high.



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Pakistan newspaper led the coverage with 77 stories while Indian papers followed with 61 stories. So, share of Pakistani media in the coverage was 55.79 percent, while Indian media chipped in with 44.20 percent.

Dawn led the drive with 42 stories, followed by 35 stories published collectively by The Frontier Post and Daily Times. From India, The Tribune published 32 stories, followed by 29 news items carried by The Hindu.

Maximum 78 stories were published in two days of January. It was followed by June with 42 stories and October with 18 stories. The number of stories in each month shows the pattern of conflict. At the height of tension, media was in over drive mode for coverage but it lost the passion as the energy fizzled out of the conflict with the passage of time.

The general contents of the stories show that hostility and negativity prevailed in media. There were hardly a comprehensive news item highlighting the dangers of nuclear conflagration and urging for calm and peace. A vast majority of the stories played with hostility and gave headlines to the statements and remarks which were full of hatred. It appears that media was more inclined towards war than peace, and flamed the nationalistic sentiments. But the war was voided as the regional and international situation was not conducive for it.

For Pakistan, the 2002 military standoff came at an inappropriate time. Pervez Musharraf being a military leader had not stabilized his hold after usurping power; he needed legitimacy. The coverage by media shows that he had to balance his military posturing with international pressure and domestic realities. That is why he showed military muscles by mobilizing force but also launched the crackdown on militant groups on demand of India. All papers gave main coverage to arrest of leaders of LeT and JeM. Indian leaders praised the restriction on those groups but also demanded more action.

The conflict was not suitable for Pakistan from a defence point of view. Pakistan had already committed resources on the border with Afghanistan to deal with the threat of terrorism. A war with India would put pressure to shift troops and equipment to the border in the east. How could the US and other global powers involved in the war in Afghanistan allow this to happen? The reason was simple because it would have diluted focus of Pakistan and put pressure on its resources.

Another reason for averting the war was that the international community was not ready to absorb the shock of possible nuclear showdown. Hence, the world put pressure to deescalate.

Further, India took time to move its troops and by the time it put resource in place to launch an attack, it found Pakistan in battle ready mode. It showed that Indian war machine was rusty and lost any advantage of early strike.

Media reports showed that the threat of nukes played the key role in stopping India to cross the red line. India was interested in limited strikes but it knew that Pakistan would respond with full force and the situation would go out of control.

Alastair Campbell wrote in *The Guardian* about a meeting with two senior Pakistani generals, who told that it would take just 8 seconds to target India. “When the time came to leave, the livelier of the two generals asked me to remind the Indians: ‘it takes us eight seconds to get the missiles over’, then flashed a toothy grin” (Sajjad, 2015).

It showed that threat of nuclear war was real and it worked to stop the two sides from going to the abyss. The international community was instrumental in playing a sobering role in the entire crisis.

A key step by Pakistan to cool Indian anger was a speech by Musharraf on Jan 13. He pledged to control those elements which according to India were sneaking into Kashmir. On the practical side, Musharraf banned some groups allegedly involved in terrorism (Musharraf, 2001). Indian National Security Advisor Mishra also said in an interview that speech by Musharraf had helped to calm down the situation (Stolar, March 10, 2008).

The diplomatic intervention by the US was another decisive factor. Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage visited the two countries in May and the security situation started to improve as result of his talks. The de-escalation started and by October the two sides started pulling back troops and the threat of conflict was over.

The tension continued for a period of 10 months and it had impact on both nations. Reportedly India lost about 2,000 troops while Pakistan suffered less than three dozen deaths. According to defence minister Fernandes: “The number of army personnel killed or wounded in Jammu and Kashmir and the western sector during the mobilization, Operation Parakram, from December 19, 2001 to October 16, 2002, was 1,874” (Pandit, 2003). The cost for Pakistan in terms of men was around 34 deaths of soldiers and injuries to another 10. “The buildup cost India nearly 4-billion dollars as compared to Pakistan’s 1.4 billion dollars” Pandit, 2003).

## **5- Conclusion**

The 2002 military standoff created war-like situation between Pakistan and India but the tension remained localized and restricted. The research has dealt in details with the central question about the quality and quantity of media coverage of the standoff.

Media coverage was aggressive and partisan on the nationalistic lines as patriotic sentiments were high. Media practitioners failed to observe neutrality in the looming conflict. Rather, media and journalists mostly became parties with their respective governments.

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The aggressive part of coverage has been proved by the number of news stories published in the selected newspapers. Day-wise coverage shows more than 11 stories published in the four selected newspapers, which were scanned for this study.

The nature and contents of coverage was skewed in favour of national policies towards each other's country. It was understandable and might have been difficult for the media to go against the popular sentiments, especially when the two nuclear-armed countries were in the war-like posture. But it was worrying to note that media could throw all ethics to air while dealing with key human issues like war.

Thus, the main question has been answered. It shows that the quantity of media coverage was good but its quality was not up the standards of free media. There was dearth of news stories about the importance of peace and addressing the problems between the two countries through talks. The threat of nuclear war and consequent destruction was also conveniently overlooked.

India undertook a costly adventure by mobilizing the troops but it didn't produce anything tangible. Its mission of limited strikes failed and along with it the efforts to stop the alleged infiltrations. It had to go back with a vague promise by Musharraf that Pakistan would launch action against those trying to go across the LoC. India also failed to cow down Pakistan by adopting a threatening tone and mobilizing armed forces.

The research showed that India was divided on the central issue of magnitude of use of force. Mishra said that there was unanimity about using full scale force and war was imminent but averted due to speech by Musharraf. But Jaswant Singh said there was no threat of total war. The contradiction tells about lack of consensus on the issue of war in Indian government.

The study tells that the international community led by the United States was in no mood to let the region become a victim of nuclear war. The consideration was also strategic as global efforts to root out terrorism from Afghanistan would have suffered in case of war between Pakistan and India.

Pakistan adopted a two-pronged strategy which worked in its favour. First, it announced crackdown against the groups Indian alleged for the attack at parliament, and second it took clear position that India would not be allowed to take any punitive action inside its territory. It was quick to move the army and face India in case of war.

Good sense prevailed in the end and the armies were pulled back by the end of the year. But media in both Pakistan and India once again proved that in case of war, it sides with the respective governments and fails to uphold the job of an impartial watchdog.

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