


International Journal of  
**Conflict Management**  
(IJCM)

**Cross-National Media Framing of Military Conflicts: A Qualitative  
Analysis of the India-Pakistan Escalation**



**CARI**  
**Journals**

## Cross-National Media Framing of Military Conflicts: A Qualitative Analysis of the India-Pakistan Escalation

<sup>1</sup>Rizwan Ahmad,  <sup>2\*</sup>Abbas Rashid Butt, <sup>3</sup>Naeem ullah Tariq, <sup>4</sup>Wahid Arjmand Zia

<sup>1</sup>Media Consultant, FM 101 Radio Pakistan.

<sup>2</sup>Research Fellow, Lahore Institute for Research and Analysis, University of Lahore, Pakistan.

<sup>3</sup>PhD Scholar, School of Media and Communication SMC, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Shanghai, China.

<sup>4</sup>PhD Scholar, Centre of Media and Communication Studies, University of Gujrat, Pakistan.

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1768-7051>

Accepted: 27<sup>th</sup> November, 2025, Received in Revised Form: 5<sup>th</sup> December, 2025, Published: 12<sup>th</sup> December, 2025

### Abstract

**Purpose of the Study:** This study investigates how international media framed the India-Pakistan military exchanges following the 7 May 2025 attack in Indian-administered Kashmir. The research seeks to identify how different global, regional, and state-aligned news organizations constructed the news relating to conflict escalation, the legitimacy of military actions, humanitarian repercussions, and diplomatic interventions. It further investigates how these framing patterns vary across geopolitical and institutional contexts as a way to reveal the structural influences on international conflict reporting.

**Methodology:** A qualitative content analysis was performed using a purposive sample of 17 international news outlets: CNN, BBC, Al Jazeera, DW, France 24, Al Arabiya, CGTN, Daily Sabah, Azerbaijan News, Mathrubhumi, Indonesia News, Bangladesh News, Sri Lankan News, I24 News, Qatar Media, CBC News, and Russian Media. News reports, published during the period of peak escalation, were collected and analyzed as textual units. A coding framework rooted in framing theory operationalized four dominant frames: retaliation/justification, humanitarian impact, escalation risk, and diplomacy/mediation. Cross-national comparisons were made to look at variations in narrative tone, emphasis, and discursive strategies.

**Findings:** The results indicate clear cross-national differences in media framing. Western outlets framed the conflict predominantly in terms of strategic calculations, military escalation, nuclear risk, and international calls for restraint, thereby constructing it as a global security issue. Regional media paid more attention to civilian casualties, displacement, and national security narratives, locating their coverage within domestic political and social contexts. State-aligned media emphasized diplomatic initiatives, ceasefire efforts, and official government perspectives. Such patterns indicate that framing is heavily influenced by geopolitical alignment, institutional orientation, and intended audiences, thereby generating divergence in the constructions of legitimacy, responsibility, and urgency.

**Unique contribution to theory, practice and policy:** Theoretically, the study furthers framing research by placing geopolitical alignment as a structural determinant of conflict narratives. Practically, it offers guidance for conflict reporting that is more balanced and ethically informed. From a policy perspective, it yields insights for diplomatic and communicative strategies for promoting conflict-sensitive media practices with the aim of diminishing risks of escalation.

**Keywords:** *Media Framing, India-Pakistan Conflict, International News Coverage, Retaliation, Humanitarian Consequences, Escalation Risk, Diplomacy, Qualitative Content Analysis.*

## 1. Introduction

The India-Pakistan relationship has for long been characterized by political tension, military confrontations, and a territorial dispute over Kashmir that has stood the test of time. On 7 May 2025, India launched missile strikes at nine sites across Pakistan's Punjab province and Pakistan-administered Kashmir, labeling the actions as retaliation for a terrorist attack in Pahalgam that killed 26 tourists (BBC, 2025). Pakistan condemned these attacks as an act of war and responded with missiles and artillery attacks; civilian casualties resulted on both sides, raising fears of a wider conflict between two nuclear-armed states (Al Jazeera, 2025). Global media played a crucial role in shaping public and international opinion on this particular escalation. International coverage of the crisis passed through various frames, such as military retaliation, humanitarian consequences, risk of escalation, and possible diplomacy (Entman, 1993; Scheufele, 1999). The concept of framing maintains that media communications focus selectively on aspects of reality while downplaying others, which have consequences for how the audience thinks about moral evaluation and policy (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). For example, Western media often integrated strategic and diplomatic frames, while the regional outlets did it more in terms of civilian suffering and national narratives (McCombs & Reynolds, 2009). Media framing analysis is essential to understand its influences on public opinion, international diplomacy, and crisis management. The investigation into dominant frames and cross-national differences in the case of the May 2025 India-Pakistan escalation adds to the comprehensive understanding of how media build up stories and shape the way different countries perceive news (Pan & Kosicki, 1993; Iyengar, 1994). Therefore, the study seeks to identify and compare dominant frames employed by the Western, regional, and state-aligned media that reported the May 7–10, 2025, India–Pakistan military escalation and examines the difference in framing strategies across these media. The research addresses the following questions:

**Q1.** Which are the dominant frames that international media used in reporting the May 7-10, 2025, India-Pakistan military escalation?

**Q2.** How did framing strategies differ across Western, regional, and state-aligned media outlets during the India-Pakistan escalation?

Addressing these objectives and questions allows the study to reveal a comprehensive understanding of the role of media framing in shaping cross-national perceptions and international discourse during conflict situations.

