

The Role of The Wire Media in the Jammu-Kashmir Conflict through a Peace Journalism Perspective

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Abstract

The conflict in the Jammu-Kashmir region has become one of the longest-running conflicts in Indian history. The Jammu-Kashmir region is an area located between India and Pakistan. Since 1948, this conflict has had many impacts both domestically in India and Pakistan, and has involved other countries in mediation and conflict resolution efforts for Jammu-Kashmir. In addition to political involvement in mediation and resolution efforts, there is also the involvement of mass media as a communication and information tool for the parties involved. The Wire is one of the mass media outlets actively covering and writing news about the Jammu-Kashmir conflict in India. In the world of journalism itself, there is a new concept called Peace Journalism. The concept of peace journalism emphasizes the role of mass media as a third party in a conflict, or in other words, as a mediator for the parties involved or affected by the conflict. The Wire is a media outlet that consistently covers and writes news related to the Jammu-Kashmir Conflict. From this consistency, it is necessary to consider The Wire's role as a medium in conveying the aspirations of the Kashmiri people and the responses of the Indian-Pakistani governments in media openness. This journal will discuss how The Wire carries out its role as a mass communication and information medium in the Jammu-Kashmir conflict through the perspective of Peace Journalism. To obtain descriptive results, the author uses a literature review method, utilizing literature sources such as books, scientific journals, and internet sites relevant to the topic discussed. From this method, it was found that The Wire is included in the media that uses the concept of peace journalism in its reporting related to the Jammu-Kashmir conflict. However, in using the concept of peace journalism, The Wire does not lose its critical stance towards Indian government policies related to the Jammu-Kashmir conflict. This research is expected to provide insights into the role of mass media in conflict through the perspective of peace journalism.

Keywords : Conflict, Jammu-Kashmir, The Wire, Mass Media, Peace Journalism

INTRODUCTION

On June 1, 2024, India concluded its general election, with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), led by Narendra Modi, emerging victorious. Despite securing a third consecutive win, it is acknowledged that the 2024 election nearly resulted in BJP's defeat (CNBC Indonesia, 2024). This was due to a reduction in the number of votes for BJP in the 2024 election, particularly in the

state of Uttar Pradesh. The mass media has attributed this decline in support to the public's distrust of Modi's policies in previous terms, which failed to reconcile social divisions and conflicts in India's national life (Aggarwal, 2024). For instance, during Modi's administration, policies related to the Jammu-Kashmir conflict have largely resulted in repressive government actions in accommodating the voices of Jammu-Kashmir residents (Lalwani & Gayner, 2020).

Throughout its history, India has employed various methods to maintain Jammu-Kashmir as part of its sovereign territory, ranging from military and political approaches to mass media strategies. For example, on August 5, 2019, the Indian Government officially revoked Article 370, which granted special semi-autonomous status to the Jammu-Kashmir region. This policy represented India's step towards unifying Jammu-Kashmir with other regions under its sovereignty on equal terms (Amir et al., 2020). Additionally, this policy provided the Indian government with greater flexibility in using military force to monitor the movements of pro-Pakistan militants and Jammu-Kashmir independence advocates. The Indian public itself was divided in supporting or opposing the revocation of Article 370 (Lalwani & Gayner, 2020). However, perspectives on the

development of the Jammu-Kashmir conflict differ in media presentations (Bhasin, 2023). From their viewpoint, the conflict in the Jammu-Kashmir region continues to be an extension of the division between religious groups, namely Muslims as the majority in Jammu-Kashmir and Hindus-Sikhs as the minority (The Economist, 2021). The issue of peace has become a particular urgency for India, without the intervention of other countries (Wani,

2024). For the Indian mass media, Pakistan is viewed as excessively "inviting" other countries to be involved in handling the Kashmir conflict, which they believe will only complicate the issues they face (Siddiqi, 2020).

