

From Crisis to Liberation: Indian Media and 1971 Bangladesh War

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Abstract

The Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971 was one of the most significant events in the history of South Asia. The 1971 War resulted in the emergence of Bangladesh following a political crisis, military repression, and interstate conflict (Sisson & Rose, 1990; Raghavan, 2013). Within this unfolding crisis, India emerged as a significant regional actor. When Bangladeshi mass people were murdered by the military of Pakistan, India intervened and sent army to fight against Pakistani soldiers and supported freedom fighters (Drong, 2016)

However, historical media research shows that newspapers often contribute to the construction of national narratives about war and identity. During any war or crisis, the media becomes an essential source to provide objective and neutral information (Ryan, 2009). The way Indian media represented 1971 allowed for a better understanding of how public memory and identity are shaped through journalistic ways, particularly in times of conflict.

This study analyzes how the war was covered in Indian media during 1971. It identifies variations in media narrative across news reports. It will use a mixed approach to present the 1971 conflict in two leading Indian English dailies (The Times of India and The Indian Express) between October to December 1971. Using qualitative coverage analysis, the study examines news reports of the front pages of both newspapers to identify dominant themes, narrative patterns, and representations of key actors. Data served by interviews of the journalists also. Data will be based on primary and secondary sources. Particular attention is given to shifts in language, emphasis, and thematic focus. The results suggest a clear progression of coverage through all three phases, with a notable move from of the refugee problem and diplomatic developments in October, to increased military activity in November, following its formal declaration on December 3, 1971, in December.

INTRODUCTION

In 1971, Bangladesh witnessed one of the significant historical moments which gave birth of an independent nation through a brutal nine-month liberation war against West Pakistan. Political tensions between East and West Pakistan after the 1970 general elections developed the crisis, when the Awami League was not permitted to form the government even if they won a majority. This

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large-scale violence and conflict lead to pressure millions of refugees to enter India.

The Bangladeshi freedom fighters (Mukti Bahini) had been battling Pakistani military since March 1971, and India entered the war in December, accelerating the path to liberation. This geopolitical turmoil, characterized by significant human rights violations and mass displacement, profoundly influenced regional dynamics and necessitated a complex array of media responses (O'Mahoney, 2017) [11].

Bangladeshi media under wartime conditions played a decisive role in portraying India as a liberator and humanitarian ally, while denouncing Pakistan for its genocidal actions in East Pakistan (Mascarenhas, 1971; Rashid, 2013) [6] [14]. The geopolitical context of this conflict, particularly the involvement of India, shaped separate media narratives that permit critical analysis (Ahmed, 2025). Specifically, the Indian media's portrayal of the war significantly influenced public perception and diplomatic debate. Indian media were utterly important to rely on for Bangladeshi people at that time and Akashvani radio that mattered the most ("1971 Mujibnagar and International Media," 2026) [23]. This study aims to examine the coverage of 1971 by Indian Newspaper. This research seeks to uncover the narratives that reveal how Indians understood the 1971 war.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this research lies in its contribution to understanding how wartime events were presented during a critical historical moment. In previous studies, focused analysis of Indian newspaper coverage during the final months of the conflict remains relatively limited. Existing literature found out different angles of the Liberation War of 1971. However, detailed analysis of Indian print media coverage during the October–December phase appears underexplored. This study adds how information, national concerns, and war developments were interpreted in real time. This study is limited to a selected sample of newspapers and does not claim to represent the entire Indian media landscape of 1971. The analysis is restricted to selected period and does not examine earlier phases of the crisis.

Objectives

- To analyse how the war was covered in Indian Newspaper.
- To identify variations in media narrative across news report.

Hypotheses

- H1. As the war progressed toward December 1971, Indian newspapers gave more attention to military and national security issues.
- H2. Earlier reports focused more on the refugee crisis and humanitarian situation.
- H3. Bangladesh coverage did not get escalation in the front-page lead position.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The birth of Bangladesh has been portrayed by past literature as a product of historical coincidence and elite political failure (Raghavan, 2013) [13]. Narrative of previous scholar's has significantly shaped the narrative of the war, leading to contrasting descriptions of the events by Bangladesh and Pakistan (Ranjan, 2016) [16]. Sarmila Bose (2011) [3] underlines the need to include the voices of Pakistani soldiers and Bangladeshi freedom fighters to make the historical accounts fair and unbiased. In both countries, the diverging narratives display the subjective nature of memory and identity and how this is often used as a tool for political mobilization (Braithwaite & D'Costa, 2018) [4].