## 2.Literature Review

### 2.1 Media Framing and Conflict Reporting

Media framing is one of the core concepts in communication studies, which denotes the activity of journalists and media outlets that cue audience interpretation and reality selection by emphasizing some aspects (Civila & Lugo-Ocando, 2024; Sharma & Pokharel, 2025). Frames build and alter perceptions about causality, responsibility, and moral-political evaluation

(Scheufele, 1999). In regard to conflict reporting, framing stipulates whether a crisis is viewed as justified, a humanitarian catastrophe, or a threat to international security (Iyengar, 1994; Kazanský, 2022). Research suggests that framing does indeed differ between regions, orientations of politics, and ownership of media (van den Heijkant et al., 2024). Western outlets tend to pay more attention to strategic and diplomatic frames concerning the risks of escalation, international reactions, and conflict resolution (Abbas & Ali, 2025). Regional or state-aligned media, by contrast, foreground national narratives, focusing on civilian casualties, patriotism, and enemy vilification (Greenberg, 2022). These differences reflect the interplay of journalistic norms, political contexts, and audience expectations.

## 2.2 Frames in India-Pakistan Conflict Reporting

The Kashmir conflict between India and Pakistan has been extensively studied using framing studies. Traditionally, Indian media frame retaliation and national security, while Pakistani media emphasize victimization of civilians and threats from outsiders (Das & Zaman, 2016; Kaul & Saxena, 2022). The CNN, BBC, and DW aim for a balance between strategic, humanitarian, and diplomatic frames in their coverage, although geopolitical biases still remain (Ibrar, & Khan, 2025; Safa., & Barati, 2024). Humanitarian frames incite empathy and might affect international pressure to take action through diplomacy (Sutton & Paddon Rhoads, 2022). Strategic frames emphasize the possibility of escalation and nuclear danger, structuring policy discourse (Matthes, 2009; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000; Park & Seo, 2023; Shahid et al., 2021). Despite this rich historical scholarship, there is a relative scarcity of scholarship on contemporary India-Pakistan escalations leveraging advanced military technologies, drone strikes, and real-time global media coverage. The May 2025 conflict presents a singular case for cross-national framing patterns, humanitarian emphasis, and diplomatic coverage. Real-time comparative research on crises among the Western, regional, and state-aligned media remains scant.

Framing Theory underpins this study, and it argues that media do not simply transmit information but rather actively construct meaning by choosing, highlighting, and organizing specific elements of reality (Entman, 1993; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). Frames are interpretive structures that form how audiences understand conflicts by guiding attention to causes, actors, consequences, and moral evaluations (Goffman, 1974; Reese, 2001). In international crisis reporting, framing determines whether the events take the color of strategic threats, humanitarian emergencies, justified military actions, or diplomatic openings (Iyengar, 1991; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). Empirical research in the frame-building perspective then goes on to point out that geopolitical alignments, institutional routines, and sociopolitical contexts have the power to impact news selection and, in turn, shape how global media craft war and security narratives (Scheufele, 1999; de Vreese, 2005). Seen from this theoretical perspective, the dominant frames across international outlets during the May 2025 escalation between India and Pakistan come into play. The paper examines four dominant media frames in international conflict coverage: retaliation/justification, where military actions are presented as responses to prior aggression; humanitarian impact, which

focuses on civilian casualties, displacement, and human suffering; escalation risk/strategic framing, highlighting the risk for a wider regional conflict and nuclear threats; and diplomacy/mediation, focusing on ceasefires, negotiations, and the role of international actors. This study analyzes coverage from 17 news outlets across the world and examines cross-national differences in frame salience, textual and narrative framing strategies.

### 3. Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative content analysis approach to examine global media coverage of the May 2025 India–Pakistan military escalation. A cross-national comparative research design was employed to capture variations in framing practices across diverse geopolitical environments and media systems (Reese et al., 2001; Hallin & Mancini, 2004). The study sample consisted of 17 international news outlets selected through purposive sampling to ensure balanced representation of Western, regional, and state-aligned media perspectives. These outlets included CNN (USA), BBC (UK), DW (Germany), France 24 (France), Al Arabiya (UAE), CGTN (China), Daily Sabah (Turkey), Mathrubhumi (Malaysia), I24News (Israel), and other prominent global platforms with significant international audiences. The timeframe of analysis covered news content published between 6 May and 11 May 2025, coinciding with the peak period of military escalation, diplomatic activities, and international reactions. The unit of analysis consisted of individual news that directly addressed the military confrontation. Data were systematically collected from official organizational websites and verified digital news archives to ensure reliability, reproducibility, and authenticity of the dataset. A theoretically informed coding framework was developed based on established framing theory (Entman, 1993; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000), centering on four analytically derived dominant frames: retaliation/justification, humanitarian impact, escalation risk/strategic framing, and diplomacy/mediation. The analytical process followed a systematic, multi-stage coding procedure involving open coding to identify initial patterns, axial coding to establish conceptual linkages among frames and narrative elements, and selective coding to refine and consolidate dominant framing patterns.

To enhance methodological rigor, a subset of the dataset was independently double-coded, and intercoder reliability was assessed using Cohen's Kappa, achieving acceptable agreement thresholds consistent with qualitative research standards (Krippendorff, 2018). The sampling strategy employed purposive selection of media sources to represent global, regional, and state-aligned journalistic orientations, in line with established research on conflict framing and media systems (Das & Zaman, 2016; Entman, 1993; Kaul & Saxena, 2022). The analytical focus was placed on identifying primary frames through close reading of texts, paying particular attention to narrative emphasis, geographical focus, sourcing practices, lexical choices, and tonal orientation. A detailed codebook, derived from Framing Theory and prior empirical research on India-Pakistan conflict coverage, guided the analysis and operationalized (Das & Zaman, 2016; Kaul & Saxena, 2022; Entman, 1993).