Since the beginning of the Cold War, mass media has become the fourth power determining victory in disputes or conflicts, known as soft power (Robertson & Johnston, 2007). This is due to the power of mass media in shaping, influencing, and directing anonymous mass opinion. Although the anonymous nature of the masses is explicitly refuted through the use of cultivation theory, agenda-setting, and hypodermic needle theory, which posit that mass media clearly knows its targets. Mass media has been transmitted as public diplomacy in conflicts (Semetko, 2009). If formal forums cannot be established, mass media becomes the sole forum used to bridge differing thoughts. As public diplomacy in conflicts, mass media then evolved into peace journalism, as conceptualized by Johan Galtung. Peace journalism does not always report peaceful situations but looks at conflicts holistically. It not only highlights the damage caused by conflicts but also examines the potential for achieving peace (Sehl et al., 2023). This is important considering that media

itself contributes to constructing public perceptions (Sriharyani, 2024).

In conflicts, mass media plays a crucial role in conveying the current conditions of the conflict itself. In India, mass media has evolved since the British-Raj era. Post-independence, Indian mass media has had the freedom to determine their media ideology by adapting to the local cultural context where the media originates (Mushtaq & Baig, 2016). Unlike mass media in other countries, the distinctive feature of Indian media is

its ability to accommodate local cultures, such as using language adapted to the region. Additionally, Indian media is known for its competition in idolizing regional leaders or local political and cultural figures at both regional and national levels. This competition has made mass media inseparable from issues of partiality (Sherfudeen et al., 2024). Indian online journalism has also experienced rapid development, forming one of the largest online mass media corporations in South Asia, such as Times of India, The Hindu, and others. However, the democratic values adopted by Indian mass media have also encouraged independent media like The Wire, which has developed as an Indian mass media outlet targeting readers at both national and international levels. The purpose of this study is to understand the role of The Wire media in raising issues about the conflict in Jammu-Kashmir from a peace journalism perspective. Based on the above description, this journal will analyze the role of The Wire media in the conflict in the Jammu-Kashmir region through the perspective of Peace Journalism.

RESEARCH QUESTION

How does "The Wire" media play a role in the Jammu-Kashmir conflict through the perspective of peace journalism?

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach using the traditional literature review method. The purpose of using the literature review method is to compare and find similarities and differences from previous relevant studies to discover the latest research findings (Gorard & Taylor, 2004). The primary data for this research consists of news content about

the conflict in the Jammu-Kashmir region published on The Wire news portal. Meanwhile, secondary data is drawn from literature sources such as books, scientific research journals, mass media clippings, and other relevant communication-information media.

DISCUSSION

Historical Background of Social Conflict in the Jammu-Kashmir Region

Since becoming part of India's sovereign territory, the Jammu-Kashmir region has experienced various conflicts, primarily the desire for separation from India. The origin of the conflict in the Jammu-Kashmir region stems from the request for protection by Raja Hari Singh, the ruler of the Jammu-Kashmir Region, to the Indian Government (Pankaj, 2023). Raja Hari Singh felt his domain was threatened by Pashtun groups supported by Pakistan, who wanted Jammu-Kashmir to join Pakistan based on religious and ethnic similarities (Tabassum, 2012).

Looking at the pre-colonial British history in the Indus region, particularly during the reign of King Aurangzeb (1658-1707), Islam and Hinduism had already become two opposing groups in politics, when King Aurangzeb's policies were seen as discriminating against Indian Hindus and Sikhs (Sum et al., 2013). After the British Empire successfully established its rule, known as the British Raj, over the entire Indus land, Hindu groups were made the closest allies compared to Muslim groups. This action contributed to forming an iceberg phenomenon that ultimately led to both groups conflicting in claiming power over the Indus land after the British Raj ended (Chowdhary, 2015).

