

MEDIA, STATE AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE : THE PRESS  
CONSTRUCTION OF TERRORISM IN THE INDIAN PUNJAB.

Thesis submitted for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
at the University of Leicester

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JULY 1995

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis could not have been written without the support and encouragement of friends. Some of my editors and fellow reporters at the Hindustan Times and India Today helped make up my mind about undertaking a 'serious' study of media and terrorism. Many politicians, members of insurgent organisations and police officers in Punjab, who were much more than just sources of news to me, and whose obituaries I was forced to write, inspired me to explore further.

Anders Hansen provided his valuable guidance and inspiration for hard work. He made sure one was grounded in theory and proficient in necessary computer programmes before touching the data for the analysis. If there are any mistakes of any sort, they are in spite of him. Sunrita Sen has been with me all through the journey. She checked the manuscript, raised sharp questions and did more than her share of house work. Her intellectual and emotional contribution to this thesis and the whole process of learning is immense. Having joined us appropriately in the middle of the writing up, little Ishan helped by sleeping through most of it.

British Council made this research possible by awarding the Nehru Centenary Fellowship. Members of staff and fellow researchers at CMCR, University of Leicester, particularly Prof. James D. Halloran, Annabelle Shreberny Mohammadi, Olga Linne, Roger Dickinson and Ralph Negrine have their contribution as well. Raman Nanda and Pervaiz Alam made sure I did not get carried away with academic jargon and Mahmoud Tarabay, Balwinder Singh and Sonia Bathla ensured I did not get away with journalistic simplifications.

The seminars I presented at the CMCR, Leicester; Queen Elizabeth House, Oxford and the Centre for South Asian Studies, Cambridge, helped me understand my subject better and the part-time broadcasting I did at the BBC World Service gave me the financial support to live in London to access my source material. I also wish to thank members of staff at the India Office Library of Records, Colindale newspaper library, School of Oriental and African Studies and at the Leicester University library. I owe special gratitude to insurgents, politicians, police officers and journalists who gave me long interviews and to friends in Amritsar who connected me to them.

I owe special thanks to my parents and Sunrita's parents, Dr Sunanda Sen, Mr Gyaneshwar Chaturvedi, and friends and teachers in Mathura, Agra, Delhi and various other places.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

For centuries India has been seen and portrayed as an enigma to the world. Its archetypal mysticism, its extreme diversity, and Gandhian 'Ahimsa' (non-violence) comply with the stereotype. Beneath the veneer of this fascinating image, there is another India, struggling to stay united and democratic. With scores of nationalities, sub-nationalities and ethnic, tribal and vernacular groups spread all over the sub-continent, social conflicts and political violence are major and recurring problems.

The Indian state's reaction to violence and insurgency keeps changing with political situations. The official action is sometimes responsive to peoples' anxieties but mostly it is synonymous with the use of force and questionable methods. The country may seem to be breaking apart with the sheer magnitude of violence and social conflicts but in the process it seems to be learning to cope with political dissent and is arguably finding more civilised ways to deal with insurgency. India is also among very few developing countries with strong traditions of democracy and an independent press. Even the electronic media which worked under the control of the Information and Broadcasting Ministry since independence, is now being decontrolled and privatised.

In Kashmir, in the extreme north of the country and in Assam, Manipur, Nagaland and Tripura, in the north-east, armed insurgency began several decades ago. In the relatively prosperous northern state of Punjab, where the Nehruvian dream of the Green Revolution became a success in the sixties, the first signs of political violence surfaced in the late seventies.<sup>1</sup> In the next few years, the violent campaign of the Sikh rebels made news all over the world and stayed on in headlines for more than a decade, either for massacres and hijackings by insurgents or for violations of human rights by the security forces. India's Delhi-based national press and Punjab's own regional press in Punjabi, Hindi and English languages reported little else once 'terrorism' became a daily occurrence. Most news items about India to appear in the international press in the mid eighties were on or about 'terrorism' in Punjab.

The genesis of terrorism in Punjab calls for separate research.<sup>2</sup> Opinion is divided over whether the last decade's violence, in which more than 20,000 people were

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<sup>1</sup> Green revolution stands for an agriculture-oriented development programme initiated in North India after independence. Punjab was in the forefront of the revolution and it continues to be the nation's granary.

<sup>2</sup> The genesis of 'terrorism' and other related questions are discussed in Chapter two.



killed, could be referred to as 'terrorism.' As a part of their struggle for freedom, armed supporters of the Khalistan movement used an extensively violent strategy, coupled with a nebulous religio-political ideology, which created an atmosphere of insecurity and terror all over North India. No walk of life seemed to be untouched by violence and insurgency. The victims included people of both Hindu and Sikh communities, state officials, security personnel, editors and journalists and even hawkers and distributors of certain newspapers. Most notable victims of this violence included the former Indian Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi, a former Chief of the Indian Army, General A S Vaidya, famous Sikh politician and former Akali Dal President, Harchand Singh Longowal and two successive editors of Punjab's biggest Hindi language paper, *Punjab Kesari*. The violent campaign for Khalistan was met with stern official violence by the security forces amid charges of human rights violations. Now the situation is said to be relatively calm and peaceful, even though India's Punjab problem is far from over.

#### THE RESEARCH PROBLEM :

The political debate on the media coverage of terrorism in India has largely been of the media-indictment nature. The media are often accused of adding fuel to fire by giving 'undue' publicity to terrorism. The state wants the media to appreciate that its security forces are being dragged into an unconventional warfare. Ministers and bureaucrats expect journalists to defend the government in uncomfortable situations. The argument is that terrorism threatens survival of the state and democracy, and hence it imperils the very existence of an 'independent' media. The state is also sensitive about the media exposures of human rights violations. They insist that excesses are a painful necessity in a 'war-like' situation. The insurgent organisations too look at the media in a similarly polarised way. Journalists and their organisations are seen either as allies of the 'peoples' struggle,' or as part and parcel of state's conspiracy against them.

The very role of the media in political violence is a problematic. The academic community is divided over the contagion effect of the media coverage of terrorism. Some researchers have found it to be logically consistent while others have called it a dangerous and misleading proposition. Popular among politicians and opinion leaders are common convictions like the media coverage only glorifies terrorism, or even worse, over-simplifications like stopping the oxygen of publicity would kill terrorism. It is also argued that terrorists indulge in their actions only to attract the media's

attention. The media-indictment approach offers an inbuilt suggestion for controlling the coverage, either by statutory or voluntary censorship.

In liberal democratic societies, terrorism and counter-terrorism exist in a complex scenario whereby each is used for justifying the other. Organisations of what is hailed as 'free' media also work under tremendous pressures. Incidents of 'terrorism' and 'counter-terrorism' are reported under strain, influence and coercion from governmental, proprietorial, social, political and commercial interest groups. Besides, journalists are seldom free from caste, class and cultural prejudices prevalent in their society. It is through all these factors acting on journalists' minds at conscious, unconscious or sub-conscious levels, along with a strict set of trade practices, that some events become news whereas others do not. The media coverage of terrorism is, therefore, not just an account of random observations by journalists but a systematic process of construction of reality through selective omissions and commissions in which participants of the conflict play an essential role.

Media's selective perceptions in a terrorism-affected society invite allegations of biased and one-sided reporting. A shadow of doubt is also cast on other democratic institutions such as the judiciary, legislature and law enforcement agencies. A polarised society develops two diametrically opposite ways of looking at everything, including perpetrators and victims of violence. The murkiness of it all creates a serious crisis of credibility for both the media and state. It also throws up myriad myths and over-simplifications about ways to tackle dissent and alienation that threaten to spawn a rebellion. Consistently, one set of arguments is that the media help in spreading violence and, therefore, something should be done about it. The other is that any attempt at censorship would only undermine the people's right to know and their capacity to eventually intervene in the political process in some way or the other.

#### PURPOSE OF RESEARCH :

The main aim of this research is to conduct a scientific study of the media coverage of political violence and the ongoing conflict in Punjab. The focus of research is 'insurgent terrorism' but its overall framework includes 'counter-terrorism' of the security forces. The study attempts to answer some of the most primary questions involving the media, terrorism and the state and also about India's liberal democratic ethos in which all three exist. The study seeks to develop a logical and scientific way of looking at the media's role in political violence. It also aims to understand the

relationship among the media, state and what is described as terrorism. Such an understanding could counter some of the prevalent stereotypes and oversimplifications by offering an alternative perspective on the media coverage of 'terrorism' in a third world democracy like India. In the long run, it may even be vital for peace and conflict resolution. All these issues are intrinsically linked to the survival of democracy in India and to the question of healthy development of a civil society.

The overall approach of the study is essentially interdisciplinary. Apart from following literature from different streams, it is attempted to utilise methodological tools and perspectives offered by other branches of humanities and social sciences including politics, history, criminology and linguistics. This, in a way, makes up for a virtual absence of mass communication or sociology literature on the media and political violence in India. An attempt is made to discuss and analyse 'terrorism' in relation with the liberal democratic society's institutions and its imminent political processes. The conceptual framework and analysis are built around the following interconnected and mutually complementary areas :

- (a) The portrayal of 'terrorism' and 'counter-terrorism' by the press;
- (b) The social, political and cultural roles of mass media in society; and
- (c) The relationships among the media, state and political violence.

The process of developing a conceptual framework includes an investigation of how newsmen at regional, national and international levels report daily occurrence of violence and conflict as well as the central question of political dispute in Punjab. The selection of the eight Punjab, New Delhi and London-based newspapers for the analysis is discussed in Chapter four.<sup>3</sup> The overall perspective in which news frameworks are produced by the regional, national and international press are examined and the media's priorities and preferences studied to determine how they go about distributing concerns and setting political agenda.

It is outside the scope of this research to analyse the media's construction of reality on the altar of a more composite (or absolute) reality. The idea is to develop an understanding of how and why different newspapers construct *their* particular picture of reality about insurgent and official violence. The foundation of the analysis is a combined and eclectic approach exploring the media's language, its professional practices as well as the perceptions of the mediators and participants of the conflict.

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<sup>3</sup> See selection of papers in Chapter four.

The analysis is qualitative as well as quantitative. The participants perspectives are utilised to study the very nature of Punjab's conflict and the Indian state's attitude towards it. The participants' views underpin the analysis of the newspapers' treatment of the Indian state and those perceived as its enemies. It offers a perspective of Punjab's conflict which is largely independent of the media's manifest content. Significantly, such a perspective makes it simpler to examine issues which are crucial for the participants but which are evidently not so crucial for the press.<sup>4</sup> The use of language is analysed to bring out the most consistent sources, themes, descriptions and judgements in violence related news items as also the linguistic variations and word contexts unique to different newspapers.<sup>5</sup>

What is described as 'terrorism news' in the regional and national papers belongs to the same genre as that appearing in the Western press. Globalization of the media and the integration of large parts of the world in an international market economy has somewhat universalised issues like terrorism and political violence. The inclusion of the two British papers as representatives of the Western press is significant in several ways. The coverage of terrorism by the British papers provides a reference point for the analysis of the Indian papers' coverage. It helps to emphasise differences between the regional and national media's perspectives as much as it reflects the Western media's understanding of the conflict in Punjab. Both the state and insurgents are highly interested in the international audience because the Western outlook is vital for their world-wide image and for the realisation of their objectives. The Western papers' approach to political violence often vacillates between civil libertarian and anti-terrorism concerns which, in different ways, are of crucial importance to the national and regional press and of course to the main parties of the conflict, i.e., the Indian state and the Sikh insurgents.

## DESIGN OF THE THESIS :

The present introductory chapter is followed by a small chapter on the background of political violence in Punjab. Titled "Punjab Politics: Fifty years of Unrest," the chapter traces the roots of Punjab's conflict and political development of the past few decades that may have contributed to political violence. It concentrates on the recent

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<sup>4</sup> Issues crucial for the press are covered under 'themes' in Chapter five and are displayed and analysed separately for the individual newspapers studied.

<sup>5</sup> The language use is analysed in Chapters five and six using two different methodologies. Chapter six analyses in what way a specific or unique language use signifies policy or ideology using linguistic variations and word contexts. A detailed note on the methodological approaches is discussed in the beginning of the two chapters apart from Chapter four on methodology.

political history of the province, its political dispute with New Delhi and the issues pertaining to violence and unrest. The state of the press in India and the pressures it has been working under are also discussed briefly in the chapter. The purpose of the background chapter is to present a short but succinct political perspective for the media coverage of terrorism and counter-terrorism in Punjab.

The third chapter titled "Media, Terrorism and the State : A Research Perspective." presents the conceptual framework of the study. It develops the theoretical foundation for the subsequent analysis of press construction of terrorism and counter-terrorism. The chapter briefly looks at the history of terrorism and the problems associated with defining the term. It subsequently develops a framework of media sociology which is followed by a review of literature on the media coverage of terrorism. The conceptual framework does not end with this chapter. The discussion on the wealth of arguments and perspectives offered by related literature continues throughout the thesis. Many arguments presented in the conceptual framework reappear in the later chapters in the process of analysis.

The basis for selecting newspapers, time-frame, and various parameters of the study are discussed in the fourth chapter, titled "Methodology", which introduces the central research strategy. Like the arguments on conceptual framework, the discussion on methodology continues in the beginning of the subsequent chapters. However, the methodology chapter brings together all the sociological and linguistic tools employed in the process of analysis. The chapter discusses the criterion for selecting news items as an unit of analysis and coding and concordance procedures used in the subsequent chapters. It also contains a discussion on the parameters and method for conducting and analysing interviews. The chapter includes a note on procedures and computer programmes used in different chapters. Methodology is followed by three chapters on content analysis, linguistic variations and interviews.

Content analysis of news stories in the fifth chapter is based on a 14-page coding schedule.<sup>6</sup> The analysis uses a statistical package and organises results in tables and charts. The focus of analysis is the media's sources, agenda, themes, descriptions and judgements contained in the stories about violence. Descriptions of news stories are seen as (a) characterisations for violence, and (b) labels for perpetrators. The coding schedule was developed through a pilot study conducted ahead of the analysis. The content analysis is an attempt to understand how different papers have constructed

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<sup>6</sup> See appendix 1 for coding schedule.

their picture of reality and what patterns of perceptions emerge out of their overall coverage.

Chapter six on concordance and word contexts uses a linguistic approach to study headlines of all the items analysed. The emphasis is on linguistic variations in different newspapers' headlines of violence related news. It takes a more critical look at the key words which are used most frequently to describe incidents of violence and their perpetrators.

Chapter seven is based on the analysis of interviews with the participants of the conflict who happen to be the media's most frequently quoted sources. It examines the role of the participants in the media's descriptions of events and looks at the conflict independent of the media's content. The interviewees are (a) insurgents and their sympathisers, (b) security forces officials, (c) ruling party and opposition politicians and (d) journalists. The interviews were conducted in a conversation style with open ended questions. The interviewees' perceptions of the conflict and its media coverage are used to study aspects of source-journalist relationship and some of the media's serious omissions about violence in Punjab.

Although the results of the analysis of content, word contexts and interviews are presented at the end of each of these chapters, an overall conclusion is presented in the end of the study in the form of a last concluding chapter. It examines the results of these three chapters in the light of the conceptual framework and reflects on some of the basic questions posed in the beginning. The discussion in the concluding chapter complements the conclusions of chapters five to seven.

## CHAPTER TWO

### PUNJAB PROBLEM : FIFTY YEARS OF UNREST

This chapter presents an overview of Punjab's politics leading to the spiral of terrorism and counter-terrorism, which claimed thousands of lives in over a decade. The issue of genesis of terrorism in Punjab calls for separate research. It requires an in-depth historical and sociological research into emergence of a collective ethnic consciousness and the growth of Sikh fundamentalism. There are many more socio-political, economic and cultural processes both Indian and, perhaps, global in nature which may have affected or expedited the process. It is out of the scope of this research to go into the depth of these processes. The attempt in this chapter is to present a brief account of recent political developments in Punjab in order to put the framework about the media coverage of violence in its political perspective. It begins from the final days of British colonialism and moves on to a broad overview of Punjab's post-independence and post-partition turmoil which gave rise to movements and disturbances culminating in social conflicts, terrorism and counter-terrorism in the late seventies. At the end there is a note on Punjab's regional press and the national press based in New Delhi.

The roots of the Sikh identity, as we know it today, run parallel to the "renaissance of Hinduism" brought about by the Arya Samaj, a Hindu revivalist movement led by Punjabi Hindu nationalists.<sup>1</sup> The Arya Samajis often criticised the political actions of their Muslim counterparts but some of their leaders also questioned the existence of a distinct Sikh identity. The more the Hindu revivalists claimed Sikhism to be yet another of Hinduism's many branches, the more the Sikhs insisted they had a separate identity.<sup>2</sup> Government of India Census Reports of 1911 and 1921 show that out of as many as two dozen Sikh sects in Punjab in the beginning of the century those who had varied identities moved towards a more unified and monolithic 'keshdhari' Sikh identity.<sup>3</sup> It was feared that the assertion of 'superiority' by the Hindus might absorb Sikhism into the wider stream of Hinduism as happened with Jainism and Buddhism in India. As a result of this fear, the expansion of the Arya Samaj gave impetus to the Singh Sabha movement which organised the Sikhs much on the same lines.<sup>4</sup> Sensitive

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<sup>1</sup> Singh Khushwant (1966) p. 147

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. pp. 146-7.

<sup>3</sup> Rajiv A Kapur (1987) pp. 31-32. A 'keshdhari' is a Sikh who does not cut his hair and dons a headgear and follows other tenets of Sikhism laid down by the tenth guru, Gobind Singh.

<sup>4</sup> Harji Malik (1985) p. 32

about the Hindus denying them a separate entity, the Singh Sabha was extremely suspicious about the multiplicity of the Sikh identity.<sup>5</sup> Oberoi (1994) maintains that the older pluralist paradigm of Sikhism was getting replaced in the early century for good by a highly uniform Sikh identity. The Sikh Gurudwara Act, 1925, passed by the British rulers after a long agitation defined a Sikh as "one who believes in the ten gurus and the *Granth Sahab* (the holy scriptures) and is not a 'patit' (apostate)"<sup>6</sup> The definition under the Act did not include most sects listed as Sikhs in the census reports in the early part of the century.<sup>7</sup>

A separate religious identity and consciousness was reinforced by the guiding principles of British colonialism in India: to create and intensify the wedge between different caste, class and community groups spread all over the country (Satya M Rai, 1965; Khushwant Singh 1966; Pramod Kumar, Sharma, Sood and Handa, 1984; Kapur 1987; Gopal Singh, 1987; Jasmal Singh Brar, 1987) The Colonial rulers were the natural benefactors of the emergence and consolidation of various religious identities all over India including Punjab. They did their best to keep Hindus, Muslims and the Sikhs divided by administrative and legal means. The British Administration passed the Land Alienation Act specially in Punjab whose declared aim was to prevent the moneylender from exploiting the cultivator. In practice the act heightened communal tensions in the erstwhile Indian Punjab.<sup>8</sup> The introduction of a communal electorate in Punjab further complicated the problem.<sup>9</sup> The Cripps Mission

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<sup>5</sup> Oberoi Harjot (1994) p. 25. Oberoi's comprehensive work views Singh Sabha as a new cultural elite "which aggressively usurped the right to represent others within this singular tradition. Its ethnocentric logic subsumed other identities and dissolved alternative ideas -- such as asceticism under a monolithic, codified and closed culture."

<sup>6</sup> Cole and Sambhi (1978) p.160.

<sup>7</sup> The definition helped the Singh Sabha gain its objective of evolving one unified Sikh identity as only of those who believed in the Guru Granth Sahab as their scripture and eternal guru and gurudwara their place of worship and observed the five 'K's of Sikhism, each beginning with letter 'K' in Punjabi (uncut hair, comb, sword, steel bracelet and undershorts). Many sects follow Sikh tenets to varying degrees and often in combination with other beliefs. Some of the most common sects are : Hazuris, Nanakpanthis, Udasis, specified and unspecified Sahajdharis and Radhaswamis. A more comprehensive list of sects cited in the 1911 and 1921 census reports is given by Rajiv A Kapur (1987) and Harjot Oberoi (1994) has discussed the multiplicity of the Sikh faith.