**Table 1: News Coverage of the India-Pakistan Conflict Across International Outlets (6-11 May 2025)**

	<b>Country / Outlet</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Headline / Focus</b>	<b>Short Link</b>
1	<b>CNN (USA)</b>	May 7, 2025	India launched strikes on Pakistan	<a href="https://surl.li/ffznrff">https://surl.li/ffznrff</a>
2	<b>BBC (UK)</b>	May 7, 2025	Indian air strikes	<a href="https://surl.li/tqvcag">https://surl.li/tqvcag</a>
	BBC	May 9, 2025	De-escalation possibilities	<a href="https://surl.li/hbzsl">https://surl.li/hbzsl</a>
3	<b>Al Jazeera</b>	May 7, 2025	Pakistan pledges retaliation	<a href="https://surl.li/fbxttdi">https://surl.li/fbxttdi</a>
	Al Jazeera	May 10, 2025	Operation Bunyan Marsoos	<a href="https://surl.li/cc/qwkxtn">https://surl.li/cc/qwkxtn</a>
4	<b>DW (Germany)</b>	May 7, 2025	India's next move	<a href="https://surl.li/ekedhl">https://surl.li/ekedhl</a>
	DW	May 9, 2025	Conflict escalation	<a href="https://surl.li/fmzowt">https://surl.li/fmzowt</a>
5	<b>France 24</b>	May 7, 2025	Cross-border fire	<a href="https://surl.li/cc/tdeeeb">https://surl.li/cc/tdeeeb</a>
	France 24	May 9, 2025	Counterattacks	<a href="https://surl.li/omdwky">https://surl.li/omdwky</a>
6	<b>Al Arabiya</b>	May 6–10, 2025	Casualties and ceasefire	<a href="https://surl.li/hurcwu">https://surl.li/hurcwu</a>
7	<b>CGTN (China)</b>	May 11, 2025	Ceasefire and China's role	<a href="https://surl.li/tiogy">https://surl.li/tiogy</a>
8	<b>Daily Sabah (Turkey)</b>	May 7, 2025	Missile strikes and casualties	<a href="https://surl.li/nqszbv">https://surl.li/nqszbv</a>
	Daily Sabah	May 8, 2025	Drone interception	<a href="https://surl.li/posubs">https://surl.li/posubs</a>
9	<b>Azerbaijan News</b>	May 11, 2025	Operation Sindoor & escalation	<a href="https://surl.li/sokprb">https://surl.li/sokprb</a>
10	<b>Mathrubhumi / Malaysia</b>	May 8, 2025	Gurdaspur blackout	<a href="https://surl.li/onenbl">https://surl.li/onenbl</a>
	Mathrubhumi	10 May 2025	LoC tensions escalate	<a href="https://surl.li/awvcox">https://surl.li/awvcox</a>
11	<b>Indonesia News</b>	May 2025	Call for restraint	<a href="https://surl.li/byaczc">https://surl.li/byaczc</a>
12	<b>Bangladesh News</b>	May 7 & 10, 2025	Conflict & propaganda	<a href="https://surl.li/ofxkxm">https://surl.li/ofxkxm</a>
13	<b>Sri Lankan News (Al Jazeera)</b>	May 7, 2025	Cross-border strikes	<a href="https://surl.li/eoqqoo">https://surl.li/eoqqoo</a>
14	<b>I24 News (Israel)</b>	May 7, 2025	Airstrikes and military response	<a href="https://surl.li/qpjhzv">https://surl.li/qpjhzv</a>
15	<b>Qatar News</b>	May 7, 2025	Qatar expresses concern	<a href="https://surl.li/iiksip">https://surl.li/iiksip</a>
16	<b>CBC (Canada)</b>	May 8–11, 2025	Conflict background & ceasefire	<a href="https://surl.li/qykfnc">https://surl.li/qykfnc</a>
17	<b>The Moscow Times</b>	May 7, 2025	Kremlin & clashes	<a href="https://surl.li/smwawg">https://surl.li/smwawg</a>

Thematic analysis was employed to identify dominant framing patterns and cross-national differences across media systems. Deductive coding was used to assess the presence and salience of predefined frames, while inductive analysis captured emerging sub-themes such as emotionalization of conflict, and nationalistic rhetoric (Kaul & Saxena, 2022). Comparative interpretation was then conducted to systematically explore differences in framing strategies among Western, regional, and state-aligned outlets, revealing distinctive patterns in narrative construction, tonal variation, source attribution, and thematic prioritization (Das & Zaman, 2016).