The conflict between East and West Pakistan has its origins in the 1947 partition of India, a decision that inevitably led to the disintegration and partition of Pakistan. The creation of Bangladesh, an independent nation, is considered by many analysts as the final culmination of the political process which began with this partition of 1947 (Murshed et al., 2011) [11]. The division brought about the two geographically dispersed regions with distinctly different cultural and linguistic values which fueled the independence struggle (Mookherjee, 2023) [9]. The liberation struggle had its roots in a political crisis, and later in the brutality of the Pakistani army on the civilians of Bangladesh. The Pakistani army together with the collaborators used various means of violence including rape against women

and later granted these victims of wartime rape with the title of Birangona in independent Bangladesh (Mookherjee, 2023) [9].

In the process of liberation of Bangladesh, known as Muktiyuddho, India plays a prominent role as regional actor. The reasons for India's intervention are that Pakistan had already shown her aggressive nature with war of 1965 and a human crisis was erupting in East Pakistan due to severe military actions on the Bengali nationalist (Schofield, 2007) [20]. Furthermore, the global arena was charged by Cold War factors and that time Soviet Union supported India and Bangladesh and China and US supported Pakistan (Mookherjee, 2023) [9]. All these actions lead to the creation of independent nation Bangladesh.

The media and political actors acquired the refugee crisis of about 10 million Bangladeshis who crossed to India as 'internal problem for India' (Gandhi, 1972) [6]. The silence of calling it 'genocide' was broken later as press continued with this narrative (Ahmed, 2025; Shad et al., 2021) [2] [21]. These show the significance of various types of media to build the understanding of the war and country's policies. In any war or crises, media is the best source of providing actual and fair information (Ryan, 2009) [18].

It is also important to examine the aspect of media bias during war and conflict as such depictions can be politically charged and driven by nationalistic agenda. The choice of narratives and themes during war is essential as they determine and cement particular interpretations of historical events (Ravikumar & Downey, 2025) [17].

Mokhtar's study on Anglo-American press coverage showed how newspaper photographs of war displayed by New York Times and The Times, influenced people's opinion and collective memory towards war and conflict (Mokhtar, 2020) [8]. Mukhopadhyay's analysis of the role of political cartoon in Bengali newspaper demonstrated that it helped to generate public opinion in favor of the war and that was why it influenced Indian foreign policy regarding Bangladesh (Mukhopadhyay, 2022) [10]. The research context is about the portrayal of the 1971 Liberation War in films in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, revealing the importance of national

narrative construction and collective memory (Tabassum et al., 2025) [23]. This matter is interesting because films have the potential to manipulate facts and hence influence perception and attitude of others on region, with relation to Geopolitics, thus leading to construction of national identities and memory (Tabassum et al., 2025) [23].

The study of the 1971 war has proved the newspaper not as an observer, but active agent of meaning making. Despite of this diverse literatures, focused analysis of Indian print media coverage during October to December 1971 was still underexplored, which seeks to address.

Theoretical Framework

The study is based on Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). This concept is important because it analyze the construction of social meaning, power relations and ideology through language in text (Fairclough, 1995) [24]. Through newspaper analysis, it goes beyond reporting facts and emphasizes on how facts are reported by examining choices in words, description of characters (victims or aggressors) and privilege certain view point over the others and how language naturalizes national interest. This is crucial for the study of media coverage of war.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a mixed method. Two top Indian English dailies i.e. The Times of India and The Indian Express have been used in this study. The chosen newspapers were selected on the basis of their circulation by using the purposive sampling method. The Times of India, the one of the leading Indian Dailies, circulation was 2,09,451 copies in 1974 (Manorama Year Book, 1975). The Indian Express circulated 4,12,025 copies in 1974, which was the largest amongst the Indian Newspapers. (Indian Press, 1976) (Rahman, 1981) [14]. Using qualitative coverage analysis, the study examines news reports of the front pages of both newspapers. This study has used purposive sampling selecting editions from the first 16th days of each month except December month sample taken up to 17th for surrender at December 16th. Semi structured interview was also



conducted with 10 senior journalists of Bangladesh and India.

Data Analysis : Front Page

This section provides an analysis of the front-page content of The Times of India (TOI) and The Indian Express (IE) across three distinct phases of the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War - October, November and December. Findings are organized by four analytical dimensions: volume of coverage, lead story prominence, visual coverage via photographs and cartoons and comparative analysis between the two papers. Interview data from two prominent Bangladeshi journalists is used throughout to provide context and lend support to archival findings.

Volume of Coverage across Three Phases

The data gathered for the front page clearly demonstrate a drastic and progressive escalation of coverage regarding Bangladesh for both papers throughout the conflict. The front-page total counts and lead story counts for TOI and IE are detailed in (Figure 1) Chart 1.

TOI covered Bangladesh with 31 front page stories during October, soaring to 104 in November (an increase of 235 percent) and peaking at 154 in December. IE also saw a rise in the volume of its coverage, publishing 57 front page items in October, 66 in November and an impressive 187 in December. The high counts in December demonstrate the massive volume of news that covered the period leading up to, and including, the formal declaration of war on December 3rd. The surge in the volume of stories in this third phase of coverage illustrates that the formal start of the hostilities was the critical marker, and that a gradual build-up of reporting was far from how both papers treated the developing crisis; there was rather an acceleration.