The Jammu-Kashmir region has experienced several conflicts, including the First Indo-Pak War that took place between 1947-1948 between India and Pakistan over the Jammu-Kashmir territory, which ended with a ceasefire on January 1, 1949 (Ganguly, 1995). This was followed by the Second Indo-Pak War in 1965, which then brought about a status quo in the Tashkent Agreement on January 10, 1966. The third major conflict was the Kargil War that occurred in 1999. These three wars were rooted in the dispute over the Jammu-Kashmir Region between India and Pakistan (Sil, 2009). However, the conflict in the Jammu-Kashmir region not only had a significant impact on the Indian government and local communities. Historically, the conflict in the Jammu-Kashmir region has influenced other surrounding areas, such as in the disintegration of East Pakistan into Bangladesh in 1971, which also stemmed from the conflict over the Kashmir region between India and Pakistan (Rahayu et al., 2024).

Development of Indian Mass Media

Journalism in India began with the publication of The Bengal Gazette in 1780 by an East India Company employee named James Augustus Hickey. The publication of The Bengal Gazette did not automatically guarantee freedom of journalistic activities; Hickey himself was imprisoned by the British colonial government for criticizing their policies. Then there were the Madras Gazette (1785) and The Bombay Herald (1789), which were born after The Bengal Gazette was banned by the colonial government. Although inheriting the same spirit as their pioneer, these two media had to operate under strict government supervision. Freedom of expression was not found in this phase, as all reporting

had to support the colonial government (Mushtaq & Baig, 2016).

After India's independence, under Jawaharlal Nehru's government, mass media became one of the tools used to spread the spirit of development throughout India through information and communication. Additionally, to expand government influence in the media, the nationalization policy of British Raj radio and television was also implemented. During this period, mass media had not yet attained the essence of liberal media freedom. However, after 1966, Indian Mass Media again experienced a period similar to the British colonialism era when Indira Gandhi's policies began to impose specific limitations on press freedom. Indira clearly repressed freedom of expression, arguing that economic productivity and social justice were more important than widespread freedom of expression. Freedom of expression, or specifically press freedom, began to be felt during Prime Minister

Morarji Desai's administration in 1977 (Sharma, 2014).

The development of Indian mass media was not only in press freedom but also in the media channels used, such as online media. Online journalism began to be pioneered in 1996 with the launch of English Daily in India. This was followed by Femina and Filmfare, which were published in online versions. News portals in Hindi began to be published in 1997, such as jagran.com (1997), amarujala.com (1998), webduniya.com (1999), and so on (Sharanappa, 2018). As of 2023, the largest Digital Journalism outlet is still owned by The Times of India Group, with the largest English-language journalistic publication in India. It should also be noted that the development of online mass media or digital journalism is

inseparable from its nature and advantages compared to print media in terms of actuality, speed, and wide distribution reach (Syahbani & Kusnarto, 2022). Thus, it is not surprising that media such as The Times of India have readers from both inside and outside India. The Times of India often becomes the first news reference in Indian reporting within the scope of international journalism coverage. This is followed by its own subsidiary, The Economic Times, which focuses on business and economic reporting (Yadav & Kadavath, 2023). Next is The Hindu, which has become the largest national online news portal in India. In addition to large media formed within corporate systems, non-corporate mass media also developed in 2015, namely The Wire.

The Wire is one of the online news portal platforms founded by Siddharth Varadarajan, Sidharth Bhatia, and M.K Venu, with its first publication on May

11, 2015. The Wire has distinguishing aspects compared to other media such as The Times of India and The Hindu, as it is a non-corporate online news portal, thus categorized as independent mass media. The Wire is also known for its critical style of news writing and opinion towards government policies

and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) as the political party currently dominating the Indian government (Raha, 2022). Although it seems to have an oppositional position towards government policies, The Wire has become one of the mass media outlets that pays great attention to issues related to social conflicts.

Peace Journalism

According to Johan Galtung, journalism plays an important role in conflict handling, primarily in the flow of information and communication regarding the current conditions of the conflict. There are two categories of conflict news reporting: peace journalism and war journalism. Peace journalism is non-partisan, covers all sides, focuses on all parties involved or affected by the conflict, and aims to resolve conflicts and call for peace. Conversely, war journalism emphasizes violence, serves as a government propaganda tool, speaks for the elites, and aims to win the conflict for its home country (Keeble et al., 2010). To simplify the explanation of the differences between Peace and War Journalism, the author uses the 5W + 1H formula.