#### 4. Results & Findings

**Table 2: Framing Matrix (Across the Four Key Themes)**

Outlet	Retaliation / Justification	Humanitarian Impact	Escalation Risk	Diplomacy / Mediation
1 CNN (USA)	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Strong
2 BBC (UK)	Strong	Strong	Strong	Moderate
3 Al Jazeera (Qatar)	Strong (Pakistan's view)	Strong	Strong	Moderate
4 DW (Germany)	Moderate	Moderate	Strong	Moderate
5 France 24	Moderate	Strong	Strong	Strong
6 Al Arabiya (Saudi)	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Strong
7 CGTN (China)	Low	Low	Moderate	Very Strong
8 Daily Sabah (Türkiye)	Strong (Pakistan-friendly)	Strong	Moderate	Moderate
9 Azerbaijan News	Strong (India-leaning)	Low	Strong	Low
10 Mathrubhumi (Malaysia/Indian regional)	Strong (India-leaning)	Moderate	Moderate	Low
11 Indonesia News	Low	Low	Moderate	Strong
12 Bangladesh News	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
13 Sri Lankan News	Strong	Strong	Moderate	Strong
14 I24News (Israel)	Strong (India-friendly)	Moderate	Moderate	Low
15 Qatar State Media	Low	Low	Low	Very Strong
16 CBC (Canada)	Moderate	Moderate	Strong	Strong
17 Russian Media (Kremlin/Reuters)	Moderate	Low	Strong	Strong

Table 2 compares the framing of the India-Pakistan conflict in coverage by 17 international news outlets across four dimensions: retaliation/justification, humanitarian impact, escalation risk, and diplomacy/mediation. Coverage patterns reflect a strong influence of geopolitical alignment, editorial priorities, and regional proximity to the conflict. Western media, such as CNN, BBC, DW Germany, France 24, and CBC, focused more on strategic and military considerations, casting it as a global security issue. All these news sources underlined the retaliatory attacks from both India and Pakistan and regularly mentioned the risk of further escalation, including the use of nuclear weapons. The diplomatic interventions were reported, but the humanitarian impact was emphasized to varying degrees: BBC and France 24 gave more attention to civilian casualties, while CNN and DW Germany had a more moderate focus on humanitarian aspects, often subordinated to the strategic framing of military escalation. Regional media, like Al Jazeera, Daily Sabah, and Bangladesh News, underlined human-centered stories with a high emphasis on civilian suffering, displacement, and moral justice. Al Jazeera and Daily Sabah were especially characterized by a sympathetic attitude toward Pakistan, underpinning strong retaliation framing with very high humanitarian emphasis while being moderate in attention to diplomacy and conflict resolution. These outlets balanced reporting of military action with the human cost, reflecting regional sensitivities and audience expectations. State-aligned outlets like CGTN, Azerbaijan News, Qatar State Media, and Russian Media framed their coverage around diplomacy and mediation, positioning their respective governments as stabilizing actors in the conflict. In general,

direct critique of military actions was avoided, with scant attention to civilian casualties. Negotiation, de-escalation, and international intervention were underlined. On the other hand, India-leaning outlets, such as, Mathrubhumi, and I24 News, emphasized retaliation and national security extensively, framing India's military responses as legitimate while paying very little attention to humanitarian impact or diplomatic overtures. Overall, Table 2 shows that media framing of the India-Pakistan conflict is highly contingent upon political orientation, regional proximity, and state alignment, unfolding along a spectrum of storylines. Western-orientation or neutral outlets foregrounded global security and strategic risk; regional and Pakistan-sympathetic reporting underlined human consequences and retaliation; state-aligned outlets highlighted diplomacy and mediation; and India-friendly outlets focused on justification of military action. These variations underlie how geopolitical context and editorial priorities shape coverage of international conflict and influence audience perceptions of legitimacy, threat, and the potential for resolution.



**Table 3: Media Outlet-wise framing**

No.	News Outlet / Country	Frame Title	Key Framing Features	Dominant Frame	Narrative Style
1	CNN (United States)	Strategic– Diplomatic Frame	Focus on retaliation logic, official sources, military timelines, nuclear risk, UN/US diplomacy	Strategic retaliation + diplomatic responsibility	Balance-of-power, risk-aware, policy-oriented
2	BBC (United Kingdom)	Balanced Conflict Escalation Frame	Comparative India–Pakistan narratives, civilian suffering, historical parallels, diplomatic solutions	Symmetrical conflict + humanitarian balance	Analytical, cautious, conflict-prevention
3	Al Jazeera	Counter-Hegemonic / Humanitarian Justice Frame	Pakistan-centered framing, mosque attacks, displacement, legality of war	> Victimhood & legality	Emotional, justice-oriented, people-centered
4	DW (Germany)	Risk Management / Security Rationality Frame	Governance lens, military rationales, regional and global stability focus	Risk containment and security governance	Neutral, institutional, analytic
5	France 24	Humanitarian Escalation Frame	Civilian deaths, drone warfare, infrastructure damage, diplomatic efforts	Civilian suffering + uncontrolled escalation	Emotionally engaging, risk-focused
6	Al Arabiya (Saudi Arabia)	Ceasefire and Stability Frame	Ceasefire updates, war fatigue, troop withdrawals, stabilization focus	Conflict fatigue + ceasefire success	De-escalation oriented
7	CGTN (China)	Diplomatic Leadership Frame	China as mediator, peace rhetoric, multilateral diplomacy	Diplomatic leadership + regional harmony	State-aligned, pacifying, authority-driven
8	Daily Sabah (Türkiye)	Pakistan-Sympathetic Aggression Frame	Emphasis on Pakistani civilian deaths, Islamic solidarity, labeling Indian actions aggressive	Moral outrage + sovereign victimhood	Advocacy-oriented
9	Azerbaijan News	Strategic India-Supportive Frame	Framed as counterterrorism, focus on militant camps, national security	Counterterrorism legitimacy	Strategic, state-centric
10	Mathrubhumi / Malaysian-Indian Syndicated News	National Security Frame	Indian retaliation, preparedness, blackouts, civil defense	Defensive nationalism	Militarized security narrative
11	Indonesia News	Neutral ASEAN Stability Frame	Avoided blame, stressed restraint, dialogue, nuclear risk awareness	Neutral diplomacy + regional balance	Soft, diplomatic, non-aligned
12	Bangladesh News	Propaganda Awareness Frame	Analysis of misinformation, emotional nationalism, narrative manipulation	Media literacy + narrative manipulation	Meta-analytical
13	Sri Lankan News / Sri Lanka	Humanitarian– Retaliation Frame	Emphasis on civilian casualties in Pakistan and India, military retaliation, national security decisions, international calls for restraint, mediation efforts by Iran and other global powers	Retaliation / Justification + Humanitarian Impact	Human-centered, conflict-aware, diplomatic-focused
14	I24 News (Israel)	Pro-India Security Frame	Legitimation of military action, downplaying civilian narratives	Security justification	Strategic-aligned
15	Qatar State Media	Conflict Prevention Frame	Exclusive focus on restraint, diplomacy, wisdom	Pure mediation	Normative, peace-centric
16	CBC (Canada)	Historical Conflict Contextual Frame	Partition, Kashmir, nuclear deterrence background	Long-term structural conflict	Educational, explanatory
17	Russian Media	Geopolitical Balancing Frame	Great power diplomacy, mediation, nuclear risk emphasis	Power balancing + mediation	Strategic geopolitical

