

# Nationalist narratives in Indian Media coverage of Pulwama Attack: Critical Analyses

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## **ABSTRACT**

No doubt Pulwama attack- suicide bombing carried out by the terrorist outfit, Jaish-e-Mohammed, was one of the fatal attacks made on Indian soil ever. But, out of all pain and suffering how Indian media covered this issue. Somehow, media houses were more concerned about upcoming election, to support present PM or they were really in to reality? Or Media houses were provoking sentiments of Indians? Instead, Indian media has ascribed to itself the role of an amplifier of very own government propaganda that took two nuclear states to brink of war. Indian TV channels were transformed into caricatures of military command centers, sometimes incorrectly anchors assessing military technology and strategy, again the question is what actually media did? What its responsibility in actual?

Times of India published “Unfairly blaming Pakistan” this publication replaced the heading and added an editor’s note at the end saying that its coverage clarified that the terrorist was a member of Pakistan based Jaish-e-Mohammad.

Indian Express quoted Mr. Modi (PM) and Mr. Jaitley (Finance Minister) who criticized Pakistan for being involved rather publishing actual note Indian Express published public speakers note, defiantly this kind of reporting gives negative idea about Pakistan in public.

Times Now, already known for its provocative reporting, it was focused on “Us v them” in overall Pulwama issue, without any facts Times now again were involved in politicians chit chat and blame game.

In my study, I will highlight minimum five Indian newspapers covering on Pulwama attack. This piece of research will be based on content analyses to analyse India media coverage on Pulwama attack.

*Keywords: Pulwama attack, India Media, Jaish-e-Mohammad, Terrorist, Pakistan*

## INTRODUCTION

On 14<sup>th</sup> February 2019, one of the most serious strikes happens against security forces in the troubled region of Kashmir. In the south Kashmir Pulwama district, a vehicle laden with 350 kilograms of explosives slammed into the convoy, which killed 44 Indian police person, yes it was horrible and a left big question mark on our security system. The surprise attack by a Jaish-e- Mohammed suicide bomber left the nation in shock and anger while PM of India Mr. Narendra Modi gave security forces a freehand to strike back with equal force. In this sensitive issue how Indian media reacted? As we all are known to the fact that India media has a notorious reputation for sensationalizing news and making claims that are not entirely accurate. However, the press is responsible of fact-checking information and educating its readers, not simply regurgitating statements and condemnations. International media first provided background on the Indo-Pak conflict over Kashmir and quoted top diplomats who could help their audiences understand the significance of the event, on the contrary Indian media tried to create war in the mind of Indians by blaming Pak for everything.

The situation of Kashmir has been tense since 2014 and there have been several deadly attacks on soldiers. If we check data of last five years, Jammu and Kashmir has witnessed a 93 per cent rise in death of security personnel. According to Ministry of Home Affairs of India there has been 176 per cent jump in terror activities in-between 2014 to 2018. Government also released data over 1,700 terrorist actives in (28/month) during last five years in J&K. Several regions in the valley has been affected by home-grown militants, and Pulwama district has been high volume of terror encounters, I guess this time it was lack of security or sensibility while Pulwama attack happens, when since long we were aware of the situation, government of India must have been lacking somewhere. However the attack left 40 CRPD paramilitary troopers dead is the deadliest terror attack in the valley in the last three decades of Kashmir's insurgency.

It was a sensitive issue to cover with emotions, as we all are aware that Indian media has a sensationalism problem, similar situation happens during Pulwama attack, its time of Lok Sabha election in India, some media organisations even reported that PM Modi is playing dirty game for politics, fake news were everywhere. Somehow this over all media sensation creates was in mind. It was mentioned in many media "Indian media is war crazy" and if in case India & Pakistan issue will solve in future, it won't be thanks for Indian media.

**Methodology:** In my study, I will highlight minimum five Indian newspapers covering on Pulwama attack. This piece of research will be based on content analyses which analyse India media coverage on Pulwama attack. The study will highlight how Indian media is misleading Indians and how Indian media is playing negative role in manipulating news.

### **Various Indian Media and Content on Pulwama Attack-**

“We want revenge, not condemnation; it is time for blood, the enemy’s blood” Arnab Goswami (Indian Senior Journalist). Goswami has been famous for aggressive news anchor. Mita Santra wife of slain soldiers was attacked online when she questioned the failure to prevent the attack and advocated peaceful dialogue with Pakistan. Some people are so not in sense, they called her coward and some even mentioned on social media related to her personal relation with her husband, likely – she don’t love her husband. One of Indian TV news anchor, Gaurav Sawant, tweeted that India should “Strike again and again”. I guess TV news anchors have been forgotten the fact that war is not a thing to buy it’s a situation which takes lives. Sitting in safe place and talking about war is very easy on the other hand army in war field fighting for pride loosing lives of loved once.