<sup>8</sup> Satya M Rai (1965) p. 27. Rai writes that after the Act was passed, it was felt by one community that it was enacted to favour the other community. According to the author many other apparently progressive measures were passed in such a way that the mainly Muslim and Sikh cultivators were at loggerheads with predominantly Hindu moneylenders. The author includes among these measures the following Acts : The Punjab Limitation Act 1904; The Transfer of Property Act, 1904; and the Punjab Pre-emption Act 1905. The main effect of the laws was that the "peasants now could not be evicted by a civil court without the intervention of the revenue authorities." p. 28

<sup>9</sup> Kumar, P. Sharma, M. Sood, A. and Handa, A (1984). Authors maintain that "Constitutional developments such as the Morley-Minto reforms of 1909, The Montague-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919 and the Act of 1935, incorporating principles of separate electorate and communal reservations, perpetuated and intensified (in as much as they necessitated competition for limited elected seats) the communal problem." p. 33



of 1942 widened this divide and gave impetus to the demand for Pakistan, a course which later affected the Sikh leadership in its own way.<sup>10</sup>

As a reaction to the possibility of the Muslims getting Pakistan in the forties, the Akali Dal issued a pamphlet proposing a Sikh-ruled 'Azad Punjab' (free Punjab).<sup>11</sup> In 1944 when the Congress leader Rajgopalachari published his controversial formula which suggested among other things that areas of Muslim dominance be demarcated, Akali leader, Master Tara Singh stated for the first time that the Sikhs were a separate nation.<sup>12</sup> In July, 1946 about a year before independence, Jawaharlal Nehru, who later became the first Prime Minister of free India in 1947, promised to set up an area in the North wherein the Sikhs could experience the "glow of freedom."<sup>13</sup> Punjab's worst time of the century came when it had to be partitioned between India and Pakistan in 1947. The aftermath of freedom and the process of partition saw unparalleled violence and massacres of all three communities, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs.<sup>14</sup> Subsequently in 1950 when the Constitution of India was finalised the Akali leadership did not find Nehru's promise reflected in it. The draft so provoked the two Sikh members of the Constituent Assembly, Hukum Singh and Bhupinder Singh Mann, that they refused to sign the constitution pleading it was against the minorities' interests.<sup>15</sup>

The overall framework of the Indian constitution (1950) was democratic and secular. A quasi-federal structure with a union government at the centre and several state governments in the provinces offered an opportunity of a limited self-rule to the states with their own elections, cabinets and governments. A secular foundation to the nation's political system also kept religious and sectarian politics at bay, at least in the formative years. The first government of independent India abolished communal electorate and other legal provisions which were seen by the nation's leadership as British tools for dividing the people. In the first decade, political parties like the Akali Dal, Muslim League and the Hindu Jana Sangh backed by its militant front organisation, the RSS, had little success at the hustings. In the 1952 general elections,

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<sup>10</sup> Rajiv. A Kapur (1987) p. 205

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 206

<sup>12</sup> Singh Khushwant (1966) p. 252. Satya M Rai (1965) has clarified over Khushwant Singh's position that the Akali party's demand for 'Azad Punjab' was meant to be a counter-proposal for the demand for Pakistan and that they made it plain that they did not favour dismemberment of the country. p. 37.

<sup>13</sup> Harji Malik (1987) p. 35.

<sup>14</sup> Some authors have called the massacres which took place during partition as "holocaust unparalleled in history" (Tully and Jacob, 1985) while others have said the violence was unprecedented in world history (Khushwant Singh, 1966). Singh has quoted Moon (1961) p. 282., as having given the 'somewhat inflated' figure of 200,000 Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs killed on both Indian and Pakistani side.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

the Congress party got an overall majority on a secular, social democratic programme. It returned to power in the next two successive elections in 1957 and 1962.<sup>16</sup> A large section of the Sikh community supported the Congress even though they were not completely satisfied with its political programme. Their grievances resurfaced over a decade later during the 'Punjabi Suba' movement led by Master Tara Singh and Sant Fateh Singh.<sup>17</sup>

Some historians believe that the demand for the 'Suba' (province) was in fact one for a Sikh state and the issue of the Punjabi language was only a means to achieve that.<sup>18</sup> The movement succeeded in rallying a cross section of Sikhs behind it and among the campaign's sympathisers was a section of Congress leaders in New Delhi. After Mrs Gandhi became the Indian Prime Minister in 1966, she proposed the division of Punjab. All major political parties of the opposition, except the Hindu Jana Sangh, supported her proposal. In 1966, what was left of Indian Punjab after partition was further divided into Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh. The Punjabi Suba was a major victory for its leadership which fought the Congress party in the subsequent elections in 1967 and 1969 with the help of other opposition parties.

In the first general election after the state's division, a highly unlikely coalition consisting of the Akalis, Jana Sangh and the Communist party of India defeated the Congress. The coalition government could not complete its tenure mainly due to the Akalis' internal bickering, its own contradictions and en masse defections from the Akali Dal to the Congress. In the next two general elections in 1969 and 1970, Akali-led coalitions came to power twice but each government lasted for a little over a year instead of the full term of five years. Throughout these years, the Akalis were using the gurudwara (Sikh temple) politics and the office of the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) for political and electoral gains.<sup>19</sup> Although politically, the Akali party was closer to the Congress than its two coalition partners -- Jana Sangh which opposed the Punjabi Suba movement and the Communists who were against religious parties -- it declared Congress as its main enemy.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Akalis did not fight the 1957 election as a political party as it had got merged in the Congress in 1956. The merger lasted for a very short while.

<sup>17</sup> Literal meaning of 'Suba' is a state or province. The leadership of the movement demanded that a state be carved out of the unified Punjab with Punjabi as its official language.

<sup>18</sup> Khushwant Singh (1966) p 295.

<sup>19</sup> SGPC (Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee) is a statutory elected body which is more like a religious parliament for the Sikh community. It was established under the British promulgated Sikh Gurdwara Act, 1925 for the purpose of running gurdwaras.

<sup>20</sup> Akalis had supported the Congress in the national movement, barring some reservations, and the party got merged with the Indian national Congress twice, in 1948 and 1956. Detailed accounts of Akali Dal's relationship with the Congress party have been given by P S Verma (1985) "The Akali Dal:

The Akalis were upset with the Congress for various reasons. The Sikh leadership felt betrayed when the Congress government in New Delhi, instead of helping out, chose to impose Presidents' Rule each time its coalition government was in crisis.<sup>21</sup> Another bone of contention was an Akali political programme called the "Anandpur Sahab Resolution." The Congress party, as also many other opposition parties including Hindu Bharatiya Janata party (a new incarnation of the old Jana Sangh), opposed the programme as anti-national. Passed in 1978 by the general House of the Akali Dal in Ludhiana, the resolution has been interpreted in many different forms.<sup>22</sup> The detractors of the document, which included the Congress leader and Prime Minister Mrs Indira Gandhi, claimed that it had seeds of separatism while the Akalis insisted they were only demanding more autonomy for the states which was their right within a federal polity.<sup>23</sup>

#### RISE OF BHINDRANWALE :

A Congress chief minister, Giani Zail Singh, who came to power in 1972 abandoned the party's secular programme to a large extent and used sectarian politics to fight Hindu and Sikh communalists. During his tenure as chief Minister of Punjab, Giani Zail Singh followed the policy of appeasement of extremists with "disastrous consequences."<sup>24</sup> He did his best in his fight against the Akalis to encourage the religious fanatics who were beginning to gain grounds in the seventies.<sup>25</sup> Some observers believe that the Congress party was responsible for the emergence of Sikh fundamentalists in Punjab (Patwant Singh and Harji Malik, 1985; Mark Tully and Satish Jacob, 1985; Kumar et al, 1984). Tully and Jacob have noted that Mrs Gandhi's younger son, Sanjay Gandhi, who had become an extra-constitutional authority in the party, hand picked Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, a priest of land owning class (Jat) on Giani's advise. Bhindranwale, who was known for his fundamentalist views, was encouraged to stand up to the Akalis with the help of an extremist platform, Dal Khalsa. Bhindranwale piqued Akalis with his demand for 'Khalistan' on the one hand

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History, Electoral performance and Leadership Profile," in Gopal Singh (1985); Kumar et al (1984); and Khushwant Singh (1966)

<sup>21</sup> President's rule is used to describe a direct rule by the central government in New Delhi through its nominee, the Governor of the state.

<sup>22</sup> Devinder Singh (1993) p. 171 and R S Narula (1985) pp. 63-77.

<sup>23</sup> Many other regional parties in South India and the Communist Party of India who had formed state governments in West Bengal and Kerala were also pressing for more autonomy for the states.

<sup>24</sup> Bipin Chandra in the preface of Kumar et al. (1984) p.15 and Kumar et al p. 71.

<sup>25</sup> Kumar et al (1984) p. 71

and actively campaigned for Congress candidates in 1980, a charge Mrs Gandhi partly admitted in an interview given to the BBC's Panorama programme.<sup>26</sup>

In 1977 when Mrs Gandhi returned to power after her post-emergency debacle, her loyal supporter Giani Zail Singh was made the Union Home minister. By then, Bhindranwale's extreme views and his abhorrence for the Akali leadership had become a common knowledge. It is debatable whether Bhindranwale was still being used by his earlier mentor Zail Singh or he was acting on his own but one of his avowed aims was to counter the Akalis politically. In his religious congregations held inside the Golden Temple, he often ridiculed and challenged the Akali Dal president, Harchand Singh Longowal, a leader of considerable stature and repute. In August 1982, Longowal started a peasants' movement, "Dharmyudh Morcha" or crusade, in order to strengthen his party.<sup>27</sup> Thousands of the campaign's supporters courted arrest during the agitation. Their demands included both political ones such as a fair share of river water for the farmers and religious ones like holy city status to Amritsar and the broadcast of Sikh religious hymns on All India Radio. New Delhi had several rounds of talks with the Akali leadership but no compromise formula emerged on their charter of 15 demands. This gave Bhindranwale and his supporters more opportunity to ridicule the Akalis.

Bhindranwale shared a part of the more moderate Akali leader Longowal's method and his political constituency. Longowal championed farmers' rights, Bhindranwale talked about injustice to the rural Sikhs; Longowal wanted Amritsar to be a holy city and 'gurbani' broadcast on radio, propagation of Sikhism was one of Bhindranwale's cardinal missions; both operated from the Golden Temple and launched their actions and movements from there; and inside the Golden Temple both leaders had the support of armed followers who often challenged each other.<sup>28</sup> However, Longowal's long drawn out 'crusade' was slipping out of his grip in the early eighties around the same time when Bhindranwale's influence was increasing. For the orthodox, Bhindranwale was emerging like a symbol of Sikh revivalism. In his congregations inside gurdwaras he often challenged sceptics and heretics among the Sikhs and sects like the Nirankaris who still followed a living guru instead of the holy scriptures.<sup>29</sup> He had also started a campaign against those in the faith who trimmed their beards or consumed tobacco or alcohol, banned by the Sikh gurus. Bhindranwale was in national headlines in April 1978 when he led a procession of his angry supporters,

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<sup>26</sup> Tully and Jacob (1985) pp. 60-62

<sup>27</sup> Devinder Singh (1993) p. 189.

<sup>28</sup> Devinder Singh (1993) and Tully and Jacob (1985)

<sup>29</sup> Juergensmeyer, M. (1988) p 175

right after a fiery speech, to a Nirankari convention a few miles from the Golden Temple.<sup>30</sup> This resulted in a clash between the Nirankaris and the Khalsas in which 12 of Bhindranwale's supporters and a Nirankari were killed. A Nirankari agitation followed which became a major crisis for the ruling Akali party in Punjab.

For the next two years Bhindranwale used this incident as a reminder to his followers that the true Sikhs were being persecuted. When the Nirankaris put on trial were acquitted as they were found to have acted in self defence, Bhindranwale swore vengeance.<sup>31</sup> About two years after this clash his supporters in Delhi gunned down the Nirankaris' supreme leader, their guru, Baba Gurbachan Singh. Fearing action, Bhindranwale shifted to one of the rooms inside the Golden Temple.<sup>32</sup> It was curious that Home Minister Zail Singh told the Indian parliament that the Sant had nothing to do with the murder while Bhindranwale declared that the killers deserved to be honoured and he would weigh them in gold if they came to him.<sup>33</sup> Later, Bhindranwale was accused of bringing out a 'hit list' of his enemies who were proclaimed as enemies of the Sikh religion. Apart from dissenting politicians and critical journalists, the 'hit list' carried names of several Sikh bureaucrats and intellectuals or virtually anyone who stood up to Bhindranwale.<sup>34</sup>

Among the first few target killings by Bhindranwale supporters were two prominent journalists. In 1981, chief editor of the Hindi paper '*Punjab Kesari*' and proprietor of the Hind Samachar group of publications, Lala Jagat Narain, was killed. 'Lalaji', as the editor was known, was one of the most committed opponents of Bhindranwale. About a year later, armed men struck again killing his son, Ramesh Chandra, who had taken over as chief editor and had continued his father's aggressively pro-Hindu editorial policy. It was fairly well known that names of both these journalists as well as that of the Nirankari Guru had figured in on Bhindranwale's 'hit list.' After several cold blooded murders in the next two years, of priests, prominent people in gurudwara politics and high ranking police officers, the pattern of violence slowly began to adopt a more indiscriminate nature.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> According to Mark Tully and Satish Jacob (1984), Bhindranwale himself shouted in front of a gathering of his supporters: "We will not allow this Nirankari convention to take place. We are going to march there and cut them to pieces." p. 59. Juergensmeyer (1988) says "for some reason he (Bhindranwale) seemed to have been fixated on the Nirankaris: his fiery sermons condemned them as evil." pp. 174-5

<sup>31</sup> Khushwant Singh (1984) p 9.

<sup>32</sup> Tully and Jacob (1984) p. 65.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. p. 66.

<sup>34</sup> Kaur, Amarjit et al (1984) eds. p 24

<sup>35</sup> For details of incidents of violence see United News of India (UNI) yearly backgrounders on Punjab and M S Deora (1991 and 1992) for a newspaper-based listings of incidents.

It was indeed intriguing that Bhindranwale was never tried for fomenting violence. He was once arrested from a gurudwara near Amritsar on his own conditions which included a chosen time and place and permission to address a congregation before he gave himself up to the police. His supporters got violent when he was being taken and attacked the police. In the ensuing clash, eleven people were killed. Bhindranwale was let off without charges in a few weeks.<sup>36</sup> Several academics and journalists believe that the preacher was released from custody on the then Prime Minister Mrs Indira Gandhi's orders.<sup>37</sup>

The aftermath of Bhindranwale's arrest witnessed a convulsive spurt of violence. Within days of his arrest Sikh gunmen killed four people and injured about twelve in an incident of indiscriminate firing on Hindus in Jalandhar. In a similar incident in Amritsar district the next day, one Hindu was killed and 13 injured. Apart from sporadic shoot-outs and incidents of sabotage like derailments of trains, an Indian Airlines plane was hijacked to Lahore in Pakistan. In another daring incident in Patiala, a bomb explosion took place inside the office of the deputy Inspector General of Police who was sent to arrest Bhindranwale. The officer escaped unhurt but the blast exhibited Bhindranwale's penetration in the police force. In the next few months, Bhindranwale's supporters made headlines either for their utterances or actions varying from bomb blasts to bank robberies. In January 1983 bombs were thrown at two Congress leaders' houses, one of them a minister and a few weeks later a Sikh DIG of police was killed while coming out of the Golden Temple after offering prayers.

One of the early massacres took place in October 1983 when armed men struck on a bus in Dhilwan village near Jalandhar. They singled out six passengers and shot them because they were Hindus.<sup>38</sup> This pattern of killing Hindus was to later become the most notable method of violence in Punjab with the advent of several new organisations. Apart from Khalistan Liberation Force (KLF), Khalistan Commando Force (KCF), Babbar Khalsa, Dashmesh Regiment, and All India Sikh Students' Federation (AISSF), at least two dozen other pro-Khalistan organisations were floated in the mid and late eighties. Panthic Committee, a co-ordinating body of these organisations, was later formed which itself got divided into several factions towards the end of eighties. Violence perpetrated by these groups could be easily divided into

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<sup>36</sup> Tully and Jacob (1984) p. 69.

<sup>37</sup> Devinder Singh (1993) p. 183; Tully and Jacob (1985) p. 71

<sup>38</sup> 'The Tribune' Oct. 6, 1983.

two distinct phases. The first phase is contiguous with the rise of Bhindranwale. It begins in the late seventies and continues till June 1984 when the Indian Army conducted an armed operation at the Golden temple. Bhindranwale was among hundreds who were killed during the operation. The second phase began in the aftermath of the operation and continued with its ups and downs till the end of eighties. The violence subsided in the nineties, particularly after 1992, though sporadic incidents still continue.

The first phase of terrorism in Punjab was marked by Bhindranwale's undisputed command over almost all armed organisations.<sup>39</sup> Most of the killings in this phase were of the targets whose names would appear on the notorious 'hit list'.

Bhindranwale was the fountainhead of power and the biggest living source of inspiration for those committing violence. In his many speeches at the Golden Temple and other gurdwaras, he quoted examples of martyrs from the Sikh history and mythology to inspire his followers to take to arms. Bhindranwale's religious discourses offered his followers a logic for using violence as a matter of right in their struggle against what was seen by him as injustice. Juergensmeyer (1988), who has analysed Bhindranwale's speeches made at his famous congregations, argues that all such violent actions which had religion's moral sanction were essentially political actions. He asserts: " By putting the right to kill in their own hands, the perpetrators of religious violence are also making a daring claim of political independence."<sup>40</sup>

## OPERATION BLUESTAR

In December 1983, when the pressure was mounting on the central government to arrest Bhindranwale, he and a large number of his armed supporters moved to the Akal Takht -- one of the most sacred buildings inside the Golden Temple complex.<sup>41</sup> After the entourage had shifted to what was considered then a safe haven, a spate of 'punishments' inside the complex and other 'actions' all over Punjab started to take place. Several people who apparently disagreed with Bhindranwale and his supporters were severely tortured and their bodies thrown into the drain.<sup>42</sup> Such was the state of

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<sup>39</sup> The only exception was the Babbar Khalsa who opposed Bhindranwale in the pre-Bluestar days and the relatively small Akhand Kirtani Jatha who did not obey Bhindranwale. Babbars supported Bhindranwale's cause after his death while the Kirtani Jatha got completely marginalised in post-Bluestar politics. For more details see Tully and Jacob (1985) and Amarjit Kaur et al (1985).

<sup>40</sup> Juergensmeyer (1988) p. 183.

<sup>41</sup> Akal Takht is the seat of Sikh spiritual and temporal authority and is situated in the form of a gold domed white building in front of the main door leading to Darbar Sahab, the sanctum sanctorum which is surrounded by the holy pond inside the Golden Temple Complex.