Table 3 summarizes the dominant frame, key narrative features, and style of storytelling for each outlet. The US and UK outlets; CNN and BBC, respectively-emphasize both strategic and balanced frames with a focus on military rationale, official sources, and diplomatic responsibility. CNN

framed strategic retaliation and the risks of nuclear escalation, while BBC integrated conflict escalation with humanitarian and historical context reflective of a conflict-prevention orientation. Al Jazeera and Daily Sabah framed the crisis through Pakistan-centered humanitarian frames and moral-justice narratives, emphasizing civilian harm, mosque attacks, and legal-ethical interpretations. Similarly, Sri Lankan News carried humanitarian consequences and a response by Pakistan with a report on civilian losses, military responses, and international mediation efforts. This news narrative balanced its human-centered reporting with diplomatic awareness, reflecting concern both for conflict impact and restraint measures. European outlets like DW and France 24 combined security rationales with humanitarian reporting, balancing institutional and risk-aware perspectives with attention to civilian consequences. State-aligned media such as CGTN, Qatar State Media, Al Arabiya, Azerbaijan News and Russian Media framed the tenor of diplomacy, mediation, and regional stabilization, while minimizing any direct military accountability. Media with an India slant, such as Mathrubhumi and I24 News mobilized national security and retaliation frames while minimizing humanitarian or mediation frames. Neutral or reflexive news outlets such as Indonesia News and Bangladesh News framed regional stability, restraint, and critical evaluation of misinformation. CBC provided a historical-structural context linking the conflict to Partition and Kashmir disputes. Taken together, these results confirm that narratives are framed by geopolitical proximity, political affinity, and institutional ideology in concert with the framing theory assumption that media are active constructors of meaning through emphases. Sri Lankan News showcases how a regional news outlet might balance both humanitarian and strategic emphases, and thus reflect the complex process by which local or neutral media might mediate between international and regional interests.

**Table 4: Cross-National Framing Patterns (Thematic Synthesis)**

Media Group	Included Outlets	Dominant Themes	Key Framing Characteristics	Narrative Orientation
Western Media	CNN, BBC, DW, France 24, CBC	Strategic escalation, military rationality, nuclear risk	Framed conflict as a global security threat; strong reliance on experts, officials, and diplomats	Policy-oriented, risk-aware, analytical
Regional Media	Al Jazeera, Daily Sabah, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Sri Lanka	Civilian suffering, emotional narratives, identity-based framing	Strong emphasis on human cost, national/religious identity cues, and emotional storytelling	People-centered, emotive, narrative-driven
State-Aligned Media	CGTN, Qatar Media, Russian Media, Al Arabiya	Diplomacy, ceasefire, mediation	Framed their own states as peace brokers/stabilizers; avoided overt military criticism	Diplomatic, state-centric, de-escalatory

Table 4 synthesizes these cross-national patterns by grouping the outlets into Western, regional, and state-aligned categories. Systematic differences in themes, framing, and narrative orientation emerge across these categories. Western media-CNN, BBC, DW, France 24, CBC-emphasized strategic escalation, military rationality, and nuclear risk, framing the conflict as a global security threat and relying heavily on experts and official sources. Regional media, by contrast, prioritizes civilian suffering, identity-driven narratives, and emotional storytelling, placing emphasis on

human cost more than strategic considerations: Al Jazeera, Daily Sabah, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Sri Lanka. And finally, state-aligned media foreground diplomacy and mediation, ceasefire efforts, presenting their governments as the most stabilizing actors while minimizing overt military critique: CGTN, Qatar Media, Russian Media, Al Arabiya. These patterns show how the framing by media is closely related to political alignment, regional identity, and institutional orientation, which underlines the idea that news coverage not only reports events but actively constructs their meaning through selective thematic emphasis and narrative positioning.