One particularly interesting observation here is the dramatic reversal between the October and

November phases. While IE led in volume with 57 front page articles in October, as opposed to TOI's 31, the opposite was true in November, when TOI reported an immense 104 stories to IE's 66. This reversal could indicate that the editors of The Times of India saw the changing situation with regards to borders and troop movements, the factors which most clearly drove the acceleration in coverage between the two phases, more acutely at that particular time. Another significant point of analysis is that after the reversal in November, the two papers swapped lead story places once again in December, IE now at the forefront with 187 stories to TOI's 154. This back and forth, and finally a significant jump, between the two papers in terms of volume over the course of the three months provides valuable information regarding which stories occupied the forefront for the two publications during the crisis and what drove their editorial decisions.

Lead Story Prominence

Examining lead story prominence, a similar, and perhaps even more striking, pattern emerges with regards to the increasing dominance of the Bangladesh crisis on the front pages of both TOI and IE. Lead stories, representing the decision of a newspaper's editor to declare a specific news item the most significant for the day, and thus the story deserving of the most prominently displayed position on the front page, demonstrate a sustained rise across the three phases. as shown in Figure.

TOI's progression for lead stories began with 6 in October, followed by 13 in November and culminating in 16 in December. The fact that in December, 16 lead stories were run over the span of 16 coded editions highlights just how central the crisis had become to TOI's editorial decisions; every single front page for The Times of India within the selected days of December treated Bangladesh as the number one story. This escalation is highly indicative of a shift in the editorial agenda-Bangladesh had been assigned an entirely new level of importance.

Table 1: Front Page Coverage Volume and Lead Stories

Phase	TOI Front Page	IE Front Page	TOI Lead Stories	IE Lead Stories
October (1-16)	31	57	6	6
November (1-16)	104	66	13	8
December (1-17)	154	187	16	14

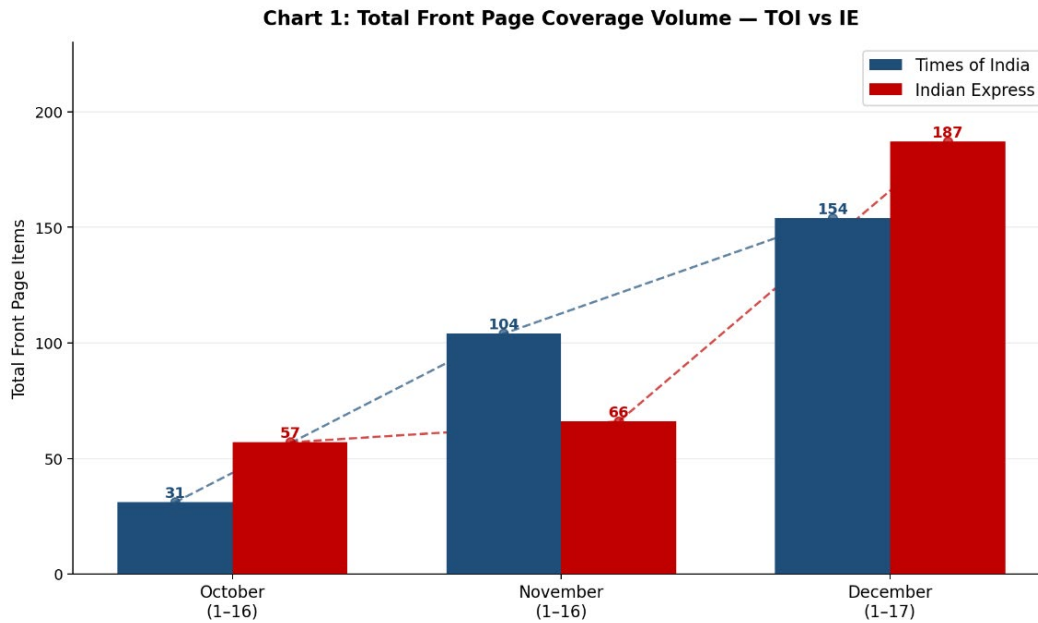


Figure 1: Total Front Page Coverage Volume, TOI vs IE

IE's leads also climbed steadily, from 6 in October to 8 in November and 14 in December. IE's 14 leads over 15 coded December editions similarly indicates an unprecedented level of front page centrality by this point, with all but one edition running the Bangladesh crisis as its main story. The isolated exceptions in the leads highlight the magnitude of the dominance across the board; both papers had assigned a critical amount of prominence to the Bangladesh story.