<sup>42</sup> White Paper on Punjab Agitation New Delhi, July 10, 1984. p. 29. The paper was tabled in Parliament after operation Bluestar. Several academics, journalists and politicians have criticised the

lawlessness all over Punjab that between October 1, 1983 and May 31, 1984, as many as 24 banks were robbed.<sup>43</sup> Millions of rupees were looted in these incidents and several officials and guards killed. In the month of April, 39 railway stations, mostly unmanned ones, were burnt down in a three day campaign by the movement's supporters.<sup>44</sup> Several politicians and many Sikh priests were among those killed. Hardly any day passed during this time without a few killings being reported.<sup>45</sup> While these incidents carried on all over Punjab, those inside the Golden Temple fortified the turrets and walls of the sprawling complex and placed sandbags at strategic points. Arms and ammunition were brought to the temple in 'kar sewa' trucks.<sup>46</sup> The militants also hired private houses around the temple and forcibly occupied some in order to consolidate their position.<sup>47</sup> The Government's White Paper claims that the "terrorists in the rural areas were instructed that in the event of any government action, they should go ahead on their own to kill Hindus and Central Government employees and to move in large numbers to the temple."<sup>48</sup>

The temple was fortified with the help of expert former army personnel (under the leadership of a former Major General Shubheg Singh) who also imparted weapons' training to armed Bhindranwale supporters.<sup>49</sup> The white paper notes: "Battle plans had been drawn up with ingenuity, maximising the advantages provided by the basements, underground passages, niches, winding staircases, lookouts and towers in the temple complex."<sup>50</sup> The biggest advantage of those inside the temple was that they had the sanctuary of the precincts considered inviolable till then. The operation started in the early hours of June 4, 1984. According to Subhash Kirpekar, one of the very few journalists who witnessed the whole operation from a building closeby, light and medium machine guns, grenades and a variety of other guns were used by both sides.<sup>51</sup> The militants also used rocket launchers, anti-personnel mines and according to the government's claim some anti-tank missiles and other heavy weapons were also

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White paper as inadequate. The main complaint is that it does not answer many questions about operation Bluestar and the build-up towards it. Its legality and inadequacies have been discussed in details by A G Noorani in Patwant Singh and Harji Malik (1985) pp. 145-161

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p.31

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p.31

<sup>45</sup> M S Deora ( 1992)

<sup>46</sup> 'Kar Sewa' is a Punjabi term for voluntary service offered by the devotees at the temple complex. Sikh temples are known to undertake huge construction works in which such voluntary service accounts for the bulk of the labour. See Devinder Singh (1993)

<sup>47</sup> The GOI White Paper (1984) Ibid. pp 30-47

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 33

<sup>49</sup> Tully and Jacob (1985)

<sup>50</sup> GOI White paper p. 47

<sup>51</sup> Subhash Kirpekar (1984) pp. 76-90.



recovered from their possession. The Army troops used tanks, helicopters and several types of artillery shells in the operation which lasted for over two and a half days.<sup>52</sup>

Many journalists and academics believe that the official death toll during the operation was underplayed. Historian Khushwant Singh claims many historians believe that the final toll was 379 dead and 2000 wounded.<sup>53</sup> Singh has quoted the "Akalis' figure" as well over a thousand.<sup>54</sup> Subhash Kirpekar puts the toll at 2,000 quoting unconfirmed reports and rumours in Amritsar.<sup>55</sup> The operation caused an enormous degree of hurt in the minds of all Sikhs whether in the Congress party, defence services or in the Opposition. Some scholars believe that the operation and the November riots in Delhi and elsewhere united the Sikhs as their different identities like *Jat*, *Bhapa*, *Mazhabi*, *Khatiri*, tended to merge into one single Sikh identity.<sup>56</sup>

#### MRS GANDHI'S ASSASSINATION AND THE CARNAGE OF SIKHS :

The immediate aftermath of the operation saw great discontentment among Sikh in the Indian Army spread in different cantonments all over the country. Over 1400 army men revolted at Ramgarh Sikh Regiment Centre and deserted barracks with their rifles and ammunition.<sup>57</sup> There were protests by Sikhs all over the world and some Khalistan supporters abroad threatened revenge. The Indian High commission in London protested to the British Foreign Office against an interview given by a Khalistan leader in the UK, Jagjit Singh Chauhan, in which he reportedly said that Mrs Gandhi and her family members would be beheaded by the Sikhs.<sup>58</sup> New Delhi took up this opportunity to reassert its claim that a 'foreign hand' was conspiring to divide India.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Khushwant Singh (1992) p. 73.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Subhash Kirpekar (1984)pp. 76-90

<sup>56</sup> Dipankar Gupta (1985) p. 211. This was also reflected in the fact that the 'Majhabi' Sikhs, whose leadership called Bhindranwale's movement a campaign by the upper caste Jats, later joined many underground organisations in the aftermath of the operation and that the two assassins of Mrs Gandhi belonged to this caste. Devinder Pal Sandhu (1992) maintains that operation Bluestar, operation Woodrose and the anti-Sikh riots of 1984 together "had a direct bearing and an everlasting impact on a separate and distinct identity of Sikhs as a minority as well as on their psyche, thereby further strengthening the already existing 'sense of persecution' among a section of the community." p. 124

<sup>57</sup> The *Hindustan Times* June 14, 1984.

<sup>58</sup> The *Times of India*, June 14, 1984.

<sup>59</sup> 'Foreign hand' was one of Mrs Gandhi's favourite terms to describe external threats to the nation. However many journalists and observers have noted that Pakistan may have been involved in helping the Sikh insurgents in Punjab. Tully and Jacob (1984) say that Pakistan almost certainly played a minor role in the situation and arms were regularly smuggled from across the border. pp. 211-2

In Punjab's recent political history, 1984 was like a watershed. The sequence of events after the Operation Bluestar changed the entire face of Punjab's and perhaps India's politics for a long time. Within less than five months of the operation, two Sikh bodyguards shot the Indian Prime Minister Mrs Indira Gandhi on October 31, 1984. Within hours of the assassination, mobs went berserk, burning and rampaging Sikh's shops and businesses. In the following two days, a large number of Sikh men, women and children were killed on roads, inside trains and buses and even in their own houses and gurdwaras. The violence also spread to other towns and cities in India. The incidents were referred to as 'Delhi-riots' or 'November-riots' by the media but the reports brought out by India's human rights organisations and citizens' fora labelled them as 'carnage' or 'massacre' of the Sikhs.<sup>60</sup>

Charges of official complicity, in at least ignoring violence and not deploying the army soon enough and with strict orders, gained currency after human rights organisations held some Congress-I leaders responsible for inciting the rioters. The death toll by various non-official agencies is put at between 4,000 and 5,000 in Delhi and nearby areas.<sup>61</sup> The atrocities included abduction of women and rapes, most of which could not be documented in a proper manner because of taboos among the victims and the fear of ostracism by their own community.<sup>62</sup> Several commissions were appointed by the government in the subsequent years and one of them even implicated, though not charge-sheeted, several ruling party members. The process of bringing the 'culprits' to book is still on after more than ten years of the carnage. Meanwhile, underground Sikh organisations shot down many of those thought to be behind the carnage and also killed ordinary people in colonies and market places. In one single day, over 100 residents of Delhi's slums and hutment were killed by planting bombs concealed in transistors. Incidents of terrorism continued in Delhi and Punjab throughout the eighties in a big way and to a lesser extent in the early nineties.

The first signs of a settlement emerged in July 1985 when the Central government headed by Mrs Gandhi's son Rajiv, negotiated with the Akali Dal President, Longowal. Subsequently, an accord was signed by Mr Longowal and Mr Gandhi on

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<sup>60</sup> Citizens' Commission headed by a former Chief Justice of India, S M Sikri has specifically noted that "it was not a communal riot". The report brought out by the Peoples' Union for Democratic rights (PUDR) and Peoples Union of Civil Liberties (PUCL) entitled "Who are the Guilty" has called the violence an act of "organised massacre." Quoted by A G Noorani (1985) pp. 277-8, 280.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. p. 275 ; and Amrik Singh "Delhi Carnage and After" Ibid., p. 317.

<sup>62</sup> Madhu Kishwar, a voluntary organisation activist and editor of a New Delhi-based feminist magazine has compiled many such cases and their circumstances in her articles. She has discussed the reasons for which most such cases could not be documented in "Gangster Rule" in Patwant Singh and Harji Malik (1985) ed., pp. 177-9

July 24, 1985 which was followed by an election which the Akalis swept. The main provisions of the accord included the transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab, an enquiry into the November incidents, compensation to the innocent persons killed and the withdrawal of the Armed forces Special Powers Act.<sup>63</sup> The government of India also agreed to enact an All India Gurdwara Act. Among other important aspects of the accord was that the claims of Punjab and Haryana regarding the sharing of river waters would be referred for adjudication to a tribunal to be presided over by a Supreme Court Judge.<sup>64</sup> The transfer of Chandigarh was to take place on India's Republic Day, January 26, the next year, simultaneously with the transfer of certain areas in its lieu to Haryana, Punjab's adjoining province. Many other demands were not conceded immediately but the government agreed to consider them.

Longowal's accord was welcomed by Sikhs in Punjab and all over the country and this was reflected in his party's landslide victory after the accord. He followed a two-pronged strategy after the accord. First he got his detractors in the party to second it unanimously and secondly he started a mass contact programme to win acceptability for his agreement among the rural masses.<sup>65</sup> However, Longowal himself did not live to see that unprecedented victory in the elections which he had converted into some kind of a referendum on the accord.<sup>66</sup> He was shot by armed extremists in less than a month after the accord was signed. His party was led to elections by his deputy, Surjit Singh Barnala, who became the Akali chief minister of Punjab. However, Chandigarh was not transferred to Punjab on the appointed day which suggested that the government's view on the accord had changed after Longowal's assassination. The government's attitude offered the terrorist organisations a pretext to step up violence while it gave Longowal's detractors in the Akali party a chance to exploit the situation and to unseat the chief minister.<sup>67</sup>

## SECOND PHASE OF VIOLENCE:

Barnala's truncated tenure as chief minister witnessed an unprecedented upsurge in terroristic violence. Hundreds were killed in less than two years which was just the beginning of the second phase of violence, characterised by a clear lack of leadership. In this phase, the number of terrorist organisations was multiplying and the pattern of

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<sup>63</sup> Government of India Document : Text of the Punjab Accord. Reproduced in Gopal Singh (1987) ed. Document 1, pp. 383-6.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., It was agreed that the decision of the tribunal would be binding on both sides. p. 385

<sup>65</sup> Devinder Singh (1993) p. 206

<sup>66</sup> Nayar, Kuldeep (1985) p. 394.

<sup>67</sup> Devinder Pal Sandhu (1992) p. 148

violence was fast becoming more indiscriminate and unpredictable. In 1981 and 1982 civilian killings were 13 each year while only two police officials had been shot. In 1983 the figure of civilian killings went up to 75 and that of police officials to 20. The figure generated concern all over the country. But the indiscriminate phase of violence which began 1985 onwards witnessed a completely disproportionate escalation of violence. The number of civilian killings in 1986 and 1987 was 520 and 910 respectively. In 1988 it came close to 2000 and in the next two years the figure touched 2500.<sup>68</sup> This means more than 200 civilians were being killed every month or around seven every day.

The five member Panthic Committee, before it got splintered in several groups, announced the formation of Khalistan on January 26, 1986. The announcement was made at a dramatic meeting which took place in front of the Akal Takht and was given the historically sanctimonious epithet of 'Sarbat Khalsa'.<sup>69</sup> According to the declaration made on the occasion, the five members were also 'nominated' by the congregation which then announced the formation of Khalistan.<sup>70</sup> A demand was made in the declaration to the UNO and its member states to recognise Khalistan.<sup>71</sup> The KCF, one of the several insurgent organisations, was declared as "the nucleus of the future defence organisation of Khalistan," under its 'commander-in-chief'.<sup>72</sup> The declaration directed Hindus not to put "hurdles in the way of Khalsa Panth" and announced that "no particular community or sect will be allowed to impose selfish will arbitrarily upon others through the medium of press, writings, education or other media of publicity."<sup>73</sup>

The government condemned the declaration and pointed out that it eulogised terrorists and expressed gratitude to sympathetic neighbouring countries. It fitted in the Indian Government's overall threat perception that certain external forces were out to destabilise India. Several Sikh organisations, many of them underground, did not approve of the declaration because they were not consulted and it declared the

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<sup>68</sup> The statistics of violence is provided by the Chandigarh office of the Director General of Punjab Police to the author in October 1993.

<sup>69</sup> Sarbat Khalsa is a name for Sikh 'Sangat' or congregation which is treated like a general body meeting of the sect inside the Golden Temple and important announcements about political and social life are made in it. Oberoi (1994) maintains that one of the earlier Gurus, had exalted the status of the congregation by pronouncing that God resided in the 'Sangat.' p. 71.

<sup>70</sup> Document of the Declaration of Khalistan ( Reproduced from Punjabi magazine 'Sant Sipahi' and translated in English by Manjit Ahluwalia, Nazar Singh Brar and Gopal Singh et al.) reproduced in Gopal Singh (1987) p. 387.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 388.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. p. 391.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. p. 390.

supremacy of KCF over other insurgent organisations. These differences were not made public but they were soon reflected in the way the Panthic Committee itself got divided into several camps. Many underground organisations stepped up violence in order to prove their worth in the struggle. Chief Minister Barnala was forced to send his police inside the Golden Temple and the declaration prompted the government to intensify counter-terrorism offensive.

## COUNTER-TERRORISM : THE OFFICIAL VIOLENCE

Soon after the army's operation at the Golden Temple, the security forces launched operation Woodrose, a concerted counter-terrorism campaign in July and August 1994. The operation was conducted all over Punjab by the army, police and para-military forces covering practically every important village and gurdwara.<sup>74</sup> A Delhi-based human rights organisation, Citizens for Democracy, has noted in its Report to the Nation that the civil administration was replaced by a virtual Army rule during operation Woodrose.<sup>75</sup> The report has cited a case in which a Junior Commissioned Officer of the Army disobeyed a Chief Judicial Magistrate's order inside a court and threatened to shoot him.<sup>76</sup> The report has also presented copies of affidavits submitted by people illegally arrested and tortured by the security forces.

Complaints of excesses and torture of ordinary people by the police and the use of under-cover and vigilante organisations continued in the subsequent years though the situation improved after the Akali government led by Barnala came to power. There is little evidence to suggest that the people of the minority communities ever formed vigilante organisations in Punjab. However a large number of such organisations were operating in Punjab in mid eighties. It was being alleged that the police were using unauthorised spotters and under cover agents to fight insurgents. Towards the end of eighties, Punjab police were being helped in their anti-terrorism operations by several under-cover organisations which operated in an extremely low-key fashion and never issued any press releases. When press reports about them appeared in the regional and national press, the police top brass either denied their existence completely or called them vigilante organisations who were operating without their permission or concurrence.<sup>77</sup> Two of the most notorious leaders of such vigilante organisations were

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<sup>74</sup> Among the para military forces deployed in Punjab were mainly the Border Security Force (BSF), Central Reserve Police force (CRPF), Indo-Tibet Border Police (ITBP) apart from the Punjab Police (PP) and the Punjab Armed Police (PAP). Besides, forces were also called from neighbouring states.

<sup>75</sup> The CFD Report to the Nation p. 33.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. p. 34

<sup>77</sup> India Today, September 15, 1988, pp. 74-7

Dalbir Singh and Santokh Singh Kala, both former employees of the state's police. The police never officially conceded that they had been backed or armed them until Dalbir Singh went astray and killed two senior police officers.<sup>78</sup> The operation was completely exposed when Chaman Lal, an Inspector General of Police commanding operations in the border areas, fell out with the top brass and publicly criticised such unlawful activities. The officer's disclosures corroborated human rights organisations' allegations that the police were using questionable methods in their fight against terrorism.

The security forces argued that they were being made to use ruthless methods because the judiciary was unable to perform normally. Between 1981 and 1986, the terrorists managed to kill as many as 69 police officials who were put on the 'hit list' but the government could not succeed in getting a single conviction for the policemen's murders.<sup>79</sup> Those arrested by the police were easily granted bail by the intimidated local courts. The insurgents killed several judicial officials, including judges, in various parts of Punjab for failing to grant bail to their comrades. In the meantime Rajiv Gandhi's Congress party government was following the policy of tougher actions. He appointed Sidharth Shankar Ray, who is often accused of illegally liquidating Naxalites in the Sixties, as governor, and J F Rebeiro a tough officer from Bombay as the police chief of Punjab.<sup>80</sup> Rebeiro and his deputy, KPS Gill, who later took his place, were following a 'bullet-for-bullet policy' ignoring allegations of fake encounters and human rights abuses. In 1989 the security forces conducted their second major operation at the Golden Temple in Amritsar where, after a ten-day siege, several wanted men surrendered to the para-military forces.

#### THE PRESS AND NEWS CENSORSHIP IN PUNJAB :

India has a strong traditions of democracy and independent press. Except the electronic media, which is now going through privatisation, the media has been free from governmental control ever since the country's independence in 1947. The Indian press is divided into national, regional and sub-regional groups. Vertically, the whole system is further divided into English, Hindi and language Press. The country's politics revolves around regional, communal and ethnic issues. The regional and vernacular press is normally ahead of the national media in breaking local stories despite limited resources and lack of infrastructure. Unlike the secular editorial

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Kohli, A. (1990) p. 373.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. p. 372

policies of the English press and its mixed readership, the editorial perspectives of the regional press are often aligned with the interests of a region's ethnic communities which in Punjab's case are the Hindus and Sikhs.

The electronic media in India has not passed through the same process of development as the print media. Owing to a government policy of direct control by the Information and Broadcasting Ministry, the radio and television were not allowed to cover incidents of violence like other media organisations. The whole system of television and radio news production has been devoid of a local network of independent reporters and correspondents. As a result, the radio or TV news are centrally governed by a newsroom which has been more akin to the bureaucracy in other government departments rather than part of a news organisation.

The 'journalists' working for the electronic media hardly enjoy the same degree of autonomy or personal space as their counterparts in the print media. The only space that the various regional centres of the radio and TV newsrooms have had in terms of producing news is that they could use stories filed by the two news agencies, Press Trust of India (PTI) and United News of India (UNI). News items are often approved and 'passed' by the Ministry's bureaucracy through a process of "reference upwards." The main thrust of the electronic media in India over the past few decades has been to highlight the government policies, development and the speeches of ministers and senior officials. However, in the past few years, the private companies have been given a larger role in the TV's programme productions even though the news and current affairs programmes are mostly centrally produced and those produced by the private companies are closely monitored by the I and B Ministry. Because of these constraints it is very difficult to compare the newspapers' coverage of violence news with that of the electronic media. That is why the electronic media has not been included in the present analysis and the construction of 'terrorism' is studied only in the newspapers.

India's national press is ideologically more secular than the regional press, partly because it cannot afford to be sectarian for commercial reasons. It has to cover many regions and areas where different religions are practised and different languages are spoken. Unlike the regional papers which are mostly owned by local industrialists and traders, the national papers are owned by the country's top business houses with financial stakes spread all over the country. Almost all national papers and the two main news agencies, Press Trust of India (PTI) and the United News of India (UNI), have correspondents in Chandigarh and Amritsar. The agencies' correspondents are

posted at these two offices and they also sort out and despatch news copy sent by stringers in other cities. The regional papers have reporters and stringers in virtually every district of the region.

The only occasion when the government imposed official press censorship in Punjab was during and immediately after Operation Bluestar.<sup>81</sup> A day before the operation began, all Indians working for foreign papers and all foreign correspondents were driven out of Amritsar by the army in a special bus.<sup>82</sup> The only foreign correspondents known to have managed to stay back were Mark Tully of the BBC and Brahma Challaney of the Associated Press (AP). A criminal case was later filed against Challaney for his reporting of Operation Bluestar.<sup>83</sup> The censorship was conducted more as an army operation than as a civil decree. After the expulsion of the foreign correspondents, army technicians disconnected all telephone lines in Amritsar.<sup>84</sup> As a result almost all Indian journalists stationed in Amritsar and those who had managed to stay back could not file their reports for a couple of days after the operation. General impression among journalists is that the operation could have been better documented and less mystified had the government allowed a limited or even controlled press coverage. On many occasions, the government itself contradicted its own figures and statements about the extent of violence during the operation. The AP journalist, Brahma Challaney, who gave the police a slip and stayed back in Amritsar and later faced charges of sedition, gave the figure of 200 soldiers dead which was reduced by the authorities to 96.<sup>85</sup> However, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi quoted the figure of 700 soldiers dead while addressing Nagpur session of his party's students' wing.<sup>86</sup> Obviously there were several opinions within the government about whether it was better to play down or to play up the number of those killed in the operation.

The Indian government seems to have learnt after the operation that blocking institutional channels of information through censorship encourages rumours and helps create a parallel, word of mouth, propaganda mechanism, capable of causing greater harm to the state than the news it manages to block. That is why, perhaps, the Indian government did not impose official censorship on two latter occasions -- during Operation Black Thunder-II at the Golden Temple in 1989 and during the siege of the Hazratbal shrine in Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir in 1994. On both these

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<sup>81</sup> Apart from the 19 months of internal emergency between 1975 and 1977 when Mrs Gandhi imposed press censorship on the nation's media and during the country's wars with Pakistan and China.

<sup>82</sup> Kirpekar, S (1984) in Amarjit Kaur et al, p. 80

<sup>83</sup> Tully and Jacob (1985) p. 190

<sup>84</sup> Gupta, S (1984) in Amarjit Kaur et al, p 75.

<sup>85</sup> The CFD Report to the Nation (1985) p. 6

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.



occasions, scores of local, national and international mediamen were allowed free movement in the disturbed areas all through the period of the siege and all official facilities were extended to them by the state's public relations department. Unlike Operation Bluestar when journalists were not allowed to go near the temple and the entire Punjab was declared out of bounds for the foreign media, newsmen were served with regular but carefully controlled information and sometimes with hot breakfast while covering the siege on later occasions.