## 5. Discussion

The analysis of media coverage of the India-Pakistan conflict shows dissimilar framing patterns shaped by geopolitical context, institutional priorities, and editorial orientation, both at the level of individual outlet framing and cross-national groupings. From the Western media outlets represented by CNN of the US, BBC of the UK, DW of Germany, France 24 of France, and CBC of Canada, some common frames were strategic escalation, military rationality, and nuclear risk, portraying the conflict as a global security threat, with heavy reliance on expert commentary, official sources, and diplomatic actors (Entman, 1993; Rawan, 2018). Specifically, CNN framed the conflict through a strategic–diplomatic lens, emphasizing retaliation logic, military timelines, and nuclear escalation risks (CNN, 2025). The BBC combined narratives on the escalation of conflict with humanitarian and historical contexts to reflect a conflict-prevention orientation (BBC, 2025). DW and France 24 wove together the institutional security rationales with humanitarian reporting, while CBC uniquely provided historical-structural context linking the conflict to Partition and Kashmir disputes (DW, 2025; France 24, 2025; CBC, 2025). These patterns support prior research suggesting that Western and elite media privilege strategic and state-centric perspectives over micro-level human impacts in conflict reporting (Rawan et al., 2018; Entman, 1993). The regional media, including Al Jazeera (Qatar), Daily Sabah (Türkiye), Bangladesh News, Indonesia News, and Sri Lankan outlets, highlighted human-centered and identity-driven narratives and civilian suffering, displacement, and moral-justice perspectives (Banaji, 2011; Hussain, 2015). At the news outlet level, Al Jazeera and Daily Sabah demonstrated sympathetic framing of Pakistan, emphasizing civilian casualties, mosque attacks, and ethical legitimacy of their actions (Al Jazeera, 2025; Daily Sabah, 2025); similarly, Bangladesh and Indonesia News showed more reflexive coverage, which focused on propaganda analysis, regional stability, and nuclear restraint (Bangladesh News, 2025; Indonesia News, 2025). These findings support previous research that finds that in regional or culturally proximate contexts, media often privilege identity-based, emotive, and moral framing over strategic-security framing and demonstrate domestic political orientations and social norms (Banaji, 2011; Hussain, 2015). State-aligned media outlets, such as CGTN (China), Qatar State Media, Al Arabiya (Saudi Arabia), and Russian media outlets, were very cohesive in their messaging throughout the crisis, placing a heavy emphasis on issues of diplomacy, mediation, and conflict stabilization, presenting a perspective that their respective governments served as brokers of peace while minimizing direct criticism of

their military actions or their humanitarian consequences. More specifically, CGTN and Qatar State Media framed their coverage in terms of multilateral diplomacy and restraint (CGTN, 2025; Qatar State Media, 2025), while Al Arabiya emphasized ceasefire developments and the withdrawal of troops (Al Arabiya, 2025), and Russian media framed great power diplomacy and mediation (The Moscow Times, 2025). This of course reaffirms previous literature on how state-aligned media operate as tools of foreign policy, framing public perceptions to bolster the legitimacy of governments and advance soft power agendas. Outlets from those countries that align with Indian perspectives, such as Azerbaijan News, Mathrubhumi (Malaysia), and I24 News (Israel), highlighted retaliation and national security narratives, while barely mentioning civilian consequences or mediation. This would be in line with prior research on conflict-sensitive reporting, which contends that nationalist and security-aligned frames are dominant across state-supportive outlets (Rawan et al., 2018). Neutral or reflexive regional outlets, such as Indonesia News and Bangladesh News, combined attention to regional stability and restraint with critical analyses of propaganda and misinformation. These highlight the potential for media literacy-oriented frames to mitigate polarizing narratives (Bangladesh News, 2025; Indonesia News, 2025). Together, these suggest that media framing is an active construction of meaning rather than a reflection of events, with selective emphasis on strategic, humanitarian, or diplomatic dimensions shaping audience perceptions (Entman, 1993; Galtung, 1998). In this context, Western outlets foreground strategic-security concerns and risk awareness; regional outlets emphasize human and moral dimensions; while state-aligned media favor diplomacy and stabilization. This pattern underlines how geopolitical alignment, editorial ideology, and institutional structures interrelate in influencing international conflict reporting, reinforcing the notion within framing theory that media discourse mediates conflict understanding and interpretation across audiences (Entman, 1993).

## 6. Conclusion

The analysis shows that geopolitical alignment, institutional priorities, and editorial ideology play a major role in international media framing of the India-Pakistan conflict. The Western outlets (CNN, BBC, DW, France 24, CBC) framed the crisis with strategic escalation, military rationale, and nuclear risk as major themes, positioning it as an international security concern. Regional media (Al Jazeera, Daily Sabah, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Sri Lanka) foregrounded humanitarian suffering, identity-based narratives, and moral legitimacy. State-aligned outlets (CGTN, Qatar State Media, Al Arabiya, Russian Media) framed their country as a voice of reason for promoting diplomacy and mediation, while downplaying all military critique. Indian-aligned media underlined retaliation and national security imperatives, hence appearing as domestic political positioning. A clear pattern therefore emerges wherein media do not simply report events; they construct meaning through selective highlighting of strategic, humanitarian, or diplomatic dimensions. Framing shapes audience perception of events, evaluations of risk, and interpretations

of legitimacy. The findings resonate with framing theory that media guide understanding through thematic and narrative selection (Entman, 1993).

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, a number of recommendations emerge. International news organizations need to go for conflict-sensitive reporting, a practice that balances strategic, humanitarian, and diplomatic dimensions of any conflict, against escalatory or unbalanced storytelling. Increased transparency in editorial matters and disclosure of institutional or geopolitical alignments assist audiences in reading coverage more critically. The reinforcement of cross-regional collaboration and independent verification would enhance the variation of perspectives and thoroughness. Newsrooms should bolster training in ethical crisis reporting standards and encourage civilian-centric storytelling. Lastly, insights from framing patterns can be taken up by policy actors and diplomatic players for developing communication strategies that inspire responsible media conduct during international security crises.