Table 1.1 Comparison of Peace Journalism and War Journalism through 5W + 1H Formula

Journalism	What	When	Who	Where	Why	How
Peace Journalism	Pre-conflict, confrontation, crisis, and post-conflict	Occurs throughout all stages of the conflict	All parties involved and affected in the stages of conflict	From the battlefield to the negotiation table as a form of conflict resolution	Conducting peace campaigns	Seeking potential conflict resolution opportunities that emerge during the stages of conflict
War Journalism	Confrontation and crisis (Violent events)	Limited to the period of confrontation and crisis	Limited to victims and perpetrators through a unilateral perspective	Battlefield	Conducting propaganda to win for their home country	Seeking causes of violent events

Source :Researcher

According to Gouse, there has been no recent research on peace journalism and war journalism in communist countries since Galtung's study in 1998 (Gouse et al., 2018). Steven Youngblood shares Galtung's perspective, where media can serve as a bridge for individuals or groups lacking access to express their opinions and desires (Keeble et al., 2010). Peace journalism has the ability to reconstruct communication. In a conflict, the role of journalism can be categorized as a third party. Through journalistic activities within the conflict, involved parties can understand each other's desires, fostering understanding, empathy, creativity, and human intelligence in resolving conflicts. Briefly, the intended journalistic activities aim to emphasize the importance of truth, community involvement, and peace-oriented solutions (Peleg, 2006).

Peace journalism advocates provide a method that emphasizes alternative media journalism ethics to promote greater conflict sensitivity in reporting. Although it can be explained in various ways, at its core, peace journalism involves editors and journalists consciously choosing to report in a manner that opens opportunities for society to appreciate and consider non-violent responses to all forms of conflict (Giritli İnceoğlu & Erbaysal Filibeli, 2018).

Peace Journalism strives to present a style of conflict coverage that is more sensitive and oriented towards, (1) Truth, involving various parties in the conflict and showing the suffering and resolution from all sides, (2) Community, which takes the perspective of people from various layers of society, not just the 'decision-makers, (3) Conflict, which delves into the roots of the conflict to

better understand the grievances of the parties involved, not just looking at the symptoms; and (4) Solutions, by identifying non-violent alternatives for handling conflicts (Miladi, 2021).

Quoting the journal titled "The Language of Media Supporting Peace Journalism", there are characteristic uses of language or sentences often employed by mass media as a form of implementing peace journalism, including (1) Choosing unnamed bodies or societies when confrontation occurs, (2) Presenting implicit or general expressions or impressions in writing, and (3) Using linguistic hedging or sentences that corner one party (Wibowo, 2018).

The application of peace journalism in war began to strengthen when the Norwegian military became involved in the Afghanistan war in 2001. The war, which continued to divide the Norwegian public, then prompted Norwegian mass media such as Aftenposten to publish news that sought to cover up military involvement by highlighting civilian casualties. Instead of becoming propaganda, this action helped the public understand the importance of peace in Afghanistan. Public attention to the urgency of peace

in Afghanistan also encouraged Aftenposten to continue publishing news related to peace efforts made for Afghanistan (Ottosen, 2010).

Long before that, the role of media as a peace agent was also evident in the conflict in Northern Ireland, when the Belfast Telegraph began to open up discussion spaces for the general public to provide their views on the conflict in Northern Ireland in 1990. It no longer raised opinions from formal parties such as the government but looked at the

people's desires regarding the Northern Ireland conflict. The issues raised were hopes for peace in Northern Ireland without having to bring political identity but only from a humanist perspective. From this step, the Belfast Telegraph then raised more views from the victims of the conflict itself who only wanted peace (Hoey, 2017).