All attempts at censorship in post-Bluestar Punjab proved highly controversial. In August 1990, the government attempted to curb "objectionable advertisements and subversive writings" by extending provisions of the Indian Penal Code (I.P.C) and the Terrorism and Disruptive Activities (prevention) Act (T.A.D.A.). These were criticised by many human rights activists as 'draconian' or 'black laws'.<sup>87</sup> The administration left the decision of what is objectionable to the newspapers' discretion even though an official memo empowered all district magistrates in Punjab to "enter newspapers and related premises and seize and forfeit papers and publications violative of the Section 95 of the Cr.P.C."<sup>88</sup> One of the official reasons given for this extraordinary power was to safeguard against the imposition of a press censorship by the terrorists. The Punjab Governor wrote to the Chairman of the Council on February 4, 1991 to this effect.<sup>89</sup>

Although it was fairly clear that the government was looking for a reason to impose censorship in Punjab, it got some political mileage while publicising the terrorists' threats to the press. Several underground organisations, including the Panthic Committee, had issued a code of conduct for the media. Some of these organisations had earlier issued warnings for the liquor, tobacco and meat sellers under what was called a 'social reform movement.' The Panthic Committee's guideline for the press stipulated that no newspaper or news organisation would be allowed to call members of armed underground organisations as "terrorists." The words they suggested in place of 'terrorist', '*Atankwadi*', or '*Atwadi*' were 'militant' and '*kharku*.' The editors of the Punjab-based papers were also asked to carry the above directive in full in the next day's papers. However, when this news item was carried in the *Tribune*, government issued a notification through Chandigarh's administration to the *Tribune* and seized copies of the edition.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Tarkunde, V M, Justice. (1985) in foreword of the CFD report to the nation pp. 3-4.

<sup>88</sup> Press Council of India Report, January and July 1991. Lancer International New Delhi. p. 88

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p. 87

<sup>90</sup> Ibid. p. 88

A similar notification was issued by another faction (Jaffarwal faction) of the Panthic Committee by its underground five members on February 20, 1991. It gave editors and journalists 20 days time "to see that its code of conduct for counter-censorship was observed by all the concerned parties."<sup>91</sup> The notification addressed the newspaper owners, editors, journalists, news agency staff, directors, station directors and other officials of the All India Radio and the state controlled television and demanded them to make sure that the material used by them was "not against the militants and is not misleading" or else "they will face the wrath of Panthic Committee." The hawkers, distributors and truck owners who transported and sold newspapers were also instructed to "note that the bundles of newspapers they are carrying should not have any material which is against the militants."<sup>92</sup> The state's journalists were clearly sandwiched between the warnings issued by the underground organisations and the government officers. In the meantime, some insurgents abducted and killed the station director of the regional television centre in Jalandhar. Several other journalists were also threatened and attacked. The journalists based in Punjab realised they could neither counter nor ignore the insurgents' censorship but at the same time they fought the government's attempts at overt or covert censorship.<sup>93</sup>

The paper which suffered maximum damage under government censorship was the Jalandhar-based Punjabi daily, *Ajit*. Several thousand copies of the paper were confiscated and destroyed by the administration on several occasions in early 1991 (7th, 20th and 27th February and 3rd and 12th March 1991) Following is the English translation of a typical press note based news story published in the *Ajit* which was considered 'objectionable' by the government:

" Batala Feb. 6---An important meeting of Khalistan Armed Police was held at some unknown place under the presidentship of its deputy chief , Bhai Amarjot Singh Khalsa. In this meeting deep shock was expressed at the untimely death of its chief Bhai Gurmej Singh Dharmkot. An appeal to observe a bandh (strike) in Amritsar and Gurdaspur was made in protest against the killing of Bhai Gurmej Singh." (50,000 copies of the paper on 7th February were seized under the provisions of the Act)"<sup>94</sup>

The Hind Samachar Group's Hindi, Punjabi and Urdu papers cater to the Hindu readers just as daily *Ajit* caters to the Sikhs. The group was a victim of insurgents'

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<sup>91</sup> Panthic Committee notification (20-2-91) " Sri Akal Takht Sahib, Sri Amritsar ji" quoted in The Press Council of India Report. p. 186.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid. pp. 186-87.

<sup>93</sup> Press Council of India Report, Annexure 24. p. 191.

<sup>94</sup> *Ajit* Feb. 7th issue. (News item quoted in the Press Council Report. P. 185)

wrath. Two of its best known editors, Lala Jagat Narain and Ramesh Chandra, were assassinated by the insurgents. As many as 12 of its reporters or stringers, its news editor and one of its chief sub editors were shot between 1981 and 1993. According to a paper brought out by the group's present chief editor, Vijay Kumar Chopra, armed militants tried to close down the paper by threatening to kill its staff members and trying to cripple its economy. Even the readers and distributors of the group were intimidated and attacked.<sup>95</sup> According to Mr Chopra his staff members killed over the past ten years included 20 agents and sub agents, 22 hawkers and 2 drivers of delivery vans.<sup>96</sup>

The underground organisations' threats were not limited to people perceived as their enemies. During 1986-87 the insurgents brought out a list of 13 do's and don'ts as a part of their 'social reform movement' aimed at 'reforming' the Sikh masses. This included boycott of tobacco, liquor, meat and barber shops. Hundreds of barber shops were burned down or forcibly closed during the campaign. A dress code was announced for Sikh men, women and school going children. The campaign called for killing those members of the sect who visited *Radhaswami deras*.<sup>97</sup> The dictat also 'prohibited' giving or accepting dowry and ostentatious displays during weddings. Many newspapers printed news to this effect and held editorial discussions on the movement's 'merits' and 'demerits' thereby keeping the issue in the news agenda. Many other Punjabi dailies including the *Aj Di Awaz* regularly carried such news items attributed to press releases received by post.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Sunday Issue 25th June 1989, pp 60-61.

<sup>96</sup> Mr Chopra was interviewed during the field trip. He gave a list of 62 journalists and non-journalists associated with The Hind Samachar Group of Publications to be killed and 11 to be injured in attacks by insurgent organisations.

<sup>97</sup> Dang Satyapal (1988) p. 26

<sup>98</sup> *Aj Di Awaz*, May 29, 1991 (quoted in the Press Council of India Report p. 198)

## CHAPTER THREE

### **MEDIA, TERRORISM AND THE STATE : A RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE**

The routine process in which events of violence are presented as news is a vital part of the public debate and popular understanding on terrorism. The questions of how the whole conflict is mediated and how the issues of terrorism and counter-terrorism have been defined are perhaps as significant as the debate itself. The research questions discussed in the earlier chapter revolve around the relationship among three crucial aspects : Terrorism and counter-terrorism; 'free' media; and the liberal democratic state. This chapter carries on the discussion on the same lines in three separate parts. The first part traces the roots of 'terrorism' and briefly discusses the problem of defining the term or classifying its course in typologies. The second part develops a framework of media sociology; and the third part discusses the media's relationship with terrorism in the overall setting of a liberal democratic state and reviews some recent literature on the subject.

#### TERRORISM : CONCEPT AND DEFINITION

One of the earliest recorded use of terror as a means of political or ideological conflict was in the West Asia. The Jewish Zealots' violent campaign against the Romans in the Palestine of A.D 6-135 could be interpreted as an ancient form of terrorism.<sup>1</sup> The Zealots used violence to create a psychological impact in their fight for freedom from the Roman occupiers who had crushed their earlier uprising by crucifying 2,000 Zealots.<sup>2</sup> Rapoport (1984), Schlagheck (1988), and Weimann and Winn (1993) cite several other examples from the West Asian history from A.D 68 to the eleventh and twelfth century where several different religious groups have used violence akin to today's terrorism for achieving social or political objectives. Walter Laqueur (1977) has compared some of these movements with contemporary terrorism and found striking similarities.

Phrases like 'terror', 'red terror' and 'reign of terror' were originally used during the French Revolution in the late eighteenth century. The word 'terrorism' stood for violent suppression by the French ruling section of the mass uprising. Weimann and Winn hold on the basis of accepted historiography that terrorism was employed on a

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<sup>1</sup> Flavius Josephus (1960)

<sup>2</sup> Weimann and Winn (1993) p. 17

large scale during the "popular phase" of the French Revolution between 1792 and 1794.<sup>3</sup> Officially, terror became the order of the day "under a decree of September 5, 1793" which formalised the reign of terror (Schlagheck 1988).<sup>4</sup> Wardlaw (1982) reports that among the most significant examples of the use of violence for ideological reasons in the nineteenth century is of Narodnaya Volya (or the peoples' will party) which operated in Russia between 1878 and 1881.<sup>5</sup> The author quotes Morozov, one of Narodnaya Volya's leading theoreticians as saying that "terrorism was a new cost effective form of struggle which would overthrow the Tsarist Tyranny." However, even at that time, terror was used by both sides, the anarchist revolutionaries as well as the Russian authorities. The only difference Wardlaw makes between the two types of activities is that the anarchist terror was an individual activity whereas the Russian terrorism was a directed campaign.<sup>6</sup>

The present century is full of such armed uprisings, rebellions and social movements all over the world in which violence and intimidation have been used for aims ranging from freedom struggles to political and religious revolutions. It is ironical that during the French revolution, the term stood for organised intimidation not by the revolutionary sections of the masses but by the French ruling faction in its attempt to suppress the uprising. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, phrases like "Reign of terror" and "terror, red terror" were extensively used for the party in power in France which "remorselessly shed the blood" of those it regarded as "obnoxious".<sup>7</sup> Hence, the term terrorist, according to the dictionary, "applied to the Jacobins and their agents and the Partisans in the French revolution...during the reign of terror."<sup>8</sup>

Over the past two centuries, the expression has acquired several new meanings and connotations. Its connotations have steadily evolved through incidents -- and apprehensions -- of gory violence. Unlike its use in French revolution, 'terrorism' in today's world is mostly used for organised political violence against the state. More recently the media, public pressure groups, academics and human rights activists have started to use "state terrorism" to define the state's violent repression of peoples' movements. There is hardly any modern society in the world which is free from organised terror of either state or non-state variety.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 20

<sup>4</sup> Schlagheck, D M, (1988) quoted in *ibid.*, p 20.

<sup>5</sup> Wardlaw, G (1982) p. 19

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Meaning of the word "Terrorism" in Oxford English Dictionary.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

Terror is 'the state of being terrified or greatly frightened;' its dictionary meaning is intense fear, fright or dread.<sup>9</sup> Thus the feeling of being in terror is the combination of intense human fear and anxiety. The connotations of the word 'terror' are alarming and evocative. It creates an atmosphere of lurking fear. Douglas Pike calls a terrorised village in Vietnam during the war "a case of collective anxiety neurosis" a victim of which seeks nothing but relief.<sup>10</sup> Through his example of a war-affected Vietnamese village, Pike quotes an American psychiatrist in Vietnam who describes how terror leaves an individual anguished and fragmented within. According to the author, a terrorised individual "searches desperately to fix his personal security."<sup>11</sup>

Terror is a psycho-social phenomenon which isolates a human being from his society. It casts its shadow over every individual, whether he is affected by violence or not. It threatens the conventional societal support structure on which people's sense of safety and security rests. Terror throws things haywire shattering the very foundations of public order. For the individuals living in a constant state of terror, insecurity strikes like an absurdity -- hitting an individual in the most unpredictable times and situations. In the words of Albert Camus: "At any street the feeling of absurdity can strike any man in the face."<sup>12</sup> In a day to day existence, terror also hits an affected individual just like that: anytime and anywhere as a distressing fear of death. Like the absurd, terror reflects the "absence of correspondence or congruity between the mind's need for coherence and the incoherence of the world."<sup>13</sup> Cruickshank (1959) discusses absurdity in terms of how an individual experiences "anxiety, disappointment, a sense of estrangement and horror of death."<sup>14</sup> It is the incidental nature of victims of modern-day terrorism which creates a pall of tension and gloom in today's hectic life. An individual finds it impossible to put his finger on the real cause or effect of terror and yet he is completely under its spell. Camus has a similar description of absurdity: "as it is in its distressing nudity, in its light without effulgence, it is elusive."<sup>15</sup> Another psychiatrist, F. Ochberg brings out this sense more clearly :

"...in psychiatry, terror is an extreme form of anxiety, often accompanied by aggression, denial, constricted affect, and followed by frightening imagery and intrusive, repetitive recollection."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Douglas Pike, cited in Schmid and Jongamann (1988) p. 16

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Camus Albert (1955) p. 16.

<sup>13</sup> John Cruickshank (1959)

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Camus Albert (1955) p. 16

<sup>16</sup> F. Ochberg. quoted by Schmid and Jongamann (1988) p. 19

Contrary to its use during the French revolution, terrorism today is a much more value-loaded word and its connotations are essentially interpretative. What makes a variety of acts -- leaflet distribution, murder or a bank robbery -- a 'terrorist act' is the sense of purpose attached to it. For violence and general crime to be terroristic, a sense of political, ideological or religious purpose is vital. Unlike bombing of a public place, what is often described as state terrorism is often rationalised as something like a "painful necessity." But the legality and justification of terrorism of all sorts depends on factors like from which side of the fence the observer is watching and how does the violence, physically or psychologically, affect him ?

Defining terrorism is highly problematic. So diverse are the contradictions inherent to the concept that governments, institutions, societies and even academics differ on almost every aspect of its definition. The range of interpretations vary from an unsymbolic assassination attempt by an isolated individual to the nuclear powers' threat of atomic bomb explosion for the man on the street. Organisations and institutions ranging from airlines to the United Nations, however, need to define the term for legal and functional purposes. Academic researchers, journalists and world organisations strive for a relatively value-neutral and scientific definition of terrorism for the purpose of intellectual exploration as well as conflict resolution. One of the biggest hurdles is the paradox that somebody's terrorist may be somebody else's hero.

Chomsky (1989) refers to a news item which quotes an Israeli army chief of staff as saying that "the number of Palestinians wounded in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip has almost doubled in the recent weeks but...the army has failed to reduce violence in the occupied areas."<sup>17</sup> According to the author's translation in what he calls "intelligible English" the army actually doubled its violent actions to increase casualties "by expanding its violent attacks in remote and peaceful villages."<sup>18</sup> However, what the army actually failed to do was not to reduce violence but to dissuade people from believing in self government. For the Israeli authorities and the US media, Chomsky says, "an attempt by the people to run their own affairs is 'violence' and a brutal attack to teach them who rules them is 'preventing violence.'"<sup>19</sup>

A lack of consensus does not mean that enough academic attempts have not been made to define the term. Several social scientists have offered broad definitions purely

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<sup>17</sup> Chomsky (1989) p. 120

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

for the purpose of further research. Schmid and Jongamann have devoted more than 100 pages of their research guide on terrorism to conceptual questions.<sup>20</sup> In a later study, Schmid and Jongamann have taken it much further by citing and discussing at length more than a hundred definitions of terrorism given by experts in various disciplines of social sciences.<sup>21</sup> The authors have also analysed these definitions to bring out commonalties. R P Hoffman (1984) has devoted his entire doctoral dissertation to the problem of offering a "universal" definition of terrorism.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, comprehensive definitions from policy perspectives are offered by R.S. Cline and Yonah Alexander (1985), P. Wilkinson (1976) and David Rapoport (1974), among several others. So diverse are some of the definitions attempted so far that the umbrella of "terrorism" covers almost the entire gamut of social and individual violence.

There is little disagreement over the position that terrorism refers to the use of violence and terror for political ends (Alexander and Picard, 1991; Bassiouni, 1982; Bell, 1991; Clutterbuck, 1977; Herman and Chomsky, 1988; Laqueur, 1977; Miller, 1982; Livingstone, 1994; Schlesinger et al, 1983; Schmid and Graaf, 1982; Weimann and Winn, 1993). The differences crop up as soon as one starts discussing perpetrators or their ideologies. If terrorism is a form of political violence, there must be a set of political ideas that perpetrators of such violence propagate or believe in. The basis for these ideas could be political or economic, religious or ethnic, or a combination of all or some of them. These ideas could be vague or very well defined but it is due to ideology that "one man's terrorist may be another man's freedom fighter" (Clutterbuck 1977) or "today's terrorists may be tomorrow's prime ministers" (Peter Taylor, 1986).

The foremost problem with those taking extreme position against any sort of terrorism (particularly those representing the state and its policy perspective) is that they deny terrorists any ideology whatsoever. They tend to look at the perpetrators of political violence as ordinary criminals. The opponents of this position try to assert their ideology in order to justify violence against innocent people. Many social scientists maintain that ideology, however rudimentary it may be, is essential for certain acts of violence to be terroristic.<sup>23</sup> Obviously, the issue of ideology is central to the debate of how political violence is to be described. The issues is taken up in the following pages while discussing the role of religion in providing moral justification for violence as

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<sup>20</sup> Schmid and Jongamann (1984) First ed.

<sup>21</sup> Schmid and Jongamann (1988)

<sup>22</sup> R.P. Hoffman. Ph.D. dissertation, Claremont Graduate School, 1984. Quoted by Schmid and Jongamann (1988) *ibid.*, pp. 3-4

<sup>23</sup> Wilkinson (1974) pp. 17-18.



also in the section on "media, terrorism and the state." Chapters five six and seven have also drawn heavily on the subject. The attempt is to obviate the above controversy by treating ideology not as a set of rigid or written down ideas or as something outside the domain of daily life but as the common-sense awareness of social processes. (The Glasgow University Media Group, 1976)

Many social scientists who have worked specifically on aspects of political violence have used ideology as a dividing line between 'isolated acts of terror' and 'terrorism.' In his study of the Zulu rulers of the last century, Walters (1969) has proposed five conditions necessary for the maintenance of a terroristic regime, foremost of which is a "shared ideology" capable of offering a justification for violence.<sup>24</sup> In his typology of contemporary terrorism, Wilkinson (1977) has differentiated between four major types of terrorism : Criminal, psychic, war and political. One of the most comprehensive and focused analysis of the modern day political violence is offered by Schmid and Graaf (1982). The authors have underlined the ideological aspect of contemporary terrorism in their typology which differentiates among political, criminal and pathological terrorism. Out of these, the present study is concerned with political terrorism which is sub-divided by Schmid and Graaf into insurgent, vigilante and state terrorism.<sup>25</sup>

The main difference between the typologies offered by Schmid and Graaf and Wilkinson is that according to former's typology, terrorism has a dimension of 'sustained policy' to it. The above mentioned four macro categories in Wilkinson's typology are clear and exclusive, but their further sub-divisions are confusing and at times unnecessary. For instance, the dividing lines between revolutionary and sub-revolutionary terrorism or those between police terror, state terror and prison terror are blurred and often non-existent for all practical purposes.<sup>26</sup> The typology offered by Schmid and Graaf is clearer. It deals with relatively less number of sub-categories which can also be seen in terms of state and non-state actors. Besides, there is very little scope for confusion between the categories of political, criminal and pathological terrorism. However, one of the problems with the typology is that the authors have seen vigilante terrorism completely independent of State terrorism which is often not the case.

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<sup>24</sup> Walter, E V (1969) pp. 341-2

<sup>25</sup> Schmid and Graaf (1982)

<sup>26</sup> Wilkinson (1977) p. 43

Schmid and Graaf (1982) have proposed that every act of violence is an act of communication. The authors maintain : "Violence aims at behaviour modification by coercion. Propaganda aims at the same by persuasion. Terrorism is a combination of the two."<sup>27</sup> The problem with this approach is that firstly it does not see any terroristic action free from propaganda aim. It is difficult to explain on the basis of this approach how certain acts are designed chiefly for retaliation (e.g. assassination of a key opponent), settling internal rivalries or for fund-raising (a daring bank robbery) etc. Secondly, this particular approach of Schmid and Graaf somewhat undermines the political or ideological nature of terroristic violence. Schlesinger (1983) has found contradictory evidence from the examples offered by Schmid and Graaf themselves to prove that "political violence is not reducible to communicative behaviour alone..."<sup>28</sup> However, it may be argued here that even if the communication aspect of terrorism can not explain everything, it has an intrinsic link with the media's criterion of newsworthiness. This means that every act of terrorism, whether or not perpetrated with the publicity motive, is eminently newsworthy. Reasons for this enigma are perhaps to be found in the functioning of the mass media rather than in the actions of those described as terrorists.

It is essential, therefore, to look at how events become news before going ahead with the media's relationship with terrorism. In the following pages a discussion on the macro and micro processes of news production would be followed by journalists' descriptions of acts of violence and their perpetrators. The discussion on the media coverage of terrorism and counter-terrorism would be continued after developing a conceptual framework for the media's overall functioning in a liberal democratic society.

#### MEDIA SOCIOLOGY AND NEWS PRODUCTION :

The process of news production is often described as random reaction to random events (Whale, 1970). The assumption fits in perfectly with another one: News is a process by which the society comes to know itself. This understanding of the media-society relationship helps journalists to form a 'working ideology' for themselves which may have little to do with the actual process and practice of news production (Fishman, 1980). The basic fallacy in the above position is that mediamen often take for granted the distinction between fact and interpretation (Tuchman, 1978). Therefore

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<sup>27</sup> Schmid and Graaf (1982) p. 14

<sup>28</sup> Schlesinger (1983) pp. 156-57

it is not a question of understanding an event 'as it happens' but 'as it is reported' (Ericson, Baranek and Chan, 1987).