Social media plays vital role in any situation due to reach and access of medium. Twitter and Facebook has been full with hastags like #surgicalstricke2 #Sayyestowar #SayNotowar #AvengePulwama,

The major problem with Indian media is that they have no authority to answer, News organisations such as India Today, NDTV, News18, Indian Express, First post, Mumbai mirror, ANI and other routinely attributed their information to anonymous “government sources”, forensic expert, police officers and intelligence officers, No independent investigations were conducted and serious questions about intelligence failures were left unanswered. (*Suchitra Vijayan- International Journalist*)

The rise of social media and smart phone has created a huge paradigm shift in Indian news consumptions habits. “80% of Indians now get their news from social media platform like twitter & Facebook- The Economic Times”. With an increasing number of people using social media, not only is the availability of media information on these devices important, but it also matters how users contextualize and share them on these platforms.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi hinting towards Pakistan in a headline that read:” If our neighbor thinks it can destabilize India, its making a big mistake” – *The Indian Express* “Well-planned attack” & “The Pulwama attack is biggest in Jammu & Kashmir’s history” *India*

### **Today**

Holding Pakistan responsible – without evidence or investigation – Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in a story published on the Indian news website- “perpetrators will pay for it” *Times Now News*. He further mourned the loss of 44 securities personal and added that “Indian security forces had been given full freedom” Over all media has been victimized on Pakistan, as since years the dispute between India and Pakistan has been there, and Indian media is using this issue as trigger with investigation any situation. The Kashmir Walla (A monthly online magazine) – quoted “Your oppression fuels our Jihad”. The article narrated that the JeM group also reportedly released a video of the suicide bomber Adil Ahmad Dar.

### **Inflammatory social media posts-**

Very first principle for media should be social harmony but what if society itself not aware of its harmful effects, As since very beginning of social media we are aware of pros & cons of social media. During Pulwama attack we can sense the miss- use of this technology which effects harmony and peace of country, here are some examples-

A 19-year old young one Sameer Khan from Jhunjhunu- Rajasthan was booked under IPC section 153A as he posted on his social media “Pakishtan ZIndabad” during attack.

2<sup>nd</sup> Year- paramedical students of Jaipur National Institute of Medical science, 4 girls were booked for sedition on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2019 evening as they posted anti-national content on scoail media. Accused Talveen Manzoor, Iqra, Zohra Nazir and Uzma Nazir has shared celebratory picture on their whatsapp status and allegedly raised pro-Pakistan slogans.

Three nursing students from Kashmir were arrested in Bangaluru on the same issue as they shared anti-national messages on Facebook, criticizing Indian Army and supporting Dar. Waquar Ahmat alias Harris Masoor, Gowhar Mustaq, Zakir, Maqbol, has been accused were booked under the Unlawful Activities under 1967Act.

Ravi Praksah Maurgya from Uttar Pradesh-Ballia district was arrested for his Facebook post lauding Adil Ahmad Dar- the suicide bomber responsible for the death of more than 40 CRPF

personnel in Pulwama. In the same case Bijnor's another young one was accused for posting pro-Pakistan and inflammatory social media posts.

Mohammad Imran from Bihar- Samastipur and Mohanmmad Tausif Alma from Katihar were also booked for their social media posts on Facebook and twitter.

Faiz Rashhed engineering dropout from Bengaluru was accused to post on Facebook for allegedly hailing Fedayeen terrorist Dar as a hero of Kashmir.

### **Pulwama attack and Indian Politics-**

India has been a place of emotions since beginning and that's who political parties are playing with people, I must say Pulwama attack on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2019, in which 40 CRPF jawans were killed, played a vital role in Indian politics and upcoming election campaigns in country. Just after Pulwama attack, action taken by ruling party on 26 February 2019 becomes a main agenda of party for electoral campaign. Terror casualties have always been portrayed as due to government's failure to effectively deal with terrorism, and opposition parties has always questioned the incumbent party. Checking the fact BJP had made populist allegations against Congress party in the past. It's a kind of strong image that BJP has always been more effective and strong to take action against terrorism or terrorist.

Pawan Khara, Congress Spoke person "The government does not have answers on two crore jobs, problems of farmers and the cause of demonetization. So they are doing such kind of politics. There should not be any politics on Army". No doubt but Pulwama attack left over question, for which ruling government has no answer yet.

### **Indian Media and Pulwama attack narration-**

On Pulwama attack India's number one English newspaper has published – Gov blames Pak after local youth rams CRPF convoy with IED- packed SUV in worst terror hit on J&K forces" which received a widespread flak from its readers who claimed that this headlines of TOI seems like the headline of Pakistani newspaper. The headline was supported by a subhead; Accuses it of supporting Azhar-led JeM.