The difference in the leads in November between the two papers is again reminiscent of the volume issue, although in reverse order of prominence. While The Times of India jumped from 6 leads in October to 13 leads in November, The Indian Express only increased from 6 to 8. TOI's increased editorial decision making to highlight certain stories that focused on the growing border crisis, specifically mentioning Urri, Mymensingh, and the blocking of the borders, explain why such an increase occurred in lead stories. IE's lower growth from 6 to 8 stories may have been an indication that while the Indian Express was aware of the growing crisis, their primary focus for the time still remained on diplomatic and political events as opposed to the escalating militaristic developments on the borders that so significantly drove the increase in lead stories for TOI.

Visual Coverage

The third important element we examined were photographs and political cartoons published on the front page, both individually, and combined for an overall visual component analysis. Photographs are crucial as visual aids to document and authenticate events; they give readers a snapshot of the reality occurring and are inherently emotionally charged. Cartoons are primarily used for the purposes of humour and political commentary and can work to shape public opinion through visual devices like metaphor and caricature.

Photographs

The quantity of photographs published, like that of total stories and lead stories, also saw a dramatic spike in December (Table 2). In October and November combined, The Times of India published only 1 photograph and 2, respectively (total 3), and The Indian Express 2 photos in October and 1 in November (total 3). By December, these numbers soared: 16 photographs from TOI and 11 from IE for a total of 27. (Figure 3). Specific photos captured at this time tell important stories regarding what was deemed noteworthy by editors. In the case of TOI, it is crucial to note a particular December 3rd article

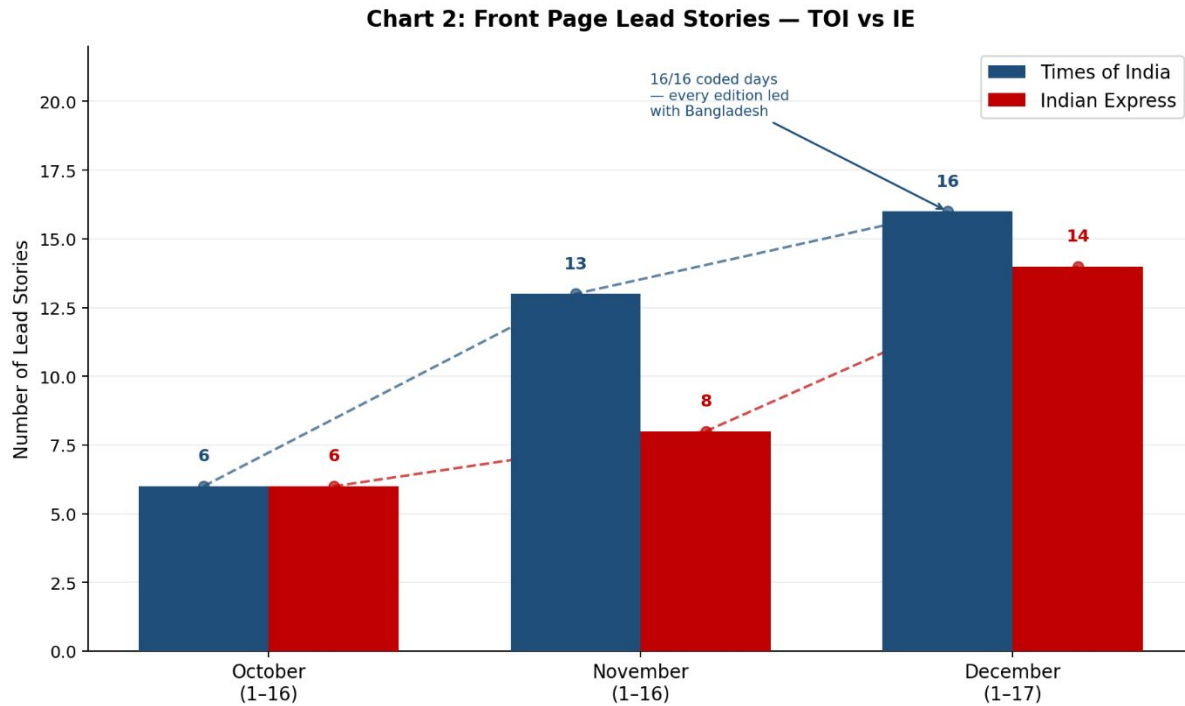


Figure 2: Lead Stories, TOI vs IE

with two photographs of Indian troops entering Agartala, signifying the beginnings of official military engagement. Another December 10th photograph illustrated the advance to Dacca with maps that provided visual cues for the reader as to the progression of the military advance. This article also included three images of troops advancing. Perhaps the most critical photo from all sample weeks captured was the surrender on December 12th. With the Indian Express, the December 17th edition offered 5 photographs all pertaining to the surrender, and liberation celebration occurring in the Indian parliament. With regards to the images used, both the explicit focus on Indian troops in December, and the inclusion of detailed maps representing India's movement across the border, work to illustrate the Indian narrative that was being constructed by the papers during the war.