Application of Peace Journalism by The Wire in the Jammu-Kashmir Conflict

Indian national mass media have a special characteristic in supporting the Indian government's policy regarding the conflict in Kashmir, with one of the media always in the spotlight being The Hindu. In a phenomenon different from peace journalism, The Hindu more often


uses the government's perspective in handling the Kashmir conflict (Din et al., 2021). The concept of Peace Journalism in India still has a blind spot, where the perspective presented is only seen from affected victims, so the media focus is only on the issue of temporary conflict cessation and not on the desire to seek conflict resolution (Shaw et al., 2018).

The Wire has become one of India's non-corporate mass media outlets focusing on humanitarian issues and social conflicts. In its reporting, The Wire often presents the perspectives of actors involved in the conflict alongside the victims affected by the conflict, such as the Kashmir conflict. In 2023, approaching the election year in India, The Wire focused more on Narendra Modi's policies towards the Jammu-Kashmir region and the parties involved in the Kashmir conflict. Additionally, it raised the issue of mediation offers from various countries to resolve the conflict in the Jammu-Kashmir region.

In a news report published by The Wire on May 3, 2024, titled "Not Against Idea of Elections in J&K, Says Mirwaiz, But its Linkage With Resolution of Kashmir

Issue", the author will formulate the important points of the news in the 5W+1H formula.

Table 1.2 News Clipping of Hurriyat Group Leader's Speech

	<div>What</div> <div>First speech by the Hurriyat group leader after release from detention</div>
	<div>When</div> <div>May 3, 2024</div>
	<div>Who</div> <div>Mirwaiz Umar Farooq</div>
	<div>Where</div> <div>Srinagar Mosque</div>
	<div>Why</div> <div>To explain the political position of the Hurriyat group ahead of India's 2024 elections</div>
	<div>How</div> <div>Establishing communication with the Lok Sabha (Indian People's Council) and exchanging views post-revocation of Article 370. Providing options for conflict resolution through the organization of peaceful elections in Kashmir.</div>

Source : The Wire, 2024

The Hurriyat group leader attempted to deliver a neutral speech regarding the Indian general election. Farooq did not want the residents of Jammu-Kashmir to boycott the 2024 general election but instead to use this event as an opportunity to elect Lok Sabha candidates capable of representing their aspirations in Parliament later.

The Hurriyat group itself is an influential group in the Jammu-Kashmir region. Formed in 1993, its members come from various religious, educational, and occupational backgrounds. After


2014, the Hurriyat group split into two factions due to differing views on approaches to handling issues in the Jammu-Kashmir region: the Hurriyat led by Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, known as the Mirwaiz Faction, and the Hurriyat led by Masarat Alam Bhat, known as the Geelani Faction. The Mirwaiz Faction is known for its moderate and diplomatic approach, which explains why in discussions held by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) addressing conflict resolution in Jammu-Kashmir, the Mirwaiz Faction's opinions were

utilized, in contrast to the hardline Geelani Faction.

Meanwhile, the dynamics within the government were framed by The Wire through its reporting on the opposition

party's stance in response to Article 370. This news was aired on December 11, 2023, with the title "Citing SC's Silence on J&K's Statehood, Opposition Parties Raise Concerns Over Federalism."

Table 1.3 Media Clippings of Opposition Party Statements Regarding Article 370


	What	Statements Rejecting the Policy of Abrogation of Article 370
	When	December 11, 2023
	Who	Members of the Rajya Sabha Parliament
	Where	National Capital Building in New Delhi
	Why	The abrogation and revocation of Article 370 contravene the federal constitutional provisions that guarantee rights to regions with specific conditions, such as the disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir.
	How	Advocating for concerns through filing a petition for judicial review in the Constitutional Court and establishing a new parliamentary committee to address post-abrogation policies of Article 370.

Source : Dasgupta, 2023

The opposition parties in the Rajya Sabha Parliament play a crucial role in directly conveying public aspirations to the government. However, the opposition can also symbolize the government's engagement in addressing the concerns of the people in the Jammu and Kashmir region.