As TOI has a mobile app, many of Indian declared that they will uninstall TOI app for the same headline, some has claimed that the word "Local youth" is a word of Pakistani papers used for Kashmiri terrorists. Thousands of people has given least rating to the app, for the same star rating

to app grew to over 33,500 at time of writing this report. Even people has requested to their news paper vendors not to deliver TOI on their houses.

Many of our readers have expressed concern over the headline "Govt blames Pak after local youth rams CRPF convoy with IED-packed SUV in worst-ever J&K terror strike". The headline clearly said it was a terror strike. There is nevertheless a feeling that it conveyed an impression of Pakistan being 'unfairly' blamed. While fully appreciating these sentiments, we wish to point out that our entire coverage was unambiguous in stating that the terrorist was a member of Pakistan-based and controlled Jaish-e-Mohammad.

In fact, there is a detailed report on Pakistan's intelligence agency increasingly using Jaish as its 'sword arm' to organise terror attacks in India

TOI condemns terror and grieves for the families of those martyred in Thursday's attack.



TOI Editor  
@TOIEditor



Editor's note

♡ 730 3:45 PM - Feb 15, 2019

At time of Pulwama attack, there were number of fake news targeted the country's primary opposition party, Indian National congress, as its election time in India. Photoshopped images has been created big issues during Pulwama attack, likewise- photoshopped image claimed to show Rahul Gandhi (Congress party president), standing next to the suicide bomber. Similar about Priyanka Gandhi, another Congress leader and sister of Priyanka Gandhi, has met chief of Pakistan army right before Pulwama attack happens. (BOOM factcheck- has posted this incident)



**BOOM FactCheck** ✓ @boomlive\_in · Feb 16, 2019



Post the deadly suicide bombing at #Pulwama in Jammu & Kashmir, where 40 #CRPF personnel lost their lives, there are several images, videos and messages that have been posted on social media. BOOM's reporters have fact checked several of them. See the thread below



**BOOM FactCheck** ✓

@boomlive\_in

Less than 24 hours after the terror attack in #Pulwama, a photoshopped image shows @RahulGandhi with suicide bomber Adil Ahmed Dar. [bit.ly/2N9xvy9](https://bit.ly/2N9xvy9)

♥ 68 12:42 PM - Feb 16, 2019



**No, Rahul Gandhi Is Not Posing With The Pulwama Attack Sui...**

The photoshopped picture claims that Adil Ahmed Dar is a close aide of Rahul Gandhi.

boomlive.in

Similarly a post in a Facebook page named Swadeshi Lehar has shared around 2800 times so far, related to Pulwama attack- has posted

*“कभी देखा है ऐसा प्रधानमंत्री जो खुद शहीद की पत्नी को फोन करे, एक बाप की तरह उनके आँसू पोंछने की कोशिश करे, देखकर आँखें मही जाँँ गी (Have you ever seen a prime minister who calls the martyr's wife himself and tries to console her like a father? This video will bring tears to your eyes)”.*

These kind of post has been high-lighted by public on Pulwama attack to support present PM of country. PM Narendra Modi at an event also said that those who committed the heinous act will pay “a heavy price”. “To all my colleagues, in ruling and opposition, it’s a sensitive time. We need to speak in one voice because this battle is for us to win” he said – The Indian Express, leading newspaper in India.

On this issue PM Modi has given full freedom to Indian forces to attack on Pakistan which was also an unanswered question yet. And the US Ambassador Kenneth Juster has tweeted 7.42pm on February 14- just an hour after Pulwama attack. Juster tweet “Strongly condemns” the attack. “The United States stands alongside India in confronting terror and defeating it” #KashmirTerrorAttack.-

In the over all coverage of Pulwama, social media also played a vital role, I must say. Due to freedom of speak and expression-people of India has too much freedom to express which some times creates problem for government and public itself. From my point of view, Pulwama attack is a story now, as media is too much focus on Loksabha election 2019. During Pulwama attack , a wing commander in Indian Air Force has been caught by Pakistani Army who was lately released but during his stay at Pakistan, Indian media has been irresponsible to share his address, name, picture of family, while in one of video released by Pakistani Army he deny to share his information. And on the other hand people felt so happy to share his personal information along with full address, which was not a proud act by Indian media and public. And fake news in whatsapp during Pulwama attack has created a massive scene also which shows, “facts were less important to some than the emotional desire to bolster national identity”. In this case if government wants to help people they can’t because people has developed trust on emotional ground of social media content.