Political Cartoons

The volume of political cartoons published provides perhaps the most dramatic indicator of a shift in press coverage, especially when analyzing The Times of India. In October and November combined, TOI published only one political cartoon. This rapidly escalated to 14 in December, a stark contrast and a clear representation of the change in editorial climate. (Figure 4). IE, while more consistent with its publications of cartoons earlier on, saw an increase of its own; one cartoon in October, one in November, and ten in December. Taken together, the cartoon figures for December (14 for TOI and 10 for IE) show a transformation of front-page visuals, from relatively few to an explosion of critical imagery in both papers. It is difficult to separate these developments from the larger unfolding events; the war has clearly

Table 2: Visual Elements- Photographs and Cartoons

Phase	TOI Photos	IE Photos	TOI Cartoons	IE Cartoons	Total Photos	Total Cartoons
October (1-16)	1	2	0	1	3	1
November (1-16)	2	1	1	1	3	2
December (1-17)	16	11	14	10	27	24

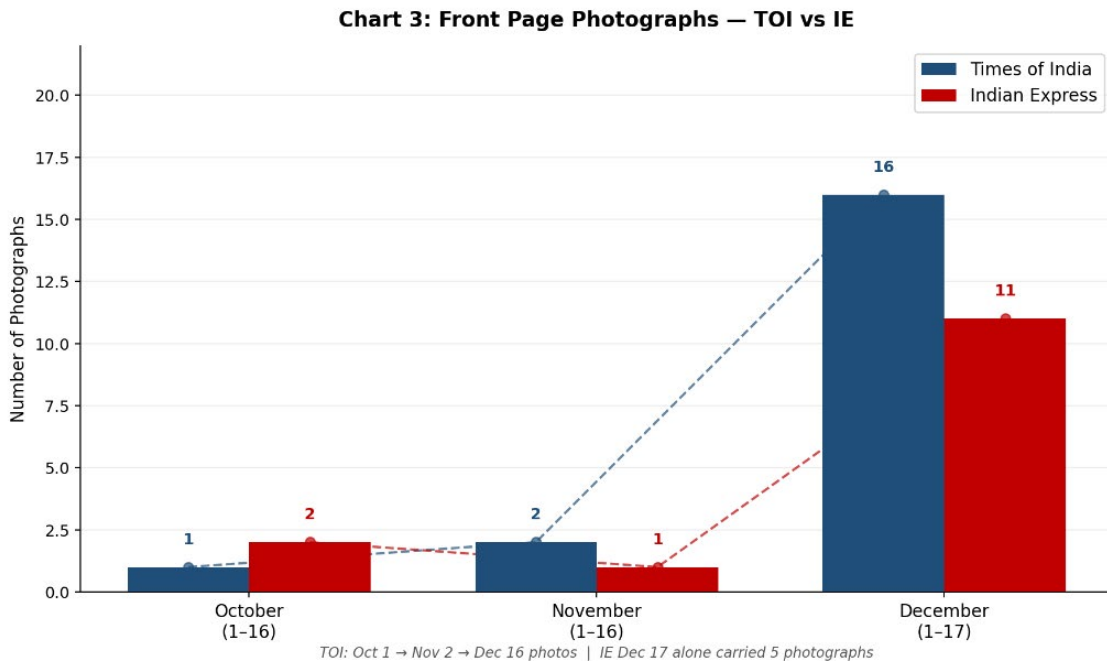


Figure 3: Front Page Photographs, TOI vs IE

reached a critical and overwhelming stage where such satirical elements become part of mainstream news production. Political cartoons traditionally act to ridicule, satirize, or lampoon individuals or events perceived to be worthy of mockery, often working as a medium to bolster domestic support by dehumanizing enemy figures or celebrating the strength and morality of one's own country. The near-total absence of cartoons in the first two phases of coverage for The Times of India followed by such an abundance in the third may suggest that the editors believed the public to be at a stage of information and opinion receptivity which allowed for this type of coverage to take hold.

Comparative Analysis

The most profound overlap between The Times of India and The Indian Express can be seen during the month of December, as it represented the month of the highest coverage for both volumes, lead stories, photos, and cartoons. This intense focus during the final phase represents a time where the formal outbreak of the war, and India's role within it, was no longer ignorable, and every day brought significant, major news worthy of the lead position and extensive visual display. One of the most pronounced points

of contrast is apparent between the two papers in November, where The Times of India featured 104 total articles, and 13 lead stories to The Indian Express's 66 stories and 8 leads. This divergence shows that the editorial departments of the two papers saw the events that played out in November, specifically concerning troop movements and border tensions, with different degrees of front-page worthiness; while both newspapers covered the war, TOI's editorial page appears to have placed greater value on these specific militaristic developments, making sure they were at the very top of the daily news agenda. In contrast, it could be assumed that IE's editorial departments maintained a priority towards diplomatic and political developments.