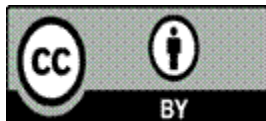
### References

- Abbas, N., & Ali, S. (2025). The Role of Western Powers in Shaping Global Governance and Conflict Resolution: Opportunities and Challenges. *Social Science Review Archives*, 3(2), 1546-1558.
- Al Arabiya English. (2025, May 7). India and Pakistan: A history of armed conflict. <https://english.alarabiya.net/News/world/2025/05/07/india-and-pakistan-a-history-of-armed-conflict>
- Al Jazeera. (2025, May 10). Hussain, A. Pakistan launches Operation Bunyan Marsoos: What we know so far. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/5/10/pakistan-launches-operation-bunyan-marsoos-what-we-know-so-far>
- Al Jazeera. (2025, May 7). ‘Act of war’: Pakistan pledges retaliation to Indian deadly attacks. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/5/7/pakistan-decries-act-of-war-vows-retaliation-as-india-launches-strikes>
- Azerbaijan News. (2025, May 11). Pakistan's PM: India imposed unjust war, we won. <https://www.azernews.az/region/241624.html>
- Banaji, S. (Ed.). (2011). *South Asian media cultures: Audiences, representations, contexts*. Anthem Press.
- Bangladesh News. (2025, May 10). War propaganda and the India-Pakistan conflict. <https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/views/news/war-propaganda-and-the-india-pakistan-conflict-3891226>
- BBC News. (2025, May 7). Biswas, S. Indian air strikes – how will Pakistan respond? <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cd020710v1ko>
- BBC News. (2025, May 9). Ethirajan, A. How can India and Pakistan find a way to de-escalate? <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/clyzg8ygeezo>
- CBC News. (2025, May 8). Maimann, K., & Shivji, S. What led up to the current conflict & Ceasefire challenges between India and Pakistan. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/india-pakistan-kashmir-explainer-1.7529335>

- CGTN. (2025, May 11). China ready to play constructive role in Pakistan-India ceasefire efforts: FM Wang Yi. <https://news.cgtn.com/news/2025-05-11/China-ready-to-play-constructive-role-in-Pakistan-India-ceasefire-1DhkwpwdGN2/p.html>
- Civila, S., & Lugo-Ocando, J. A. (2024). News framing and platform affordances in social media. *Journalism Practice*, 1-23.
- CNN. (2025, May 7). May 7, 2025 India launches attacks on Pakistan after Kashmir massacre. <https://edition.cnn.com/world/live-news/india-pakistan-attack-kashmir-tourists-intl-hnk>
- Cohen, J. (1960). A coefficient of agreement for nominal scales. *Educational and psychological measurement*, 20(1), 37-46.
- Daily Sabah. (2025, May 7). Death toll hits 31 in wake of Indian strikes, cross-border clashes. <https://www.dailysabah.com/world/asia-pacific/death-toll-hits-31-in-wake-of-indian-strikes-cross-border-clashes>
- Daily Sabah. (2025, May 7). Death toll hits 31 in wake of Indian strikes, cross-border clashes. <https://www.dailysabah.com/world/asia-pacific/death-toll-hits-31-in-wake-of-indian-strikes-cross-border-clashes>
- Daily Sabah. (2025, May 8). Pakistan downs 25 Indian drones as tensions climb. <https://www.dailysabah.com/world/asia-pacific/pakistan-downs-25-indian-drones-as-tensions-with-archrival-climb>
- Daily Sabah. (2025, May 8). Pakistan downs 25 Indian drones as tensions with archrival climb. <https://www.dailysabah.com/world/asia-pacific/pakistan-downs-25-indian-drones-as-tensions-with-archrival-climb>
- Das, J., & Zaman, A. (2016). Borders in the south: Migration news in South Asia and the Pacific. *Global Media Journal-German Edition*, 6(1).
- De Vreese, C. H. (2005). News framing: Theory and typology. *Information design journal+document design*, 13(1), 51-62.
- DW. (2025, May 7). Krishnan, M. What is India's next move after strikes on Pakistan? <https://www.dw.com/en/india-pakistan-kashmir-strikes-response-v2/a-72466207>
- DW. (2025, May 9). India and Pakistan in Kashmir conflict: Heavily armed rivals. <https://www.dw.com/en/india-and-pakistan-in-kashmir-conflict-heavily-armed-rivals/a-72490542>
- France 24. (2025, May 7). 'Operation Sindoor': India launches strikes on Pakistan as Islamabad vows retaliation. <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20250506-india-launches-strikes-on-pakistan-as-islamabad-vows-retaliation>
- France 24. (2025, May 9). Pakistan launches counterattacks against India after strikes on air bases. <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20250509-pakistan-warns-won-t-de-escalate-as-conflict-with-india-spirals>
- Galtung, J. (1998). High road, low road—charting the course for Peace Journalism Track Two, 7, 4. *Centre for Conflict Resolution and Media Peace Centre. Cape Town, South Africa.*
- Gamson, W. A., & Modigliani, A. (1989). Media discourse and public opinion on nuclear power: A constructionist approach. *American journal of sociology*, 95(1), 1-37.
- Greenberg, K. (2022). The 2014 Israel-Gaza Conflict: Exploring the representation of 'Israel' in the Israeli media using a triangulation of corpus-based critical discourse analysis and discourse-based interviews (Doctoral dissertation, Swinburne).
- Goffman, E. (1974). Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience. *Northeastern UP.*