Modern journalism is replete with impressive professional practices and inbuilt provisions for improvement and self correction. So is the modern democratic state with all its mechanisms ranging from participatory and remedial social systems to sophisticated methods of control. In spite of a very special relationship with the state, the 'free' media have to live up to high expectations and fulfil tall requirements. They have to stay crisp and fresh, score over competitors, make money, serve their controllers' interests and yet, establish credibility among common people as 'neutral' conveyers of the 'truth.' A large number of journalists do strive to be impartial, objective and impersonal. In their pursuit for objectivity, they often try to rely on the accounts of 'independent' sources, witnesses and victims, rather than purely on their own impressions. A news story without quotes and attributions is considered to be weak. However, newsmen's quest for objectivity does not contradict that journalism operates as a form of fiction with its own conventions and within its own set of ideological, literary and other constraints (Manoff and Schudson, 1986).

The process of justifying events as 'news' involves a narration which brings in a set order (such as pyramidal structure), suspense and drama among other things. According to Schudson (1989) the charge is not that the journalists 'fake' news but it is simply that they 'make' news through a variety of professional norms and methods. The requirements of good presentation introduce elements which make a story more interesting, visually more attractive, and full of other 'relevant facts' such as quotes and hunches, backgrounders and parallels which may have little to do with the event itself. Then there are news angles to be taken which is like discovering or cultivating a 'workable slant' to justify news contexts of events. There is a certain creativity involved in the professionalism of good media craft. Schlesinger (1989) describes this professionalism as an 'all purpose defence' against outside attack. News is manufactured, distributed and sold through a chain of more or less accepted professional practices (Golding, 1979; Fishman, 1980; and Schudson, 1989). The process of construction is fraught with its own, almost automatic, inclusions and omissions. Supporting the view that news is a constructed reality, Tuchman, (1978) compares it with all public documents possessing their own internal validity. Cohen, Adoni and Bantz (1990) have defined the construction of reality as "a dialectical process in which human beings act both as the creators and as products of their social world. This is a consequence of a special human faculty of externalisation and

objectivation of one's own internalised and subjective meanings, experiences and actions."<sup>29</sup>

Methods of analyses of news, their construction and meaning production, are built upon the nature of social and cultural structures in a given society. They are also based upon effectiveness of symbolic forms in the maintenance of change of those structures. (Collins, Curran, Garnham, Scannell, Schlesinger and Sparks, 1986). According to them, such analyses are oriented to consider mass media as "aspects of cultural systems and of social life." Much of recent mass communication research is devoted to studying and demonstrating that the news as a cultural package depends more on the forces that produce it rather than on the events it claims to portray (Golding and Elliot, 1979). The chapters on content analysis and linguistic variations have used a constructionist framework in order to study news as a finished product. In the following pages the constructionist framework is analysed in relation with social and political processes of a liberal democratic society as well as professional practices of a media organisation, first in macro and then in micro perspectives:

The discussion on the media's functioning at the **macro-level** concentrates on a wider framework involving the media's social role in a liberal democratic society. It evaluates what role, knowledge in general and information in particular, play in political processes. The idea is to present an overall perspective of signs and symbols, language and rituals and dominant themes which are an integral part of news production. The focus is on the institutional means by which construction of symbols and meanings is carried out and distributed. The discussion at the **micro-level** examines the processes and influences which govern the production of news within the media organisations. The interaction between news and other source organisations is also analysed. These processes naturally involve journalistic practices, methods of news gathering and various norms and principles which help shape news as a product.

#### NEWS PRODUCTION AT MACRO-LEVEL :

The mass media serve as a system for communicating messages and symbols to the general populace (Herman and Chomsky, 1988). They play a vital role in mediating various political processes in liberal democratic societies. Within the parameters of democratic polity, the mass media play a representative and policing role and protect the interests of the system and its powerful institutions like the 'independent' judiciary, 'free' market and the 'security' forces among others. The mass media operate at several

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<sup>29</sup> Cohen, Adoni and Bantz (1990) p. 34.

levels. Their working and operation can be studied in many different ways and means. On one level they produce and distribute "commodified knowledge" (Ericson, Baranek and Chan, 1991) to a variety of consumers. On another level they provide knowledge about the 'authorised knowers' and where they stand in society's knowledge-information hierarchy (Ericson, Baranek and Chan, 1987). Most significant part of the authors' analysis of mass media as an instrument of visualising deviance and representing order is that they look upon mass media as a part of both democracy's proliferation as also its control mechanism.

On yet another level complementary to the ones discussed above, mass media "simplify and standardise issues of power, conflict and human integrity and build them into a daily ritual" (Gerbner 1988). All this fits in the general perspective that the media operate within the society's power structure which is governed by its own dynamics, of which the media may be a part, but are certainly not the prime movers. Therefore, it is argued that the forces historically at work in societies are more potent than the media (McQuail, 1987). The media's role in reinforcing the inevitability of authority, law enforcement and justice is a part of the liberal democratic state's control mechanism. Its vital institutions like the bureaucracy, legislature and judiciary have intrinsic and legitimised links with the media. According to Ericson et al (1991) "Both the law and news media are disciplinary and normalising social discourses that are intertextually related to each other as part of continuing dialogue about terms and conditions of social order."<sup>30</sup> As for the people, mass media provide "a stream of diagnostic symbols" for their daily actions and reactions.<sup>31</sup> The normalising discourses produced by the media as well as legal institutions like the judiciary draw heavily on society's common sense and precedent.

Ericson et al (1987) assign to media the central role of watchdog of dominant social values on behalf of those seen as agents of social control. Their normalising function includes an articulation of the bounds of behaviours in everyday social life. Newsmen not only reflect how society and the state designate deviance and effect control but are actively involved themselves as agents. The 'man-biting-dog-principle' explains why any sort of deviance is readily picked up as news from virtually all organised spheres of life. If deviance is a departure from the stability of social order, and if deviance is also news, then it would be difficult to argue that the media only visualise order and

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<sup>30</sup> Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1991) maintain that as "disciplinary and normalising discourses, law and news are both fundamentally concerned with policing....the news media and law also share an affinity in claiming that their policing is in the public interest. The basis of this claim is the appearance of neutrality." p. 7

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

stability and not change. One of the explanations of this problematic can be derived from the classical theories of sociology of deviance (Durkheim 1938; Starss, 1978 and Foucault, 1980). Many theories of crime come around to the point that deviant behaviour is not an outcome of society's weakness but an important condition for preserving stability of social life. Durkheim (1938) holds that criminal behaviour (as a form of deviance) not only affects change but also helps to determine what forms society's collective sentiments will take. Ericson et al (1987) equate today's reporting of bad news with public hangings of yesteryears. Such an understanding of the media's role in social processes is crucial for studying the coverage of terrorism and its portrayal. Many of these processes are understood by newsmen as ordinary members of society and many others as their mediators. The significance of various political and social issues' is inbuilt in the media's political economy which, together with professional practices of journalism, determine how deviance is to be perceived and portrayed.

Most 'free' press organisations have similar structures, hierarchies, resources, work practices and standards of efficiency and ethics. Their working ideologies are more or less shared just as journalists working for them have similar ways and means of interpreting the world (Chibnal, 1977; Tuchman, 1978; Ericson, Baranek and Chan, 1987; Glasgow Univ. Media Group, 1976 and 1980). Thus the news produced on the "cultural assembly line" (Gerbner 1988) with the help of organisational sources or 'relevant knowers', rarely clashes with the dominant thinking prevalent in organised spheres of life. Looking from the perspective of knowledge and power, one can view much of journalists' work as common sense reproduction of the specialised knowledge of their sources.

Society can be stratified in terms of knowledge (Bohme 1984). More specifically, defined in terms of societal components of labour and property, knowledge is a form of cultural capital.<sup>32</sup> The journalists' role in such a knowledge society is that of "cultural workmen" whose work and professional practices "provide a means of unpacking the nature of communication".<sup>33</sup> Thus the process of news production involves construction of news events with the help of dormant cultural codes or 'cultural givens.' Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1987) explain that journalists convert run of the mill events into what they call stable beliefs of culture. Certain types of events are considered more newsworthy than other types "primarily because they

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<sup>32</sup> Gouldner (1979)

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

relate to, or 'resonate' with, widely held cultural beliefs."<sup>34</sup> The role of knowledge and culture in much of the cultural workmanship that journalism has come to be could be viewed more lucidly from the perspective of society's power relations. While presenting a more macro relationship between power and knowledge Foucault (1977) has maintained that the knowledge is produced by power and that "power and knowledge imply each other."<sup>35</sup>

The conscious or unconscious process of the media's management of deviance and control is largely dependent on symbols of dominant culture. It can be seen in the media's consensual paradigms that rarely clash with the requirement of the state and its institutions of power. This is also reflected in routine matters such as journalists' dependence on sources, particularly those who figure high on power hierarchy. This takes us back to the earlier position that the society's dominant ideology is functionally very well intertwined with routine practices of news production.(Chibnal, 1977; Tuchman, 1978; Fishman, 1980; Herman and Chomsky 1988;) Because of shared working ideologies, professional practices and areas of operation, competition between two media organisations begets more similarity rather than differences in the content of news coverage. This is not to suggest that journalists are nothing but disseminators of the dominant ideology. Individual journalists do have their space with some sense of autonomy. However, what matters in the longer run and particularly at times of crises, is the overall impact of media as an institution.<sup>36</sup> Hallin (1986) has offered an explanation for resolving this paradox by suggesting that the media are by and large left "autonomous" but deeply enmeshed in Government with an ideological commitment to a "national security consensus."<sup>37</sup> This understanding is crucial for the study of violence related news. The study of sources and themes in Chapter five and interviews with participants of the conflict in Chapter six show how

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<sup>34</sup> Hansen (1994) p. 112.

<sup>35</sup> Foucault (1977) has argued that "there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations." p. 27

<sup>36</sup> Several examples can be given in support of this argument based on long drawn out media events rather than anecdotes. Phillip Knightley (1975,1982) has illustrated this point in the chapter "Korea, the United Nation's War 1950-1953." He maintains that most American correspondents covering the war took their stories in the form of handouts and except a few, most Western reporters' stories were full of what the army wanted them to write. One of the world's most powerful 'free' news agencies, the Associated Press, announced the recapture of Seoul five days before the town actually fell. Knightley recounts that "...practically every correspondent was under instruction from his newspaper, magazine or radio station to play down stories dealing with the sufferings of the Korean people..." p. 332. Hollingsworth (1986) has offered similar examples from the media coverage of miner's strike by the 'independent' British press to suggest that the overall impact of the stories favour the society's dominant sections notwithstanding the good and impartial and very occasional writings by individual reporters. pp 242-285.

<sup>37</sup> Hallin (1986) Quoted by Schlesinger (1989) pp. 283-306

important the issues of national security could be for the sources the media choose to quote significantly more often than others.

The processes of the media and communication are well integrated in the political and economic system. Just as other institutions of a modern liberal democratic state, the media have a well specified role in defining, legitimising and protecting order. The media's ownership facilitates corporate control of public information while the state's laws of official secrecy prevent their access to sensitive information. Herbert Schiller (1989) calls the corporate monopoly of the privatised media and information networks the 'information-cultural complex'.<sup>38</sup> By explaining the ideological basis for the privatisation of information and culture industry, he challenges the popular perception that a privately owned media is a "free marketplace of ideas" just because it is free from governmental control.

It is ironical that the 'free' market which controls the media through private ownership, is considered to be a shield against state control and coercion. The 'liberal' explanations of the free press, which hold sway in the democratic world, is optimistic that "the market will provide appropriate institutions and processes of public communication to support a democratic polity" (Garnham, 1986). The alternative, socialist model of public communication, is readily discarded because of state control. The Soviet and East-European models of communication have not been able to prevent the media from becoming an instrument of the communist party, bureaucracy and the ruling elite. It is, however, easier to demolish the latter model because of its explicit bias in favour of the prevailing order and political status quo. Those who see the contradiction between the market-driven media and democracy irresolvable, pin their hopes on some kind of public sphere of communication (Hollingsworth, 1986; Garnham, 1986; Schiller, 1989; Keane, 1991). These authors stress the importance of a diversity of ownership as desirable for a more fair and democratic media despite reverse trends of the past few decades. The subject of the media's political economy is significant for a better understanding of ideological issues which affect every aspect of media's coverage of social unrest, violence and terrorism. It may not be too risky an assumption here that a less controlled and more diversified 'public service media' would be relatively more sensitive to the needs and wishes of the people. The following arguments, however, suggest that the public

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<sup>38</sup> Schiller (1989) p. 166.



service media remains more of a wishful thinking in today's liberal democratic societies.<sup>39</sup>

With the advent of new technologies and Globalization, the sphere of transnational corporations is spreading, they are penetrating deeper into public life, and yet, the eventual control of world's media empires is slipping into fewer and fewer hands. Herman and Chomsky have listed financial data, affiliations and wealth of some of the world's largest media corporations or their parent companies to establish a direct link between the media giants and the world's most powerful corporate community.<sup>40</sup> Bagdikian (1992) says that only fifty of the largest media organisations account for most of the output of the press, broadcasting, books and movies in the USA.<sup>41</sup> The author calls the handful of people who head these corporations the "new Private Ministry of Information and Culture."<sup>42</sup> Some social scientists have looked at the media as a multi-layered structure in which the top tiers command more prestige, resources and outreach than the lower tiers (Paletz and Entman, 1981; Hess, 1984 and Herman and Chomsky 1988).<sup>43</sup> The centralisation and control of the whole system is maintained in such a way that the top tiers which comprise the government and the wire services define the news agenda and supply the bulk of ready-made news to the media organisations that figure in on the lower tiers.<sup>44</sup> Bagdikian feels that despite the spectacular diversity of the US media, the "actual range of available ideas and serious information is relatively narrow" and he blames the media's ownership for this.<sup>45</sup> For the corporate world, however, the setting of agenda for national and international media is not the end of their objective. It seeks to control, if not take-over, all fora of public convergence and expression. Schiller (1989) has observed that the corporate business has seized most of America's cultural space, a phenomenon which is sure to spread all over the 'free' world. The author calls it "corporate colonisation of consciousness."<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> The examples of a very few democratic countries where the law upholds the right of the victims of vilification by the press to use the same columns to reply or in the states where the opposition press is subsidised by the state in some form or the other are more like exceptions than the rule.

<sup>40</sup> Herman and Chomsky (1988) p. 6-14.

<sup>41</sup> Bagdikian B (1992) p. xviii.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Paletz and Entman (1981) and Hess (1984) have given points to the different tiers of media on a one to 24 scale. Quoted in Herman and Chomsky (1988) p 4.

<sup>44</sup> Herman and Chomsky (1988) have asserted that the four major international wire services-- Associated Press, United Press International, Agence France Presse--account for some 80 per cent of the international news circulating in the world today. The authors quote a survey to establish that the television networks themselves depend heavily on the prestige newspapers, wire services and government for their choice of news, and that is why their autonomy as newsmakers can be easily exaggerated. pp. 5 and 355.

<sup>45</sup> Bagdikian, B. H. (1985) pp. 97-8

<sup>46</sup> Schiller H I (1989) p. 110.

Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model of the 'free' media identifies forces which cause the media to play a "propaganda role" by "mobilising bias." The model underlines that the media serve the purpose of the state and corporate power which are closely inter-linked.<sup>47</sup> Demystifying media's popular image, Chomsky argues, that the "anti-establishment access" of the 'free' media is their "strongest asset" in order to serve their purpose even better. The essential ingredients of the propaganda model are a set of five 'news filters' which stand between the raw material of news and its finished product. The raw material of news must pass through successive filters, leaving only a 'cleansed residue' fit to print. The filters proposed by the authors are the following:

"...(1) The size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth, and profit orientation of the dominant mass-media firms; (2) Advertising as the primary income source of the mass media; (3) The reliance of the media on information provided by government, business and 'experts' funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power; (4) 'Flak' as a means of disciplining the media; and (5) Anti-communism as a national religion and control mechanism. These elements interact with and reinforce one another...They fix the premises of discourse and interpretation, and the definition of what is newsworthy in the first place, and they explain the basis and operation of what amount to propaganda campaigns."<sup>48</sup>

Apart from the five filters, the propaganda model also spells out a way of "dichotomising" propaganda campaigns. This dualism in news coverage is clearly visible and is based on its "serviceability to important domestic power interests."<sup>49</sup> It describes that there are two types of causes and victims for the 'free' media : "worthy" and "unworthy." Herman and Chomsky have cited examples from crucial political events and conflicts 'happening' all over the world in the past few decades and their media coverage. The authors have shown how the victims of similar types of violence taking place more or less at the same time are treated completely differently by the Western media. The examples range from the cases of dissidents in two dictatorships of the early eighties (Poland and Turkey) to shooting down of civilian planes by the

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<sup>47</sup> Herman and Chomsky (1989) p. 10

<sup>48</sup> Herman and Chomsky (1988) p. 2.

<sup>49</sup> To Herman and Chomsky the reference to 'domestic power interests' is essentially vis a vis US politics. One of the problems with the propaganda model is that it concentrates almost completely on the Western media and the Western corporate world. The third world countries figure in mostly as victims which is not without its own validity. However, the corporate giants within the Third World have been using 'free' media in their own countries much to the same benefit as the Western multinationals.

Soviet and Israeli armed forces (KAL 007 and Libyan airliner). The authors have studied and presented a large number of other examples and case studies to show that the corporate control of the Western media is crucial for guarding their masters' interests. In their other books, the two authors have cited dozens of stark examples of the media's choices and omissions from virtually all over the globe.<sup>50</sup>

Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model has many functional problems for using it in research. First and foremost is that it neither takes into account the effect of the media reporting nor its audience. According to Schlesinger (1989) the "perspective assumes that powerful unilinear effects occur."<sup>51</sup> For Schlesinger the problems of audience research have not been addressed in the framework. Secondly, the propaganda model assigns no positive role whatsoever to the media in social change. In other words, mass media in a liberal democratic state are invariably seen as a dangerously retrogressive force. The model also tends to oversimplify the connections between the media practices and social and political processes of daily life. There is no doubt that Herman and Chomsky's understanding of US foreign policy, its corporate interests and that of the Western press is indeed very deep and incisive. Their West-versus-Third-World-paradigm also makes sense when they talk about Latin America and South-East Asia. But the problem arises when the propaganda model is sought to be applied to other liberal democratic societies particularly of Third World countries.

The media's commitment to anti-communism in several Third World countries, including India, falls considerably short of the Western hysteria which comes across in the authors' work.<sup>52</sup> Hence the last filter of the propaganda model is of highly limited use in countries like India. Since its independence in 1947, India has had very close political, economic and cultural ties with the socialist bloc. This, coupled with the world-wide success of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), of which India is a founding member and one of its undisputed leaders, diluted India's hostility towards communism as compared to the Western democracies. The big business and industry, owned by India's monopoly houses, got a sizeable chunk of their profits from trade with the socialist bloc. It is ironical that India's NAM and socialism-inspired reluctance to fully enforce market reforms till the early nineties also helped the monopoly houses, which incidentally own most of India's main newspapers and the media networks.

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<sup>50</sup> Herman (1982); Chomsky (1989); and Herman and Chomsky (1988).

<sup>51</sup> Schlesinger (1989) pp. 296-97

<sup>52</sup> Herman and Chomsky (1988) have called the Western obsession with Communism as their 'religion'.

Besides, it is the experience of many other Third World countries that a section of small and middle-level media, especially in the regional pockets, is a very powerful force in its own political environment. This set of media has a wide range of ownership. It may be owned by the regional elite, political formations or small, regional businessmen but it is by no means under the control of the country's minuscule corporate community, which, according to Chomsky, seeks to centralise the control of the media networks. At the same time the model's first four filters, including profit motive and advertisement-based economy do apply to this section of the media. While it may be argued that the propaganda model may not be useful as a single framework for understanding all the processes governing the media coverage of conflicts, it certainly offers a good macro setting to explain much of the Western media's functioning, and to an extent the functioning of the commercial 'free' media in any capitalist democracy. Compared to the propaganda model, the constructionist framework accounts for many more minute processes which affect the media's portrayal of political processes even though the latter has no real contradiction with its wider understanding. A combination of two approaches can contribute to a more holistic understanding of the media's description of events and processes. The following analysis of the news production at the micro level makes it clear that the process of construction of reality does involve various processes which dominate the state and society's functioning.