The specific issues each paper covered varied, although many commonalities existed. In October, both papers reported on the UN and Soviet actions; TOI on their bids for Mujib's release, and IE on the talks of a political solution between Podgorny and Yahya Khan. Both papers covered the story of Pakistani diplomat defections in October, with TOI reporting on a specific diplomat's defection, and IE on a theft of state documents pertaining to Bangladesh from the Pakistani government. In December, both papers closely covered India's official recognition

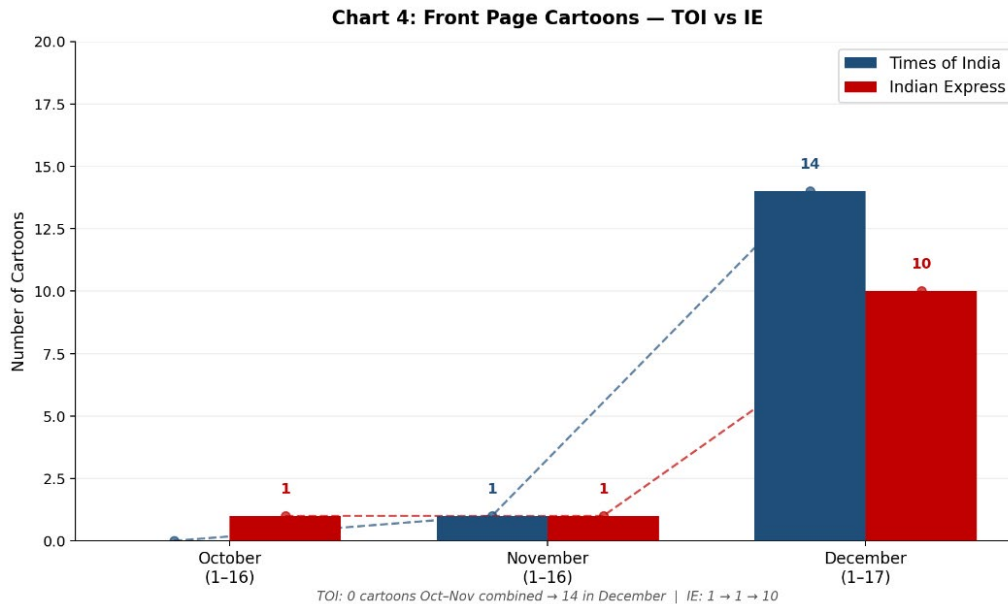


Figure 4: Chart 4 - Front Page Cartoons, TOI vs IE

of Bangladesh; TOI with its printing of the first map of Bangladesh on December 7th, and IE with the story of the Bangladesh flag raising on Hyderabad, showing its coverage was both localized and in the heart of India itself. The sheer intensity of coverage in December is exemplified by the November 17th edition, which, like many other examples throughout this analysis, highlights both the similarities in, and subtle differences between, the coverage presented by each newspaper. This single edition, in particular for IE, included a remarkable nineteen articles on 43 columns, with five photographs demonstrating the profound impact of the surrender.

Data Analysis: Editorial

This section presents an editorial analysis of the Times of India (TOI) and the Indian Express (IE) in the three phases of the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War. The findings are presented around three axes: editorial volume and distribution, editorial content and language, and a comparative analysis of both papers' editorials' standpoints. The interviews with senior journalists are incorporated as they

support the textual data obtained from archives, as reproduced in the front pages of both papers in Figure 5."

Editorial Volume and Distribution Across Three Phases

The editorial statistics of TOI and IE for October, November, and December 1971 are shown in Table 3. (previously misprinted as shown in Table 1, which is the frontpage coverage/lead story table, not the editorial output table) Throughout the sample period, TOI published 12 editorials whereas IE published 19; a difference of seven editorials that is significant, as both papers received coverage of the same events on the same coded days. However, the phase-based distribution is more revealing. TOI produced 5 editorials in October, no editorials in November and 7 in December, whereas IE published 1 in October, 4 in November and 14 in December. It is evident that the two papers followed quite distinct editorial trajectories.

It is pertinent to note that no editorial was produced by TOI in November. This is interesting

Table 3: Editorial Output — TOI and IE by Phase (October–December 1971)

Phase	TOI Editorials	IE Editorials	Combined
October (1–16)	5	1	6
November (1–16)	0	4	4
December (1–17)	7	14	21

because November 1971 represents the period when diplomatic as well as military tension was highest due to the border clashes at Uri, defection of Pakistani officials abroad and mounting global tensions over the region. This restraint stands in stark contrast to the proactive stance of IE which published 4 editorials in November, discussing the crisis in Bangladesh as the most burning regional issue and calling Tyabji's statement of dismissing the refugees as 'stuff and nonsense' incorrect; and even discussing world leaders' responsibility to solve the crisis.

The fact that IE published 14 editorials over the 15 days that were scanned in December highlights the intensity of its coverage that phase nearly all issues of IE published on these days carried an editorial. This single fact, makes IE's coverage qualitatively distinct from all other editorial productions over the same period.