In a news report published on June 10, 2024, The Wire covered a congratulatory message from Prime Minister Sharif to the Indian Prime Minister, which was posted on X (formerly Twitter). The article was titled "Replace Hate With Hope: Nawaz Sharif Tells PM Modi in Congratulatory Message".

Table 1.4 Media Clipping of Pakistani PM's Congratulatory Message on Modi's Electoral Victory

	What	Official congratulatory message from Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi
	When	June 10, 2024
	Who	Shehbaz Sharif and Narendra Modi
	Where	Social Media platform X (Twitter)
	Why	To convey a message of friendship by replacing symbols of hatred with hope
	How	Prime Ministers represent their nations' governments; thus, the interaction between PM Sharif and PM Modi via social media may signal the reopening of friendly relations between Pakistan and India. Sharif's congratulatory message was responded to by Modi, who sent a message of friendship and emphasized their focus on border security.

Source : The Wire, 2024

Although it shares similar content with other mass media regarding the congratulatory message given by the Prime Minister of Pakistan to the elected Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, The Wire's use of images as visuals representing their news content adds value in promoting hope for improved relations between the two countries, especially concerning the Jammu-Kashmir conflict which is also mentioned in the news article.

In the three news items above, The Wire attempts to present the views of each group in pursuing peace in the Jammu-Kashmir region after the revocation of Article 370, including perspectives from Jammu-Kashmir groups, Indian Parliament members, and both Indian

and Pakistani governments, in seeking the best resolution for the conflict in the Jammu-Kashmir region. When these three news items are connected, it can be seen that the urgency for peace in the Jammu-Kashmir region is not a struggle of just one party, but also of the parties involved in governance. Two of the three existing clippings imply that in the period before the election, leaders of the Hurriyat Group and Pakistani leaders tried to present more peaceful orations to maintain conducive election conditions while continuing to campaign on the issue of peace in the Jammu-Kashmir region.

However, The Wire also does not disregard their critical stance towards the government, especially the elected

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, where The Wire wrote that PM Modi responded to PM Sharif's congratulations with a long-winded answer and indirectly criticized Pakistan over terrorism in Kashmir. The Wire considered Modi's response unfair.

CONCLUSION

In the current development of information and communication, mass media has taken its position as a connector for conflicting parties. Peace journalism has become a concept that guides the steps of mass media as a conflict mediator. Mass Media Corporations have become one of the factors hindering the development of Peace Journalism, where peace campaigns always clash with the interests of certain parties who have access to and influence over mass media corporations. Following the steps of Belfast Telegraph and Aftenposten, The Wire media already has an awareness that the role of mass media is not just about presenting visible news but what actually escapes public attention when conflict occurs. Although The Wire has its own challenges in implementing Peace Journalism compared to the other two mass media outlets, especially in its country's political climate.

Peace Journalism also cannot develop within the network of Indian mass media corporations, especially when discussing the conflict in the Jammu-Kashmir region, given that the Indian government still has a great influence on the regulation and corporation of mass media. Media independence becomes one of the drivers for the development of the Peace Journalism concept in the world of Indian journalism, but this concept cannot develop without the competence of a journalist in assessing a

conflict and comprehensively understanding conflict resolution from the events covered.

The Wire's news coverage of the Jammu-Kashmir Conflict focuses more on the abolition of Article 370 or the revocation of the semi-autonomous status of the Jammu-Kashmir region. It presents responses from various parties regarding the future of Jammu-Kashmir after the abolition of Article 370 and hopes in maintaining peace in the Jammu-Kashmir region. However, in their news writing, it does not eliminate The Wire's critical side in assessing Indian government policies. Although it must also be understood that in its application, Peace Journalism intersects with aspects of transparency in the writing of journalistic works. The Wire media cannot avoid this in writing articles about the Jammu-Kashmir Conflict, so in some writings, readers will find The Wire's critical narratives towards policies related to the conflict.

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