#### NEWS PRODUCTION AT MICRO-LEVEL :

As discussed above, the news as a finished product -- and the process of its construction -- carries its own logic which is intrinsically linked to a society's power structure. The following micro perspective concentrates on the functioning of news organisations, particularly newspapers, and their routine practices which are a part of daily news gathering, its packaging and presentation. On a more functional plane, the day to day news production hardly involves an automatic reflection of a "self-evident reality." It involves a frequent use of organisational resources (Gouldner 1979) and intra as well as inter-organisational communication. The process is more like creating, developing or structuring rather than recording the reality.

In the core of journalistic practices is an event's news worthiness. Various analytical techniques have been used to prove that there are routine and almost fixed professional norms of media's news selection.(Chibnal, 1977; Fishman, 1980; Hartley, 1982; Ericson, Baranek and Chan, 1987, Manoff and Schudson, 1986;

Herman, 1986.) These practices come in handy for an automatic and almost mechanical selection of news out of much more material supplied by a variety of wire services, specialised agencies, free lancers and outstation and foreign correspondents. This is in addition to the material generated by the newspaper's own reporters who are assigned exclusive areas of operation called 'news beats.'

A beat is like a reporter's portfolio or his office. Beat reporters in rival dailies in a city work more often with each other and know each other better than many of their colleagues within their own papers. Their beat is an area which covers an entire "domain of activities outside the newsroom." (Fishman, 1980) In a beat like the police or the courts, a large number of organisational sources interpret various inter-connected occurrences for newsmen individually or collectively. With minor variations, a beat is "territorially defined, as a situated entity with stable locations, stable actors and stable actions."<sup>53</sup> For the senior editors and newsroom staff, a beat is seen as undepletable source of news from where a workable story can be dug out almost anytime. That is why on a 'lean day', reporters are often asked to produce anything -- a follow-up or even a less 'meaty' story -- in order to fill pages even though there is a general agreement that nothing substantial is there to report on that particular day.

The process of detection of events takes place primarily through a network of beat reporters whose interaction with stable actors at stable locations is key to deciding what is news. For a crime reporter in a city like Delhi, there are millions of news events taking place at the several hundred police station areas, jails, customs and excise entry and exit points, sleazy townships and the vast underworld. It is physically impossible for a crime reporter (or a battery of them for that matter) to make sources at each of these numerous locations and contact them as a matter of routine. There are also constraints of time and resources for following up potential events at all these points.

The same goes for almost all regional or state correspondents. Most provincial correspondents in India cannot even travel in a single day to areas they are supposed to cover. That is why it is a practice to keep close contact with the state's police, fire and jail control rooms for law and order news. For administrative and bureaucratic news they stay in touch with the secretariat and for political news with the state assembly and legislative institutions. The Chief Minister's office and other ministries are also monitored. Within each of these institutions, secretariats, headquarters and

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<sup>53</sup> Fishman (1980) p. 29

control rooms, there are hundreds of potential news points. So it is an occupational requirement for the state correspondents to expose themselves highly selectively. Most of the time their interaction is confined to spokesmen and 'official knowers' for detection of events.<sup>54</sup>

An efficient reporter is the one who does not miss out on an important development of the day taking place within the area of operation falling under his beat. By definition, this development is the day's main event such as an official briefing, press conference or conducted trip ( i.e. to a police station, trouble spot, jail or canal construction site, etc.) Usually a state correspondent has more than a handful of such routine events to tackle in a standard working day. This leaves him virtually no time to think beyond what crucial source organisations define as the day's developments. At any given point of time there are competing source organisations in society just as there are competing news organisations.<sup>55</sup>

The degree of a reporter's handicap is directly proportional to the pressures of his deadline and the sheer 'width' of his journalistic 'jurisdiction.'. For the foreign correspondents covering a country like India, local newspapers, magazines, radio, TV and other media outlets serve as primary source of detection of events. The same goes for India's national papers' correspondents covering regions like Punjab, Kashmir or the North East. Hence the detection of routine events is done by source organisations as a matter of daily exercise for some local media outfit or the other from where it has a chance of getting picked up in the national or international media.

A critical analysis of journalists methods of detection of an event as newsworthy has a direct relation with their working ideology or a loose 'ideological code'. It is like a scheme of interpretations which includes both knowing certain facts as well as not knowing certain others or, alternatively, using certain facts as well as not using certain others in the process of construction.(Gans, 1979; Fishman, 1980). The news values in the detection of events in the ways described above form an 'ideological code' and are neither natural nor neutral. (Hartley, 1982). Molotch and Lester (1974) see the whole process in terms of "news promoters, news assemblers and news consumers." The 'reality' becomes unimportant here and objectivity could be seen as a "strategic ritual" (Tuchman, 1971). Rather than looking for 'reality', mass media look for the "purpose which underlie the strategies of creating one reality instead of another."<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> As discussed earlier, the 'official knowers' or the 'stable actors' at 'stable locations' are individuals who figure high on society's power hierarchy.

<sup>55</sup> Gans (1983) p. 177.

<sup>56</sup> Molotch and Lester (1974) p. 104.

The reporters' job is to gather pre-identified news from representatives of the source organisation which fits into the deadlines of his 'newsday' (Schudson, 1986). The pressure of the deadline is all the more intense on the newsroom. It often gets a developing news copy minutes before the final page layout is made. Obviously, it is not expected to judge every detail from the veracity of news events to the soundness of the reporters' judgement. Such are the requirements that a reporter himself is supposed to anticipate problems with his story so as to "minimise the risk imposed by deadlines, libel suits and superior reprimands" (Tuchman, 1971). On rare occasions, however, the news room spikes a copy or refers it back to the reporter to guard his flanks. Its rare objections pertain to the lack of facts, quotes or attributions in the story which is like a reminder to a reporter of his routine professional practices. Questions are also asked if a story contains contradictory 'facts.' The stress while packaging is, however, on generally accepted principles of news value and objectivity covered under 'professional' thumb rules.

Once again a similar set of professional norms comes in handy for editing and packaging of news as is needed for news gathering. These practices are essentially shared among the various cogs in the assembly line of news production. If the perceptions of 'thumb rules' differ from journalist to journalist, too many stories would need to be rewritten resulting in delaying of printing and loss of circulation and profits. No wonder then, that pressures of deadline, accuracy and matters like libel suits are tackled simply by following "strategies of news work" (Tuchman 1971). Thus news policies might be different for different papers but their perceptions of 'facts', 'objectivity', 'bias' and 'balance' are more or less the same. Similarly, there is hardly any difference in what different papers regard as a feature, a piece of news analysis, a soft or an investigative story, or hard news. These norms are applicable to almost all sections of most newspapers such as sports, magazine, women's section, health, education and culture etc.

McQuail and Sven Windahl (1993) have summarised in a handbook several practical models suggested by communication scholars.<sup>57</sup> Apart from a 'free market' model and several gatekeeper models, the handbook reproduces many models based on the functioning of the newsroom or factors like source-journalist relationship. Some have taken into account the audiences and their choices as well as the feedback factor but no single model convincingly explains various processes of news production. One of the most descriptive and comprehensive of all gatekeeper models is Galtung and

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<sup>57</sup> Mac Quail, D and Windahl, S (1993)

Ruge's model which proposes nine filters covering time span, intensity, clarity and socio-cultural values of the receivers among other things.<sup>58</sup>

The contribution of the various gatekeeper models is that they have painstakingly explained the functioning of news organisations, particularly in the news room, and the professional practices of journalism which exercise an indirect control over news content. Their weakness, however, is that they do not explain what goes on outside the newsroom and how several powerful organisations and institutions of the society routinely affect the media's news content. Some scholars have criticised gatekeeper models because of their emphasis on bare technicalities at the cost of significant processes such as extraneous factors affecting news content. Herman (1986) has criticised the gatekeeper model's obsession with professional practices as a "laundry list of factors affecting choices."<sup>59</sup> Gatekeeper models have a significant role in explaining the functioning of a typical newsroom and determining the internal and external factors which affect news production.

The extraneous processes are accounted for in the propaganda model of Herman and Chomsky and in the "Contexts of Newsmaking" by Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1987). The authors have combined inter-organisational communication with gatekeeper models to propose a more comprehensive model for news production. The model combines various models earlier proposed by media scholars and it accounts for various news factors inside a source organisation just like gatekeeper models explain the factors which come into effect inside a media organisation.<sup>60</sup> The model also takes into consideration factors such as timing, professional values and news worthiness of 'occurrences' or 'events' which are ultimately justified as 'news.' It also includes the needs of the source organisation, its own interests and internal pressures. The authors maintain that "social, political, economic and cultural elements", which are discussed in the macro perspective of news, articulate with the more practical "transactional, organisational, and institutional processes of news making."<sup>61</sup>

Herman and Chomsky (1988) have underlined the 'free' media's need for 'independent' experts in daily news reporting. These 'experts' may or may not complement the news worthiness of what Ericson et al have called a "source event".<sup>62</sup> Herman and

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<sup>58</sup> Gultang and Ruge's model of selective gatekeeping in Mcquail and Windahl (1993) pp. 173-6.

<sup>59</sup> Herman (1986)

<sup>60</sup> Ericson et al. (1987) p. 41.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model spells out that the 'free' media in liberal democratic countries rely a great deal on 'experts' who have their own utility for the construction of 'credible' news. The reference to experts who may not complement the source event strengthens the earlier



Chomsky have, perhaps, taken a more cynical view in which the experts are seen only as collaborators of the dominant sections of society. It may also be argued that within a source organisation several latent channels of parallel communication are almost always present. As discussed above, but for a certain autonomy and space for individual journalists, contending viewpoints would never reach the news organisations. The media scholars differ on the role this autonomy plays in the overall perspective of news production. Hartley (1982) maintains that the space that journalists get is never enough to make the news "ideologically inert".<sup>63</sup> Hall et al (1976) argue that a "relative autonomy" and the news media's "commitment to impartiality" are necessary conditions for the production of dominant ideological meanings.<sup>64</sup> One may also argue that irrespective of the media's overall message about a source event, journalists do have limited access to contending viewpoints within a source organisation. Such viewpoints are often included in news reporting even though they invite denials or rejoinders. Reporters try very hard to look for disgruntled elements, trade unionists and such individuals within the source organisation who may have an axe to grind or who may offer a counter viewpoint of the 'source event'.

The source organisations try to counter pilferage of news from their end by barring most individuals working there from defining newsworthy events. One of the ways is to route much of their communication through an authoritative representative or spokesperson whose job is to serve his organisation's interests along with fulfilling the objective of providing raw material for news to the waiting journalists. Every efficient organisation recognises this need and develops strategies to make best use of its resources. Walter Lippmann (1949) says that a group of people who arrange news for the journalists actually prevent independent access to the event. This can be best understood in the words of a Nixon and Reagan Administration Press Officer :

"They've got to write their story every day. You give them their story, they'll go away. As long as you come in there every day, hand them a well packaged, premasticated story in the format they want, they'll go away."<sup>65</sup>

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discussed position that journalists' routine work involves some amount of personal autonomy and space.

<sup>63</sup> Hartley (1982) p. 55.

<sup>64</sup> Hall et al (1976) quoted by Hartley (1982). p. 55.

<sup>65</sup> Leslie Janka (Press Officer for the Nixon and Reagan Administrations) in Mark Hertsgaard (1988) quoted by Livingstone (1994) p.81.

A good spokesperson or press administrator is himself half a journalist, if not a former journalist. He understands the needs of journalists as completely as he understands the needs of his organisation. There are times when an organisation's interest is best served by 'giving' a news to newspapers without identifying its actual origin. Popularly known as 'leaks' such secret disclosures are planted on willing collaborators and it can be seen as a normal inter-organisational communication practice. Elliot (1977) has cited examples of such secret disclosures which routinely found way in British papers' coverage of Northern Ireland. However, there are also times when leaks are unauthorised and detrimental to the interests of the source organisation. In organisations such as the police, ministries, courts, political parties and the local councils and corporations, a lot of unfiltered news reaches news organisations through unofficial leaks organised by individuals and lobbies. The underlying assumption here is that in actual practice none of democratic society's crucial source or news organisations work like a monolith even though their controllers would like them to. Thus dissent and contending claims about the source event do find their way into news. Such discordant notes give rise to occasional exposures which go a long way in imparting credibility and reach to a news organisation.

## TERRORISM, MEDIA AND THE STATE

The nature of terroristic violence is such that the 'free' or 'autonomous' media cannot ignore terrorist incidents. The sheer scale and dramatic nature of violence offers media 'unputdownable' news as well as providing the perpetrators a good measure of publicity. Laqueur calls the "innovative" terrorists as "super entertainers of our times" as their innovativeness fulfils the media's insatiable need for diversity and for new angles of news.<sup>66</sup> Gerbner (1988) considers violence and crime to be the "staple diet" of commercial news reporting. He explains that the media policies and their exposure to violence and terror contribute to "people's perception of reality; to some behaviour patterns and to the pursuits of institutional interests."<sup>67</sup> Hence the reasons for the media's compulsive coverage of terrorist violence go beyond the drama or shock value of an event. The bare details of an 'event' and its immediate aftermath, legal social or political, are of little value as compared to their long-term cultural significance in a symbolic sense. Gerbner explains the media coverage of violence and an audience's long-term exposure to and preferences for such news almost as a form of ritual :

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<sup>66</sup> Laqueur (1977) p. 223.

<sup>67</sup> Gerbner (1988) p. 21

"Stories of violence and terror raise issues of conflict, power and human integrity. They are a part of mythology, literature and other areas of our cultures. Mass media simplified and standardised them, put them on the cultural assembly line, and built them into a daily ritual in nearly every home. Exposure to them begins in infancy and continues throughout life. The saturation of modern cultures with mass produced images of violence and terror is constant and inescapable."<sup>68</sup>

It is due to the commercial media's obsession for violence and terrorism news that the state finds it easier to manage the media rather than to black out news. By effectively managing the flow of such news, the state achieves more control over its content than it can ever hope to do either by suppressing such news or by stifling the media. For news censorship endangers credibility of the institutional channels of information. It may result in formidable outbreaks of rumours and creation of a parallel, word of mouth, propaganda mechanism which has the potential of causing more harm to the state than the violent campaigns it is trying to fight through censorship. Schlesinger, Murdock and Elliot assert that the state is interested in "delegitimising" its enemies in the same way as "their enemies have a stake in promoting the acceptability of their struggle." The authors suggest that the state is at greater ease when the situation of fight against terrorism is perceived as a war rather than as just another law and order problem. Total war, in their opinion, simplifies matters so much that the liberal democratic state gets an easy opportunity to control the flow of news "without... risking the legitimacy of the system."<sup>69</sup> Besides, because of the "extraordinary situations" the media have little moral problems in collaborating with the state by adopting favourable policies or voluntary censorship. Herman and O' Sullivan (1989) have warned that many democratic states have used 'terrorism' to advance right wing agendas justifying 'exceptional' legislation, encroachments on individual rights and even for enlarged military roles in solving civil disputes.<sup>70</sup>

In an ideal situation the state would like to treat mass media as another wing of their fighting forces. Schlesinger (1991) contends that the official and semi-official circles the world over have found it important to use the media as "instruments which can contribute to, or impede, final victory." Herman and Chomsky (1979) take this argument further by pointing out that the media can go to the extent of "reconstructing" history in order to manipulate public image of a conflict long after it is over. According to the authors, a very large section of the US media have been trying

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Schlesinger, Murdock and Elliot (1983) p.111

<sup>70</sup> Herman and O' Sullivan (1989) p 223

hard to absolve their country of its destructive role in Vietnam.<sup>71</sup> Such responses would be difficult to come from the media purely on the basis of the state's money power or media management. It may be argued that the media persons' own commitment to an elevated sense of national interest plays a definite role in it. As discussed above, the state often employs repressive tactics, often condemned as official or state terrorism. However, it would want to occupy the moral high ground with the help of journalists' commitment to national interest or security. If one party of the 'war' is seen as anti-nationals, its adversaries are likely to be seen as the custodians of the nation. Hence the media often denigrate the state's enemies by giving moral high ground to the security forces. The media's active assistance to the state is not necessarily functional through reaffirmation of the state's policies but also by their consistent failure to raise the right kind of questions.<sup>72</sup>

The British press in Northern Ireland is often criticised for falling prey to unofficial censorship in the garb of protecting national interest. Arblaster (1977) charges that almost all the London papers have had neither the will nor the courage to resist the planted information in Northern Ireland by and on behalf of the British Army. The author mentions three categories of such news manipulation: "Censorship, self-censorship and news management." In his opinion news management is fairly easy as the 'free press' shows a great readiness to bow down to pressures from the state. Schlesinger maintains that elaborate media management falls "within the compass of the psychological warfare aims of the state."<sup>73</sup> Calling the British state a direct party in the conflict in Northern Ireland, the author says in his study of the BBC that the British State expects the broadcasting media to take into account the 'national interest' while covering the incidents of extremist violence whereas it also wants the media to emphasise that the 'legitimate' violence of the security forces is a "regrettable necessity."<sup>74</sup>

Some social scientists give this right to the state rather readily. They seem to believe that a liberal democratic state has a justification in using 'violence' and 'force' to deal with its adversaries while the so called terrorists have none.<sup>75</sup> Arguing that a political debate with a terrorist should be refused, O' Brien (1977) suggests that a terrorist is

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<sup>71</sup> Herman and Chomsky (1979) The authors charge "when the devastating consequences of the (Vietnam) war are noted, care is taken to sanitise the US role." p. 83.

<sup>72</sup> Glasgow university media group (1976) The authors question the assumption that news value is a set of 'neutral and routine practices.' They also contend that the media not only continue to affirm the status quo but they also fail to raise the essential questions about the structure of the society.

<sup>73</sup> Schlesinger (1991) p. 21.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> O' Brian, (1977) quoted by Schlesinger (1991) p. 18

not accessible to "rational argument on premises other than his own." Another scholar has condemned terrorism by stating that it is an "abominable means used by political fanatics for contemptible ends."<sup>76</sup> Walter Laqueur (1977:4) has rejected the idea that a terrorist and a revolutionary are two sides of the same coin. Social scientists who justify the state's right to use counter-violence and devious methods against terrorism are against granting 'terrorists' a rational ideology. In Laqueur's opinion, terrorism is an "insurrectional strategy...(which) is truly all purpose and value free." He is against justification for political violence even if it is based on patriotism, freedom struggle or similar socially recognised ideological objectives. "Patriotism," he says, "has been the last resort of many a scoundrel and so has been the struggle for freedom." He argues that the "horse thieves in Latin America used to claim political motives for their actions as a safeguard against being hanged."<sup>77</sup>

Clutterbuck (1975) has sided with the state by emphasising the violence and disruption aspects of terrorism rather than those of dissent and protest. He goes one step ahead of Laqueur in his denouncement of terrorism as if on behalf of the state. To him the terrorists' actions are by no means temporary acts of desperation but they are the "main satisfaction" of their perpetrators. In his opinion, the logic of counter-productivity of terrorism would not be enough for an eventual cure of violence. Clutterbuck believes that terrorism has adversely affected the Northern Irish and Palestinian movements in spite of their "burning nationalism."

As discussed earlier, for the ideology of the terrorists' organisations to be their chief motivating force, neither clarity nor consistency of their goal is considered to be a precondition. The West German terrorist organisation, Rote Armee Fraction (RAF), have felt that the destruction of the Western system in and around West Germany was more important than the question of what should come after the destruction.<sup>78</sup> A similar phenomenon was seen in Punjab. In the mid eighties the insurgent violence in Punjab was claiming scores of lives every day even while those committing violence were not clear about the nature of the state they were fighting for. Some social scientists consider such lack of clarity and consistency to be normal for many contemporary terrorist organisations. Konrad Kellen (1990) finds it normal for the RAF. Walter Reich (1990) cites several examples of terrorist organisations all over the world in the present century who have vacillated between extreme ideologies.

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<sup>76</sup> Robert Friedlander quoted in Schmid and Graaf (1982) p 15.