Editorial Content and Language: Phase by Phase Analysis

Not just the volume of editorials, the actual language and content used within them are key to understanding how the two papers constructed the narrative surrounding the Bangladesh crisis. Critical Discourse Analysis was employed to identify the patterns within the editorials with regard to language, actor representation and ideological positioning in each phase.

October 1971: During October, the 5 editorials of TOI analysed Pakistani strategy and implications of an impending Pakistani invasion. The language adopted reflects a nationally cautious and defensive posture and considers the Bangladesh crisis in terms of Indian security rather than Bangladeshi liberation. For example, the editorial of October 6, discussed Pakistani military strategy and the one published on October 13 explicitly talked about Indian security in relation to Pakistani invasion, thus positioning India as a reactant rather than a proactive actor at this stage of the crisis.

Despite having significantly higher volume in terms of news reportage of the crisis (57 items), IE published only one editorial. This editorial was

relatively understated, reflecting a hesitant start to editorial coverage in October where even the publication of one editorial spread over 13 days suggests that IE had not yet developed the editorial commitment towards the crisis as it would do later.

November 1971: November is critical for the study in that it highlights a fundamentally different editorial approach taken by the two newspapers. IE produced 4 editorials that phase while there was complete absence of any editorial in the entire issue from TOI. While there might be various explanations for the editorial restraint of TOI in November when the political and diplomatic tension were at its highest and before war had been formally declared; it is evident that the editorial board was either waiting for the right time to comment or deliberately opted to stay silent during this highly volatile period. The 4 editorials of IE clearly reflect an actively involved editorial board which discussed the Bangladesh crisis as the primary concern, questioned Tyabji's denial of the suffering of the refugees and debated the global political leadership's responsibility during the crisis.

December 1971: December brought a qualitatively different editorial approach on the part of both newspapers and is the most intensified and politically charged in the whole sample period. However, although both newspapers escalated editorial coverage on formal declaration of war in December, their content and language were significantly different.

The 7 editorials that were produced by TOI in December analyzed the military and political dimensions of the war and highlighted the consequences of India's formal recognition of Bangladesh. A fullwidth editorial published on December 4, represents the maximum endorsement that TOI could confer upon the matter. Nevertheless, the tone was generally considered institutional and cautious in its approach, and was framed more in terms of the Indian geopolitical situation and political repercussions rather than celebration or even a fervent support for the ongoing liberation war.

In December, the 14 editorials of IE were more emotionally charged. The editorial of December 7 'Jai Bangla Desh' is arguably the most openly

partisan editorial in the whole sample. It adopted the nationalist song of liberation itself as the headline, and this represented a departure from the conventionally acceptable news reportage and entry into ideologically charged reporting that Fairclough (1995) writes about, the language of which becomes involved in creating its own political reality. Furthermore, on December 10, Indira Gandhi was described as 'emancipator of Bangladesh' on the editorial page. The phrase describes her as a liberator, a revolutionary rather than a leader involved in a complex geopolitical crisis; this indicates a move beyond the bounds of mere reporting and into open and fervent advocacy of a particular political stand.

Linguistic development was evident even from TOI's December 17 issue where the newspaper adopted the spelling 'Bangla Desh' rather than 'Bangladesh,' a subtle but significant change of narrative towards accepting the independent status of the new nation. Conversely, on December 17, IE published 19 items totalling 43 column inches with 5 photographs reflecting the Pakistani surrender and the victory in Bangladesh, which was the largest newspaper section ever published by any newspaper over the whole sample period.

In addition to the coverage analysis, this research uses interview data, of ten senior journalists, which provides additional context for understanding the results discussed above.

When asked about the role of Indian newspapers during the 1971 Liberation War, interviewee first establishes the overall political context of the period. Concerning media, before the war Indian newspapers did not reach East Pakistan. So, people were generally ignorant about the portrayal of Bangladesh in India; Bengali media had supremacy and no significant impact of Urdu media of Pakistan was there in Bengali public. However, with the initiation of war and flow of refugees into India, the readers of Indian print media among the fighters and the refugees gained some awareness. Akashvani Kolkata was a major source of inspiration and information during the Liberation War and also the Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra later on was broadcast from border areas such as near Agartala. The Indian media, as per his views, carried the plight of the distressed people and the activities of the

Mukti Bahini quite boldly and democratically. He clarifies that in that phase of war even language had also new implications. Words usually deemed positive can have very negative connotations, like the word 'razakar' (a word that denotes 'collaborator'). When inquired about the potential influence of the Pakistani administration on newspapers during the war, the speaker argues that Bengali papers became critical of Pakistani administration after the 1969 mass uprising, Pakistani media had little access and even official communication networks broke down when the war started, he says, on the contrary Indian newspapers always sided with Bangladesh, during the war their articles had a tendency of giving strong positive news and there was massive press freedom during the period. The overall perception is that Indian newspapers supported the liberation war, although they also had their own political nuances and preferences; the newspaper that made remarkable impact, according to the speaker, was not just Ananda Bazar Patrika but all newspapers. He believes that while newspapers had an impact, the support of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, the people and press of India were instrumental.