## **Headlines of some newspaper on Pulwama attack-**

Headlines and Bias: How Are India and Pakistan Depicted?

Pulwama attack; India mourns Kashmir dead-14/2/2019

Kashmir attacks; Bomb kills 40 Indian paramilitary police in convoy-

15/2/2019 India accuses Pakistan in Deadly Kashmir attack-16/2/2019

After terror, polarizing politics in Kashmir- 23/2/2019 India-

Pakistan crisis; why they keep fighting over Kashmir 27/2/2019

We will always live in fear; what life is like for civilians in Kashmir 1/3/2019

Pulwama terror attack; suicide bomber drives SUV packed with 300kg explosives into CRPF bus, 44 men martyred 15/2/2019

Pulwama terror attacks; PM Narendra Modi takes Pakistan head on, says perpetrators will 'pay for it'. 17/2/2019

Pulwama attack played role in listing of Masood Azhar as global terrorist: MEA 19/2/2019

Awantipora attack; your oppression fuels our Jihad, 'says Fidayeen attacker in video. 15/2/2019

Virtual SIMs used in Pulwama terror attack; India to approach US for help 2/3/2019

"Pak in Denial" India disappointed with Islamabad's response to Pulwama attack dossier. 2/3/2019

Pulwama attack' Pakistan says no terror camps exist on 22 locations shared by India. 17/2/2019

Govt blames Pak after local youth rams CRPF convoy with IED- packed SUV in worst terror hit on J&K forces. 3/3/2019

PM Narendra Modi pays tribute to CRPF jawans killed in Pulwama attack 15/2/2019

Kashmir attack coverage; UN says those behind Pulwama attack must be brought to justice.15/2/2019

Pulwama attack; Evidence shows Pakistan's mentoring of jaish continues 16/2/2019 Pulwama

terror attach coverage; Amit Shah pays tribute to CRPF jawan maneswar/15/2/2019 Pulwama

attack coverage; customs duty n imports from Pakistan raised to 200% after India withdraws MFN status. 19/2/2019

Pulwama attack played a role in Masood Azhar's listing as global terrorist; Govt 17/2/2019

JeM claiming responsibility of Pulwama attack raises questions over role of ISI: US expert.  
19/2/2019

Pulwama attack Highlights : Rajnath Singh hits our at 'elements' in Valley funded by ISI,  
Pakistan 15/2/2019

India won't tolerate terror: Rajnath Singh 16/2/2019

From Pulwama to Balakot: A new line of Control

17/2/2019 The challenges in Pulwama attack 16/2/2019

**Conclusion-** After analyzing the content of five newspapers- The Times of India, The Hindu, Hindustan times, Indian Express, Pioneer on Pulwama attack, I can say that Indian media did not played responsible role. 40 CRPF Jawan's were killed on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2019 at Pulwama terror attack, in which national and international media has reacted in a particular way, which has been known to world since long. As per this piece of observation, I found the act was brutal but Indian media played vital role to miss lead as well. As its time of Loksabha election in India, Pulwama attack somehow becomes a political issue rather a terror attack. Though it's a fact that whenever Indian media talks about Pakistan it works like ghee in fire, which happens same it Pulwama attack. The Times of India, The Hindu, Hindustan times, Indian Express, Pioneer, all newspaper has been example of this fact.

Somehow this situation really helping present government to collect votes on present Loksabha election, as the Indian PM has dare to act of UN secretary general Antonio Guterres's words ; We strongly condemn today's attack in Jammu and Kashmir Pulwama district...' but Delhi wanted stronger language. On 19<sup>th</sup> February 2019 Guterer's spokesperson said. "We are deeply concerned at the increase in tensions between the two countries in the wake of the attack on Indian security personal on 14<sup>th</sup> February in Pulwama." In the whole attack story Indian media has been ignored about the fact why it happens and it focused on "it happens" then went to present political zone. As Pulwama attack becomes the most important card for BJP -leading political party of India, And people start promoting Modi "fir ek bari Modi sarkar". Some even saying "Modi hai to sambhav hai". Indian media start claiming that only Modi (Present PM of India) has dared to react on this situation which he did. But as per my observation any of Indian government must have done the same with Pakistan what Modi did. Still the question remains

unanswered why and how Pulwama attack happens after so much security. It's a big question mark on Indian security channel

Reference:

My observation of five newspapers, The Times of India, The Hindustan times, The Hindu, Pioneer, The Indian Express 15<sup>th</sup> February to 2 March.

The Indian Express

The Hindustan times

The Hindu

Pioneer

The Kashmir wala

The Times of India

The quint.com

[www.tribune.com](http://www.tribune.com)

[www.news18.com](http://www.news18.com)