<sup>77</sup> Laqueur (1977) p. 4

<sup>78</sup> Konrad Kellen (1990) p 55

Most of these groups are, according to Reich, "mixture of types such as leftist nationalists, rightist nationalists, religious nationalists and so on."<sup>79</sup>

Mark Juergensmeyer, an American Professor of Ethics and Phenomenology of Religion, studied speeches of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale to analyse the logic of religious violence. He came to the conclusion that the supreme leader of the Khalistan movement was a little vague about the aim of his struggle. Some of his statements were so equivocal that he said completely opposite things almost in the same breath. In an address to a Sikh congregation quoted by the author he said "We are neither in favour of Khalistan nor are we against it." Similarly he demanded a separate state for the Sikhs if they did not get what he called justice but added that "we wish to live in India".<sup>80</sup> In his speeches, contends Juergensmeyer, even the perpetrators of injustice to the Sikhs have largely remained "vague, shadowy force of evil."<sup>81</sup> Another prominent leader of the movement, Balbir Singh Sandhu, who was known as the Secretary General at the 'headquarters' of Khalistan, which was formed in the early eighties at the Guru Nanak Niwas area of the Golden Temple, spoke to journalists about his ideology which appeared to some a 'strange mix of Marxism and very orthodox Sikhism.'<sup>82</sup> Juergensmeyer argues that at the time of his popularity, Bhindranwale was 'fomenting something of a political revolution' and his constituency was comparable to that of Ayatollah Khomeini's in Iran.<sup>83</sup> His religious messages did serve two very significant purposes for the members of the armed underground organisations: first it gave power to those village 'fundamentalist youth' who had little power before and secondly it provided a potent moral logic for countering the violence of the state.<sup>84</sup>

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the perpetrators of political violence or 'terrorists' are those individuals or groups who use selective or indiscriminate violence or force as their methods of combat for an ultimate aim of social change or behaviour / policy modification. Obviously, the above criterion applies to the state as much as it applies to the insurgents. Several modern states, including many in the liberal democratic West, have been using questionable means of counter violence against sections of its own public or against an ethnic minority. Leeman (1991) has described such actions as "reflective strategy" which ultimately proves to be counter-productive for a liberal

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<sup>79</sup> Walter Reich (1990) p. 266

<sup>80</sup> Juergensmeyer (1988) p. 181

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Tavleen Singh (1984) p. 36

<sup>83</sup> Juergensmeyer (1988) *ibid.* p. 184

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 184 -185

democratic state.<sup>85</sup> That is why liberty' and 'democracy' of a so called 'liberal democratic state' can not be taken for granted.

Apart from a 'monopoly' over institutional violence in society, the state is often known to exceed its legitimate limit in 'extraordinary' situations. But what is a state's outer limit for exercising violence on behalf of the society? Max Weber describes the role of the state as a 'legitimate' organisation entitled to violence. According to Weber, it is essential for the modern state to monopolise the use of physical force.<sup>86</sup> Thus the modern state is the only legitimate organisation which has successful monopoly over use of extreme force against an individual. The violence employed by 'terrorists' is certainly capable of shattering what Weber calls the state's monopoly over physical force. There are constitutions and legal systems to take care of the 'legitimacy' aspect of such physical force. If the state's 'legitimate' right to take a life stems from its social authority over crime and punishment and law and order, the insurgents' moral sanction or justification come from their religious belief. To quote Juergensmeyer:

"Those who want moral sanction for their use of violence, and who do not have the approval of an officially recognised government, find it helpful to have access to a higher source: the meta morality that religion provides. By elevating a temporal struggle to the level of the cosmic, they can bypass the usual moral restrictions on killing."<sup>87</sup>

The religious discourses carry their own logic for violence and it is evident in the symbols and rituals of almost all major religions.<sup>88</sup> An actual act of violence certainly shocks one's sense of order and disorder and the religious rhetoric very often deal with this theme. In a way the religious violence furnishes a perfect moral parallel to the state's monopoly over violence. Such moral sanction of religion apply to the Catholic bombers of abortion clinics in the United States as much as it does to the Sikh and Muslim extremists in India and West Asia. Terrorist violence justified by religion challenges the legitimacy of a liberal democratic state's violence. Talking about IRA terrorism, Conor Cruise O' Brien (1977) maintains that "articles of faith" are the terrorists' main foil against the democratic state's "practical reason."<sup>89</sup> In the same way, Bhindranwale's religious discourse offered his followers a logic for a violent campaign which he regarded as a fight against injustice. Juergensmeyer argues

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<sup>85</sup> Leeman, R (1991)

<sup>86</sup> Max Weber (1947) p. 156

<sup>87</sup> Juergensmeyer (1988)p. 182.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. 187.

<sup>89</sup> O' Brian (1977)

that all such violent actions which may have religion's moral sanction behind them are essentially political actions. He asserts : "By putting the right to kill in their own hands, the perpetrators of religious violence are also making a daring claim of political independence."<sup>90</sup>

In spite of such ideological support or moral sanctions, most terrorist organisations are no match for a well determined state. For the state does not rule by the force of its police and armed forces alone, it rules through its "ideological apparatus" and hegemonic consent of large sections of its people.<sup>91</sup> On one level the modern liberal democratic state is maintained by a 'representative system' while on the other it derives its power and legitimacy from "apparently neutral" institutions such as the government and the law<sup>92</sup> (Hartley 1982). Apart from these apparently neutral institutions which form some kind of steel frame of the state, there is another set of not so visible layers of dominance. The dominant economic and political forces exercise hegemonic control through culture and with the help of society's other institutions such as the family, courts, school and the media. This kind of control mechanism can be understood by seeing knowledge as power, a framework discussed under construction of news at the macro level.

The state has a natural advantage over its underground rivals even before a debate starts. It is often in a position to exercise control over how the whole conflict as well as the daily events of violence are to be defined. In a disturbed situation, it is mostly the official sources who decide whether a violent activity is to be described as a subversive attack, a motivated strategy or simply as senseless criminal activity. Elliot (1977) brings out this irony in his study of news reporting on Northern Ireland. In a period prior to the cease-fire, several stories of the new threats of the IRA or new examples of their "devilish cunning" appeared in the press. According to Elliot, these stories of IRA's vilification owed their origin to its main enemy, the British Army sources. The official sources, he argues, "emphasised the innocence of victims or the lucky escapes of bystanders, particularly children" so as to portray the violence as indiscriminate and senseless. He found that while covering the conflict, the native Irish press is more open than its British counterparts on how they came to know of

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., p. 183.

<sup>91</sup> Hartley (1982) maintains that in trying to make sense of the world, the mass media can be seen as what Althusser (1971) calls 'ideological apparatus' of the state. The author contends that the mass media would fail in their function if they became a mouthpiece of the dominant classes and that is why they are given 'relative autonomy' by the system. p. 57. Hartley defines hegemony as : "The process by which consent is sought and won..." p. 59.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid. p. 58



what they reported and that the former indulged in far less generalisations about violence.<sup>93</sup>

Liz Curtis (1986) has argued that the British state has not been able to tolerate BBC's news coverage of Northern Ireland. In 1981, Mrs. Thatcher and other British politicians attacked the BBC television companies for the 'excessive' coverage given to the IRA hunger strikers' funeral.<sup>94</sup> The author finds that stringent internal censorship procedures functioned in the TV companies and that the BBC's "reference upwards" and "managerial censorship" policies, as well as its special rules, kept close control over all programmes dealing with Ireland.<sup>95</sup> The author maintains that the general impression that "Ireland spells trouble" acts as a deterrent for the television journalists who are usually on short term contracts. For every programme that gets banned, there are probably 20 that are never made in the first place, the author contends. So cautious is the BBC's top management in matters pertaining to Northern Ireland that it trusts no one, not even its own "overwhelmingly white, male and middle class," producers and reporters, says Curtis. Elliot (1977) has concluded in his study that the British state has depended more on its conventional carrots and sticks and occasional ministerial pressure rather than on the crude and offensive tactics, being practised in many other European countries.<sup>96</sup>

#### THE MEDIA COVERAGE OF TERRORISM :

Systematic and empirical research on the media coverage of terrorism is relatively recent. The lack of consensus on the definition is more symptomatic of a certain irresolvability which comes from 'inherently politicised' and extreme viewpoints involved. This is not to suggest that there is a dearth of literature. The nebulous area of the 'dynamics of terrorism' is full of unacademic literature, often written for or on behalf of the security forces and from one sided policy perspective, anecdotal write ups and journalistic quickies. Another set of 'studies', though much less when compared to official literature, often turn out to be pamphleteering on behalf of the insurgent organisations. A large number of academic researchers believe that the bulk of literature on the subject is inadequate, unscientific, and one sided (Eke and Alali 1991; Paletz and Boiney 1992; Herman and O'Sullivan 1989; Schlesinger, Murdock and Elliot 1983; Weimann and Winn 1994 and Livingstone 1994) Given the highly contentious and evocative nature of issues involved and the fact that all participants of the conflict have something or the other to hide -- and something of great immediacy

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<sup>93</sup> Elliot (1977) pp 354 -73

<sup>94</sup> Curtis (1986)

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Elliot (1977) p. 358.

to propagate -- makes things only more difficult for researchers. No wonder then that balanced and academically significant studies on the subject are fewer and far between.

Just like the very definition of terrorism, its contagion effect also seems to be a bone of contention. The conventional wisdom is that criminal behaviour is often emulated by the young people. Plato has emphasised on the need for "isolating children from potentially harmful role models."<sup>97</sup> However, the counter argument is that the bulk of evidence about young people committing crime because of the media coverage of violence is sketchy and anecdotal. Picard (1986) observes that the literature implicating the media for contagion effect has grown rapidly despite no credible evidence to prove the point.<sup>98</sup> Herman and O'Sullivan (1989) have described research organisations and institutions sponsored by governments, armed forces or corporate interest groups with stakes in 'terrorism research' as 'terrorism industry' and warned the academic world of power brokers, including governments and experts, who are contaminating serious research on the subject.<sup>99</sup> The authors have debunked a large number of Western 'institutions' and 'research centres' as dubious because of their 'questionable' funding or alignments. Schlesinger (1991) has warned that the expertise on terrorism research is frequently called upon and seldom questioned. The author has noted one significant development in this area: the institutionalisation of British terrorism studies with the establishment of the Research Foundation for the Study of Terrorism.<sup>100</sup>

As discussed earlier, there is a surfeit of terrorism literature written from a policy perspective. The official as well as much of policy perspective operates from the premises that the media coverage of violence encourages further violence. A large number of scholars have suggested ways and means for fighting insurgent terrorism on behalf of the state or public (Clutterbuck, 1975; Laqueur 1977 and O'Brian 1977). These researchers and many others have blamed the media coverage for encouraging violence in some way or the other (Schmid and de Graaf 1982; Schmid and Jongamann 1988; Wardlaw, 1989; Bassiouni, 1983; Crenshaw, 1983; Midlarsky, Crenshaw and Yoshida, 1980) This camp believes in the contagion effect of terroristic incidents. Despite forceful criticism from the other camp they have some strong arguments to offer, especially in the form of examples. Schmid and Graaf (1982) have cited the example of a 'terrorist' in an NBC thriller who parachuted from a plane he

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<sup>97</sup> Weinmann and Winn (1984) p. 211

<sup>98</sup> Picard, R G (1986)

<sup>99</sup> Herman and O' Sullivan (1988) pp. 55 - 57

<sup>100</sup> Schlesinger (1991) *ibid.* p 91 (postscript)

had hijacked with large bags of cash. Authors have said that the incident inspired as many as two dozen would be imitators who tried to follow their 'hero' in exactly the same manner.<sup>101</sup> Schmid and Graaf have listed 10 cases and 27 incidents in support of their argument that media coverage of violence and terrorism does inspire 'copy-cat' reaction.<sup>102</sup> Bassiouni (1982) has cited many cases where the media coverage has contributed to making the hostage situation violent and when it has become a 'tool' of dissemination of information to the terrorists.<sup>103</sup> The author has argued that in specific cases, the media coverage can result in a disadvantage for the state in many ways and it can even lead to deaths of hostages. Some other supporters of the contagion effect have blamed the media coverage rather disproportionately for legitimising terrorism or for provoking violence (Crenshaw, 1983; Wardlaw 1989).

Unlike the simplistic positions taken by many policy researchers, some academics have seen the contagion effect of the media coverage in a more symbolic way. In one of the very few studies conducted from the perspective of the portrayal of the victim in news media, called the "Myth of my Widow" Jack Lule (1991) has viewed the effects of the media coverage in two significant ways: First, the news stories which drew from the "myth" of the victim as a national hero, "invoked the symbol of the self in response to terrorism and thus helped the terrorists establish the link between the victims and the self." Secondly, the coverage, according to author, might also create a "powerful climate for revenge" for the security forces or the public officials.<sup>104</sup> What is most significant about Lule's finding is that it talks about a strong identification of every member of the community with the victim which only increases "the terrorists' ability to communicate with the community."<sup>105</sup> What Lule has called the symbolic function is seen somewhat differently by Barnhurst (1991) in his study of contemporary terrorism in Peru -- that media can be useful to terrorists but not indispensable. His analysis of activities of the Peruvian insurgent organisation, Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path), shows that symbolic acts of violence are an inherent part of their philosophy of struggle and exist independently of media attention.<sup>106</sup>

In both these studies, like most others, the audiences are largely seen through the media coverage and the findings have not been backed by audience research.

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<sup>101</sup> Schmid and de Graaf (1982) p. 132.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. pp. 128-136.

<sup>103</sup> Bassiouni, M.C (1982) p 131.

<sup>104</sup> Lule, J. (1988)

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Barnhurst, K G (1991)

Weimann (1983) has taken a different approach for a similar study by looking at the behaviour patterns of some readers but he has also not gone deeper into the effects of the media portrayal. In his experimental study, he has compared "evaluative attitudes" of some students before and after they read press clippings describing two separate terrorist incidents and found that the exposure to press coverage "did tend to enhance slightly the evaluations of the terrorists."<sup>107</sup> Schmid and de Graaf (1982) have called the likely increase in terroristic activities the "most serious effect of the media reporting." In their comprehensive book on political terrorism the authors have proposed three negative effects which the media-contagion may entail : First is that "it can reduce the inhibition" against the use of violence; secondly, it can offer "models and know-how" to potential terrorists and thirdly it can "motivate them in various ways."<sup>108</sup>

One of the significant ways of looking at the media's attitude is through journalists' professional practices, notably their sources. Paletz, Fozzard and Ayanian (1982) have concluded in a study of the press coverage of the IRA, the Red Brigade and the FALN in the New York Times that the tone or direction of an article is often determined by the sources of a reporter.<sup>109</sup> In another empirical study, the authors have found that the television news generally ignores the motivations, objectives and long term goals of violent organisations.<sup>110</sup> In both these studies the authors have come to the conclusion that the media coverage does not legitimise the terrorists' cause.

Those who have questioned and criticised the contagion theory are of the view that these studies lack scientific evidence. Obviously, they consider the media-centric or anecdotal studies, based mainly on examples, inadequate for proving contagion effect. Some academics have questioned the premises that all types of violence or violent motives are anti-public and advocated a case for a more critical approach to studying terrorism (Schlesinger, 1991; Herman and O' Sullivan, 1989; Picard, 1991; Paletz and Boyny, 1992). Picard (1991) has called the contagion effect "dangerous charges backed by dubious science."<sup>111</sup> Questioning the evidence provided by the supporters of the contagion effect, Picard has maintained that the thousands of studies available on the subject could be safely called "contradictory, inconclusive, and based on widely differing definitions, methods and assumptions."<sup>112</sup> Like Picard, Paletz and

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<sup>107</sup> Weinmann, G. (1983)

<sup>108</sup> Schmid and de Graaf (1982) p. 142.

<sup>109</sup> Paletz, Fozzard and Ayanian (1982a) .

<sup>110</sup> Paletz, Fozzard and Ayanian (1982b)

<sup>111</sup> Picard (1991) in Alali and Eke p. 49.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid. p 51.

Boiny (1992) have expressed their dismay in rather strong language over some of the literature on the relationship between the media and terrorism which, according to them, is "blatantly propagandistic, consisting of shrill jeremiads, exhortations, tendentious examples and undocumented assertions."<sup>113</sup> Jenkins has felt that the news media are responsible for terrorism to about the same extent that commercial aviation is responsible for airline hijackings.<sup>114</sup>

The contagion effect is the cause for some of the most contentious debates in the field of the media coverage of violence. The two positions discussed above define the two extremes of opinion. However, there is also some middle ground. Jenkins (1981) has not indicted the media for provoking or spreading violence but he has conceded that in times of certain terrorist incidents such as embassy sieges and airline hijackings the media might have played a role. This position vis a vis contagion is significant as it does not discount the possibility of the media playing a role which could be advantageous for the terrorists but at the same time it does not convert specific cases into thumb rule. One of the very few quantitative studies on the contagion effect is by Weimann and Winn (1984). The authors have shown through "frequencies of emulation" that the contagion effect exists. However, the measurement of emulation or replication is a highly contentious area where narrow margins of difference between high and low recurrence of events may affect the overall findings. The only way to establish the veracity of this claim is to support it with more research in the field, involving different sets of the media and terrorist organisations.

Picard (1991) has also proposed that the media coverage of terrorist violence may actually reduce the possibility of future violent action by removing the need for individuals and groups to resort to violence.<sup>115</sup> This view is diametrically opposite to the one discussed above. Supporters of this position believe that the coverage may be useful in preventing or reducing the scale of violence. Miller (1982) who has looked at terrorism from a legal perspective has also suggested that violence could be diffused by providing accessibility to the media.<sup>116</sup> While Miller thinks that the media provide a mechanism for governments to communicate with terrorists, Picard believes that the media should be made open to disenfranchised sections of people. Miller (1982) has cited the conclusion of the Ditchley Castle Conference on Terrorism (At Oxfordshire, England, November 1978) that "If terrorism is the means of reaching the

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<sup>113</sup> Paletz and Boiny (1992) p 23.

<sup>114</sup> Jenkins, B. made this remark before Conference on Terrorism and the Media, Florence, Italy, June 16-18, 1978 as quoted by Schmid and de Graaf (1982) pp. 143 and 257.

<sup>115</sup> Picard (1991) p 57.

<sup>116</sup> Miller, A. H (1982) p. 24

public forum, violence can be diffused by providing accessibility to the media without the necessity of an entry fee of blood and agony."<sup>117</sup>

A lesson from the above debate is that positions on any extreme of the contagion perspective could be misleading. Just as every act of terrorism cannot be seen as an act of communication, it would be, perhaps, dangerous to assume that every act of terrorist violence leads to further violence or no act of terrorism could ever lead to further violence. It is ironical that there are much more studies which support the contagion effect when compared to those who oppose it even though most contagion literature is without sound empirical basis (Schlesinger et al, 1983; Herman and O'Sullivan, 1989; Picard, 1991; Paletz and Boyny 1992). The argument in favour of the contagion effect inadvertently strengthen the case for overt or covert press censorship. It is discussed earlier in the chapter that most acts of terrorist violence have an inherent publicity value and yet they are not necessarily acts of communication. Similarly, in specific situations the media coverage might help terrorists by getting them more sympathy or recruits but these isolated cases cannot outweigh the importance of public access to uncensored information. There may be situations or instances where the media coverage may have contributed to spread of terrorism but in specific situations the same purpose could be served by public transport or the existence of civil liberties.

A large number of case studies on the relationship between the media and terrorism have concentrated on either the policy and government perspective or the media's perspective. There is a relative dearth of studies on the insurgents' or the victims' perspective. It may be partly because of practical difficulties involved in interviewing actual perpetrators of violence and partly because data of their activities are seldom recorded in such a way that it could be used by researchers. Cynthia L Irvin (1992) poses two central questions in her study of statements and internal documents of three insurgent nationalist organisation about insurgents' own perspective: First, whether they always perceive themselves as victors when they receive media attention and secondly what are their preferences vis a vis media use and if they change in the course of insurgency.<sup>118</sup> She has concluded that the so called terrorists are "more likely to use the media as, at best, reluctant allies and, at worst, hostile and powerful enemies."<sup>119</sup> Barnhurst (1991) has included both these questions in his study of contemporary terrorism in Peru. His conclusion is that the terrorists' acts of violence

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Irvin, C.L (1992) p 63.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., p 84.

exist independent of the media attention and in the case of Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path), contact with the media was later dropped as a strategy and the organisation preferred to communicate by means of sabotage and violent acts.<sup>120</sup>

One of the significant studies from the perspective of insurgents and their own communication is by David C Rapoport (1988). He has analysed ten memoirs written by nine persons who were involved in eight different movements in different parts of the world. The memoirs span over a century. Rapoport has challenged the conventional wisdom about contemporary terrorism by concluding that terrorist movements always had an international dimension to them.<sup>121</sup> Another work from this perspective is by Bonnie Cordes (1988) who has suggested in a study of terrorist literature that the "auto-propaganda" aspect is crucial in terrorists' communication. As important as the actual action which is designed for effect, most terrorist activity is followed by an explanation "later provided in written or oral forms." The author has reflected that most terrorist activity is followed by an explanation provided in written or oral forms which is "ostensibly directed at the state authorities, or a constituency, or potential recruits, it has rarely been recognised that the explanations are developed to convince the terrorists themselves that what they are doing is correct and justified."