Another interviewee also agrees with non-availability of Indian Newspaper in 1971. On the role of Indian newspapers during the 1971 Liberation War, although radio was far more popular, the interview reveals that Indian newspapers were not accessible in East Pakistan after the 1965 war between India and Pakistan, thus, they were unavailable during the Liberation War, until they became accessible after independence of Bangladesh, though, Akashvani (All India Radio) was a vital source of news.

He confirms from a Bangladeshi journalistic standpoint that Indian media's stance towards Bangladesh was active, supportive and constant throughout the entire period and was never neutral. He emphasized that, "Indian newspapers and media were always on the side of Bangladesh all through the period. And when Operation Searchlight began, they became even more forceful." Thus, from the very beginning to the end, the role of Indian media was favourable to the Bangladesh Liberation War, through various mediums, to convey news of the one crore refugees fleeing to India and the eventual fall of Dacca where the journalists from Ananda bazar



Figure 5:

Patrika covered the events with major headlines and “Sangbad Probaho” transmitted emotional and analytical reportage on the war, Debabrata Bandyopadhyay becoming particularly popular with the masses in Bangladesh during that period.

According to another journalist, the Indian media’s support within a structural framework where the government, public opinion and media all had parallel agendas, “In India, the government, public opinion and media were all aligned all three were in support of Bangladesh. So, they could cover it much more freely.” This unique alignment facilitated extensive and unbiased coverage. He provides a nuanced perspective acknowledging the existence of inaccurate reporting and tensions after independence that temper a purely positive recounting. Following the India-Pakistan war in 1965, attempts to instigate anti-India sentiment among Bengalis failed; the coverage focused on Bangladesh’s actions and internal happenings,

although He does not delve deeper into any instances of misleading reporting by Indian media. Altogether, the convergence of Indian media coverage with international reporting channels it through which Indian media had its most significant global impact. “Indian coverage could be seen as biased but when international journalists independently confirmed the same events, it carried far more global weight.” The international media predominantly operated from and through India during the war.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

Although, news relating to Bangladesh featured in front pages regularly, it failed to progressively increase its lead in terms of ranking on the front page. In fact, the statistics presented in section B indicates a fluctuating pattern of coverage which shows Bangladesh competing with the most

important political and foreign news on the front page. Although during the month of December the situation was given high prominence during the escalation of the war, the evidence does not indicate a monotonic increase. Hence the proposition stating that Bangladesh news is increasingly dominating leads is rejected. The figures indicate a progressive intensification of volume of articles from the newspapers on Bangladesh over time, which culminated during the course of the conflict. The month of December shows highest count of articles and thus depicts that editorial decisions are responsive to unfolding political events, instead of showing a steady monotonic trend. Visually photographs and graphics depicted images that clearly illustrated themes of humanitarian crises, refugees invasion, war and military action. Though images were selectively used for certain prominent news and did not feature prominently with every important story reported, yet these were an important editorial instrument in emphasizing certain aspects of the war. Both newspaper articles showed sympathetic frame towards Bangladesh in portraying humanitarian crisis, refugee problem and act of aggression from Pakistan, which are very similar with the country's official stand. This suggests media discourse also bears an imprint of national interest.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

The result of this study mainly supports the hypothesized outcomes. Hypothesis 1 is confirmed; the two papers were indeed becoming increasingly aware of military events and national security issue over time, towards December, which could be traced by the spike of lead articles and war-reporting after November, leading up to December. Hypothesis 2 is confirmed; news stories regarding refugee crisis and diplomatic issue related to Bangladesh occupied most of the space of October coverage in both papers. Hypothesis 3 is rejected; Bangladesh coverage increasingly dominated the front-page lead position. Both papers show clear progressive increase in lead story dominance.

CONCLUSION

This analysis has illustrated that The Bangladesh Liberation War was showed in terms of human crisis through the months of October and November for both papers, developing into a conflict showed predominantly in military/border terms as the war grew in intensity, until by December both papers had shifted to war-centred framing by the end of their coverage. The Indian Express's commitment remained more exclusive to human crisis during the earlier two months and presented a sharp contrast through December, whereas the shift towards strategic framing was more evident from October in The Times of India. Both papers show tremendous growth in coverage as well as placement on the page/top column and in their editorials, especially from November onwards until December where there is clearly an acceleration of this trend, especially with a significantly larger output from The Indian Express and it's a more politically charged editorial showed than The Times of India. Therefore, future study should broaden up its chronological stage to engage with one of the most significant conflicts in South Asian history.

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