- Hallin, D. C. (1989). *The uncensored war: The media and Vietnam*. Univ of California Press.
- Harcup, T. (2021). *Journalism: principles and practice*. Sage
- Hussain, I. (2015). News framing on Indo-Pak conflicts in The News (Pakistan) and Times of India: War and peace journalism perspective. *Journal of Mass Communication & Journalism*, 5(8), 1-6.
- I24 News. (2025, May 7). India launches airstrikes against Pakistan in response to Kashmir terror attack. <https://www.i24news.tv/en/news/international/asia-pacific/artc-india-launches-airstrikes-against-pakistan-in-response-to-kashmir-terror>
- Ibrar, Z., & Khan, M. (2025). Framing and Media Bias in Conflict Reporting: A Comparative Analysis of Al-Jazeera, CNN, and Global Times During the 2023 Palestine-Israel Conflict. *İnterdisipliner Medya ve İletişim Çalışmaları*, 2(3), 42-71.
- Indonesia News / The Jakarta Post. (2025, May 9). Indonesia calls on India, Pakistan to show restraint amid escalated conflict. <https://asianews.network/indonesia-calls-on-india-pakistan-to-show-restraint-amid-escalated-conflict/>
- Iyengar, S. (1994). *Is anyone responsible?: How television frames political issues*. University of Chicago Press.
- Kaul, M., & Saxena, A. (2022). Framing the News: A Study of Print Media Coverage of the Kashmir Conflict.
- Kazanský, R. (2022). The definition frame of the conflict of the crisis management in the international relations. In *Trends and Future Directions in Security and Emergency Management* (pp. 105-130). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Krippendorff, K. (2018). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology*. Sage publications.
- Mathrubhumi. (2025, May 7). India hits back hard, launching strikes after Pakistan's assault on 26 locations; LoC tensions escalate. <https://www.mathrubhumi.com/news/india/2025/05/india-strikes-pakistan-lo-c-tensions.html>
- Mathrubhumi. (2025, May 8). Guards up: Complete blackout in Punjab's Gurdaspur district amid escalating Indo-Pak tensions. <https://www.mathrubhumi.com/news/india/2025/05/08/gurdaspur-blackout-india-pakistan-tensions.html>
- McCombs, M., & Reynolds, A. (2009). How the news shapes our civic agenda. In *Media effects* (pp. 17-32). Routledge.
- Neuendorf, K. A. (2017). *The content analysis guidebook*. sage.
- Pan, Z., & Kosicki, G. M. (1993). Framing analysis: An approach to news discourse. *Political communication*, 10(1), 55-75.
- Park, D., & Seo, Y. (2023). Identity frame at metaphor layer as the driving force for nuclear strategy: The US nuclear strategy during the cold war. *Futures*, 152, 103214.
- Qatar State Media. (2025, May 7). Qatar expresses concern, urges diplomacy amid India-Pakistan tensions. <https://thepeninsulaqatar.com/article/07/05/2025/qatar-expresses-concern-urges-diplomacy-amid-india-pakistan-tensions>
- Rawan, B., Hussain, S., & Khurshid, A. (2018). Media framing and foreign policy: A case study of the coverage of Sino-Pak relations in global media. *Dialogue*, 13(3), 286.
- Reese, S. D., Gandy, J., & Grant, A. E. (2001). Prologue—Framing public life: A bridging model for media research. In *Framing public life* (pp. 23-48). Routledge.

- Safa, R., & Barati, M. (2024). CNN and BBC Shaping the Opinions in Different Countries: A multi-dimensional descriptive commentary related to security, military and diplomacy. *Development (IJHED)*, 6(5), 23-25.
- Scheufele, D. A. (1999). Framing as a theory of media effects. *Journal of communication*, 49(1), 103-122.
- Semetko, H. A., & Valkenburg, P. M. (2000). Framing European politics: A content analysis of press and television news. *Journal of communication*, 50(2), 93-109.
- Shahid, N. U. A., Ashfaq, M., & Zubair, J. (2021). Framing of Armed Conflicts between the Two Nuclear States of South Asia. *Medijska istraživanja: znanstveno-stručni časopis za novinarstvo i medije*, 27(1), 29-48.
- Sharma, B., & Pokharel, B. P. (2025). Conceptual Foundation of Framing, Media Framing, and Rhetorical Scholarship. *Literary studies*, 38(1), 11-18.
- Sri Lankan News / Al Jazeera. (2025, May 7). Pakistan says death toll from Indian military strikes, cross border firing stands at 31. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/pakistan-says-death-toll-from-indian-military-strikes-cross-border-firing-stands-at-31/3560333>
- Sutton, R., & Paddon Rhoads, E. (2022). Empathy in frontline humanitarian negotiations: a relational approach to engagement. *Journal of International Humanitarian Action*, 7(1), 23.
- The Moscow Times. (2025, May 7). Moscow Urges 'Restraint' as India and Pakistan Clash in Worst Violence in Years. <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2025/05/07/moscow-urges-restraint-as-india-and-pakistan-clash-in-worst-violence-in-years-a89005>
- van den Heijkant, L., Skovsgaard, M., & Vliegthart, R. (2024). Framing Policy Reform in Europe. A Comparative Study of Frame Variation Across Countries, Newspapers, and Time. *Journalism Studies*, 25(10), 1138-1159.



©2025 by the Authors. This Article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)