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Like terrorists' own communication, another area of research which is virtually untouched by academic researchers is state-sponsored vigilante terrorism. There are very few studies available on the activities of state-supported front organisations even though their existence may be common knowledge. Vigilante terrorism is included in some of the typologies discussed above but there is hardly any comprehensive study on the subject. Schmid and de Graaf (1982) have seen vigilante terrorism as a sub-type of insurgent terrorism and separately from state terrorism. The authors have failed to mention that very often vigilante violence is just an extension of the state's counter terrorism efforts. Chomsky (1988,1989) and Herman (1989) have discussed several examples of "terrorist states" sponsored by the powerful interests of the West including the US Government who sponsor non-state terrorism to execute on their behalf. Chomsky has questioned many US operations abroad and their 'real' objectives in his book, *Culture of Terrorism* (1989). The discussions include those on 'activist' US foreign policy in Latin America, Middle East and South-East Asia in which

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<sup>120</sup> Barnhurst (1991)

<sup>121</sup> Rapoport, D C (1988) pp. 33 -34.

<sup>122</sup> Cordes, B. (1988) p. 164.

thousands of civilians were killed by non-state juntas sponsored by US backed dictatorial regimes.<sup>123</sup>

Alex Vines (1991) has documented in his book on RENAMO terrorism in Mozambique that the organisation owed much of its initial media publicity and profile to the US right-wing organisations.<sup>124</sup> Chomsky has maintained that RENAMO activities depended largely on the indirect Western support via the erstwhile racist government in South Africa.<sup>125</sup> Vines (1991) has also noted some activities of UNITA in Angola, another US supported rebel movement, which made tactical use of land mines with an aim of maiming, rather than killing people.<sup>126</sup> Similarly Chomsky has cited a large number of examples of terrorists and vigilante organisations creating havoc in Latin America with foreign help. Apart from odd accounts, there are few ethnographic studies on the state sponsored terrorism and even fewer on more specialised areas like its media coverage. Whatever little is available, including Chomsky's work, is written from the perspective of contemporary politics and it cannot be characterised as purely media research.

As discussed above, most serious media researches have concentrated on insurgent terrorism from either the perspective of policy or conflict resolution. In one of the earlier empirical studies, Epstein (1977) content analysed three US newspapers' coverage of political violence in Latin America in 1970-71. The study concentrated on the use of the term 'terrorism' and found that on more than half the occasions, a different, perhaps a more nominal term could have been used.<sup>127</sup> In another study, Weimann (1985) content analysed 381 terrorist incidents in Israel's main newspapers to study the use of labels. He found "political distance" to be the most effective determining factor for the use of positive or negative labels.<sup>128</sup> As discussed in the above pages, Schmid and de Graaf (1992) and Schlesinger, Murdock and Elliot (1983), and Schlesinger (1987, 1991) have offered wider frameworks for researchers in the field mainly because they have dealt with the issues of the inter-relationships between terrorism, media and the liberal democratic state.

Among the most comprehensive and recent books (both edited) on the media coverage of terrorism are those by David L. Paletz and Alex P Schmid (1992) and A. Odasuo

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<sup>123</sup> Chomsky (1989b) pp. 41-48.

<sup>124</sup> Vines, Alex. (1991) pp. 42-43.

<sup>125</sup> Chomsky (1989) pp. 40, 58.

<sup>126</sup> Vines (1991) p. 90.

<sup>127</sup> Epstein, E.C. (1977) p. 68-71 quoted by Simmons in Alali and Eke (1991) p. 26.

<sup>128</sup> Weinmann, G (1985) p. 433-445, quoted by Simmons (1991) in Alali and Eke p 35.



Alali and Kenoye Kelvin Eke (1991). Paletz and Schmid have looked at the media coverage of terrorism from various different perspectives with authority and lucidity. A single theme, i.e., the communication aspect of terrorism, sharply runs through every article (many of which are discussed in this chapter). The discussions in the book, particularly about the perspectives of the terrorists, media and researchers forewarns of the pitfalls in the area. Alali and Eke's book is more focused on the media's language. Two case studies in the book -- Picard and Adam's study of characterisations and Simmons' study of labels -- are of immense use for researchers who want to concentrate on media's language. This aspect of media's description is partly followed in Chapter five with some amendments. A study of characterisations of acts of violence and labels for perpetrators is certainly complementary to the study of themes, sources and judgements which have also been identified and analysed in the chapter.

Two more recent books, Livingstone (1994) and Weimann and Winn (1994) have tackled less acreage in terms of the sheer area of enquiry (when compared to the ones discussed in the above paragraph) but both have attempted to go deeper into the subject matter they have dealt with. What is common between the two is that they have both treated terrorism as dependent on some kind of public arena or audience. Livingstone has called this public arena a "spectacle of terrorism" whereas Weimann and Winn have characterised it as the "theatre of terror." Both these books also look at terrorism essentially as a form of communication, an approach strongly advocated by Schmid and de Graaf (1982). One basic problem with this approach (and perhaps a lesson) is that it undermines the ideological aspect of terrorism and seeks to explain all its actions in terms of the media coverage. Schlesinger, Murdock and Elliot (1983) have refuted this position and maintained that political violence can not be reduced to communicative behaviour alone. As discussed earlier, every act of terrorism is not necessarily an act of communication even though it has a very strong element of 'unputdownability' for the commercial media. This rather subtle difference between the two positions is maintained throughout the present analysis.

Livingstone (1994) has concentrated more on terrorism rather than on the media, even though coverage of terrorism is a part of his enquiry. Out of various issues which surround the media coverage of terrorism, he is more interested in the management of news and agenda setting function of the media. The author has also looked at what he calls terrorism spectacle from the perspective of foreign and domestic policy objectives. Livingstone has partly followed Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model to discuss terrorism and what he calls "non-terrorism" of the US-backed

guerrilla groups. He has supported his analysis with two comprehensive case studies of news coverage by the *New York Times*, one on the Afghan Mujahideen and the other on the UNITA rebels in Angola. Livingstone has argued that the violence committed by the ideological and foreign policy allies of the United States is treated completely differently by the 'free' US media than violence committed by its adversaries. This kind of dichotomy is analysed in Chapter five of this research in the form of newspapers' treatment to state and non-state actors of violence.

Picard and Adams (1991) have conducted an exhaustive content analysis of three elite US daily newspapers. The study looks at the characterisations of political violence in the Los Angeles Times, the New York Times and the Washington Post between 1980 and 1985. Depending on their meanings, the authors have divided the characterisations into "nominal" and "descriptive" categories. The study reveals that a significant difference exists in the ways media personnel, government officials and witnesses characterise acts of political violence and perpetrators of those acts. Another of the authors' finding is that the media personnel and witnesses tend to use more "neutral" terms when compared to government officials who tend to use more "judgmental, inflammatory and sensationalistic" terms. The authors have concluded that more than 90 per cent of the characterisations were media's own while only three and two per cent were direct quotes of government officials and witnesses respectively.<sup>129</sup>

One criticism of the study was presented by Simmons (1991) in which he has questioned the authors' classification into "nominal" and "descriptive" as arbitrary and "not empirically based."<sup>130</sup> Another problem with Picard and Adam's study is that the basis for dividing the tone or direction of characterisations and descriptions according to their sources seems to be weak. It was realised during the coding of news items for content analysis that the descriptions contained in the news items were extremely difficult to classify according to sources. One invariably runs the risk of clubbing all characterisations as media's own when they are not attributed to anyone directly. Many of these characterisations and descriptions could have been simply thrown up during a briefing or news conference. The study of media's content in Chapter five identifies characterisations and labels on the same lines as the studies conducted by Picard and Simmons but does not classify them according to sources unless they are directly attributed to them.

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<sup>129</sup> Picard and Adams (1991) pp 12-21.

<sup>130</sup> Simmons (1991) p 23-39.

In another content analysis, Simmons (1991) has studied labelling of terrorism by three major US Newsmagazines, Time, Newsweek, and US News and World Report. The study was conducted in two stages. In the first stage a random sample of articles between March 1980 and March 1988 were content analysed while in the second stage 120 college students completed a survey made up of a semantic differential and the respondents were asked to rank order the 13 labels used by the media. The study found that the newsmagazines used the label 'terrorist' along with more negatively perceived terms when the acts impacted US citizens. The term 'terrorist' was used as high as 79% times when US citizens were involved while it was used half the time when they were not.<sup>131</sup> The analysis of content in Chapter five examines the labels used for the insurgents and the police officers separately and then compares them with one another. However, the scope of the research does not allow a study of readers' response in the same framework of analysis.

Tony Atwater (1987) content analysed TWA hostage reports broadcast on ABC World News Tonight, CBS Evening News, and the NBC Nightly News. The findings show that the TWA crisis coverage on network evening newscasts was "dramatic, reactive and extensive" with very limited reporting on factors that may have given rise to the crisis.<sup>132</sup> Cohen, Adoni and Bantz (1990) have concluded in their study of social conflict and television news that conflict news is shown on television in such a way that foreign conflicts are more intense and less solvable than domestic ones.<sup>133</sup> Jack Lule (1988) has presented the victims' perspective in his analysis of the media coverage of hijacking of an Italian cruise ship with 400 people aboard. Lule maintains that the most memorable image of the case was the widow of its victim, a handicapped US tourist, who "became the story" more than her husband. The author established through an exhaustive study that "through the myth of the hero, the news stories invoked the symbol of the self, inviting intense identification of the individual reader with the terrorist victim. But in doing so, the news stories also provided the terror of terrorism."<sup>134</sup> This aspect of relationship between news media and victims of terrorism is significant for conceptualising a relationship between terrorism, media and the liberal democratic state.

Some studies have concentrated on the rhetorical patterns of the media coverage of political violence. Dowling (1986) has supported the view that terrorism could be best

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid. p. 32

<sup>132</sup> Atwater (1991) p 63-72.

<sup>133</sup> Cohen, Adoni and Bantz (1990) p. 108.

<sup>134</sup> Lule (1991) p 107.

understood as a 'theatre' and called violence itself the terrorists' rhetoric.<sup>135</sup> Johnpoll (1977) defines terrorist acts in terms of their rhetorical value which is quite narrow in form and whose only purpose is to fit into the news agencies' definition of news.<sup>136</sup> Picard (1991) has seen the 'intros' or lead sentences of news stories about political violence in four "rhetorical traditions": information, sensational, feature story and didactic traditions depending on their language use. Picard believes that journalists are deeply involved in the construction of rhetorical versions about terrorism and its perpetrators and they "amplify, arbitrate, and create their own rhetoric about terrorist acts."<sup>137</sup> Leeman (1991) has studied the rhetoric of terrorism and counter-terrorism from a democratic perspective and with the basic assumption that rhetoric can be influential. The author has warned that the response of liberal democratic states to terrorism is often 'reflective' which the author found counter-productive. In his opinion a non-reflective rhetorical strategy is fundamentally a democratic rhetoric and is preferable over other strategies.<sup>138</sup>

Though both studies are concerned about the rhetoric of terrorism, there is a basic difference in their approaches. Picard has tried to connect media's discourse of insurgent violence with the social processes, albeit without taking the audience into account. His analysis revolves around the meaning of the message conveyed. Leeman is more interested in the socio-political message part of the terrorists' communication. He has found the terroristic rhetoric essentially a form of exhortation which seeks to inculcate anger in the audience. He has attempted to offer the best rhetorical strategy (perhaps for the US leadership) for countering the terrorists' message meant for the body politic. Clearly, Leeman has not accorded much importance to the mediation of the terrorists' rhetoric by the mass media. Leeman's study has a significant contribution in determining governments' rhetorics about terrorism but its framework can be followed only with a relatively narrow perspective of evolving 'best' rhetorical strategies for the governments rather than for developing an understanding of ways in which terrorists try to use the media.

## SUMMARY

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<sup>135</sup> Dowling, R E (1986)

<sup>136</sup> Johnpoll, B. (1977) quoted in Dowling (1986).

<sup>137</sup> Robert G Picard (1991 b) p. 42

<sup>138</sup> Leeman (1991). According to the author, a reflective strategy is the one in which a "respondent might choose to mirror the opponent's arguments, language, significant symbols, methods of delivery etc. " p 32. Conversely a non- reflective strategy is to ignore the opposition's language, its metaphors, and its form of discourse etc. p 39.

Terrorism is one of the most intense problems of the modern liberal democratic society. The liberal democratic state's response to such violence is often against the norms of civilised society. That is why it becomes important to study press construction of insurgent terrorism as well as its response by the state's law and order machinery, often referred to as 'state terrorism.' It is noted in the beginning of the chapter that the last few decades' research has failed to evolve an acceptable definition of terrorism. In this research, two aspects of political violence are considered necessary for violence to be terroristic : First, terrorism uses (actual or threatened) violence or terror for political or ideological purposes in order to change / influence the state of affairs in society and secondly, the victims of such violence are (most often incidental) message generators. The conceptual framework of this research differs with Schmid and Graaf 's approach that every act of terrorism is an act of communication. A more accurate position would be that most (and not all) acts of terrorism are acts of communication. As discussed above, terrorists' acts certainly have an inherent newsworthiness but they are not necessarily acts of communication. The reason for this is to be sought as much in the commercial news media's functioning (discussed under macro and micro perspectives above) as in the nature of insurgent terrorism.

The metamorphosis of events from daily life into news stories is a production routine which involves several socio-political, inter-organisational and cultural processes and constant negotiations between different types of cultural workmen. The mass media are aligned with the larger society and its representatives do recognise the power and other hierarchies of society. Therefore, it is argued that mass media may be a part of the society's overall dynamics but they are certainly not its prime movers. In a liberal democratic state, mass media act both as instruments of democracy's proliferation as well as its defence mechanism. They may have a role in maintaining the hegemonic control of the dominant sections over society but the media can also become instruments of social change. Obviously, the most powerful of the world's institutions, among them leaders of the 'free market' and the 'free world', seek to control the media. It is these paradoxes of the mass media which become instrumental in defining the issues of political violence and its response by the state.

The conceptual framework about the media's relationship with the state and society in the present research follows what Halloran calls critical eclecticism. It combines some of the perspectives discussed above. It draws on Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model but follows it in conjunction with perspectives offered mainly by Gerbner; Schlesinger, Murdock and Elliot; and Ericson, Baranek and Chan. The eclectic

approach is taken because it is felt that no single framework can explain the media's functioning in liberal democratic societies convincingly and with clarity. For instance, the more mechanical Marxist models of political economy can be problematic in explaining moral and philosophical questions of modern societies. Some of these questions could be best understood in terms of the society's common sense awareness or co-option of consent. Herman and Chomsky's approach is both comprehensive and functional but it lacks the sophistication of approaches based upon hegemony and culturology to explain finer social and political processes of the modern nation and society.

A combined but critical approach distances itself from the single-minded policy perspective which, directly or indirectly, justifies the state's questionable methods of restraint, against both terrorists as well as the media. The propaganda model spells out aspects of dichotomy between the state and non-state perpetrators of violence and offers a convincing explanation of the media coverage of different types of terrorism. This understanding is complemented with a constructionist framework of news production which lays stress on the media's professional practices. As discussed above, the news is understood in the framework of how it is reported and not as it happens (Ericson, Baranek and Chan, 1987). That is precisely why it is argued that the cultural package presented as news depends more on the forces that produce it than on the events which make it possible (Golding and Elliot, 1979). The above position, obviously lays considerable emphasis on the norms, principles and practices through which the cultural workmen make news (Schudson, 1989; Ericson et al, 1987; Tuchman, 1978; Cohen, Adoni and Bantz, 1990) The organisational approaches discussed above work as a practical link between the newsroom and much of the outside world represented by organised spheres of life. As discussed above, Ericson, Baranek and Chan's approach makes it simple to understand finer points of this inter-organisational link in terms of pressures working on both, news and source organisations, and with regard to source-journalist relationship. The authors position that news media have a more 'normalising' effect on society makes it simpler to take a position against the theories which advocate a contagion effect.

As discussed above, those who support the contagion argument inadvertently support some kind of voluntary or statutory curbs on the media. The framework of this research agrees with the opponents' position that holding the media responsible for terrorism is like blaming the messenger for the bad news. The anti-contagion position is that the media coverage has a more normalising effect on its audience. Herman and Chomsky's approach makes it plain that 'free' media's response to insurgent and state

terrorism is qualitatively different from one another. The latter is often presented as a 'painful necessity' as against the 'obnoxious' and 'misanthropic' nature of insurgent violence. This is corroborated by the findings of the chapters on content analysis, word contexts and interviews. It is through the use of media's language that one seeks to determine how the conflict and its perpetrators are defined and presented in the first place.

Many recent studies, including some of those mentioned above, have content analysed media's discourse of insurgent violence in order to understand how a conflict is mediated. Few have, however, tried to analyse the coverage of state's violence or its questionable methods of counter-violence. The conceptual framework of the present research takes into account the media construction of official violence along with that of insurgent violence. It seeks to partly combine the methodological approaches followed by Picard and Adams (1991) and Simmons (1991) as a part of the larger analysis of the newspapers' contents, their linguistic variations and interviews with the participants of the conflict. It seeks to extend Livingstone's enquiry about media's news management and agenda setting and go in the realm of media's judgements and omissions. The basic assumption behind such enquiry is that the media condition the way in which a conflict is perceived (Peter Taylor, 1986).

The way a conflict is defined leads to the "synthesis of the political and public perception" of the state and its enemies.<sup>139</sup> The issue of public perception of violence is accorded utmost importance by Herman and Chomsky (1988), and Schlesinger, Murdock and Elliot (1983) as is clear from the above discussion. Hence characterisations of acts of violence, labels used for the perpetrators and the news items' sources, themes and judgements are seen as vital parameters of the press construction of terrorism news. The process in which some elements of an event go into its representation as news while some other do not, has a lot to do with the kind of sources a journalist chooses to quote. That is why sources of news in different newspapers as primary definers form an important part of the study. In the light of the above conceptual framework, the sources' role is bound to reflect itself in the characterisations, labels and judgements used in a story. The consistency of permutations and combinations of the above mentioned attributes of a news story in a particular paper should have a definite bearing on its ideology. The analysis of interviews underpins this position. There is also an attempt to go beyond the media's manifest content by looking at the newspapers' most stark omissions. The discussion on semantics of political violence, ideological variations contained in the use of

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<sup>139</sup> Taylor, P (1986) p. 212.

language and participants' perceptions about the press coverage continues in the chapters on content analysis, linguistic variations and interviews.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> See Chapters five, six and seven.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study seeks to study construction of 'terrorism' and 'counter-terrorism' news about Punjab by three different types of newspapers: regional, national and international. The ambit of 'terrorism' covers political violence committed by both insurgents as well as the state's law and order machinery. It examines how newspapers at the three levels perceive and present the conflict in Punjab and what are the socio-political or cultural reasons behind their perceptions. The attempt is to analyse different permutations and combinations of relationships among the media, terrorism and the state. At a more macro level, the study attempts to locate these relationships in the overall context of India's political environment and the 'free' media's political economy.

The basic methodological approach in this research is inspired by the simplest questions that one needs to ask --more as a layman rather than as media scholar -- in relation with the media and terrorism. At the root of all methods and computer programmes used in the subsequent chapters is an attempt to analyse the patterns of relationships between terrorism in Punjab and the media at local, national and international levels. Questions which involve studying some of the social and political processes of larger society include what the papers cover and what they leave out; what 'terrorists' want to say through their violent communication; how does a liberal democratic state react to this; and who is called a terrorist by whom and why.

This research draws on various types of studies conducted in different fields of social sciences. The conceptual framework chapter has quoted and discussed some important contributions made to the study of mass media and political violence by social psychologists, linguists, criminologists, environmentalists, jurists, historians and culturologists among others.<sup>1</sup> The present study is basically a piece of media research but its multi-disciplinary framework often stretches its basic enquiry beyond mass communications. That is why once in a while the study appears more problem-centric than media centric. The spirit of this research is rooted in what Halloran (1983) calls 'critical eclecticism'.<sup>2</sup> The theoretical approaches used in the analysis for developing a conceptual framework are discussed in the summary of the last chapter.

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<sup>1</sup> See research perspective in Chapter three.

<sup>2</sup> Halloran James D (1983) pp 270-278. Halloran has recommended a 'multiperspective diagnosis' for mass communication and has argued that exploring a range of complimentary approaches is the "only fruitful way of dealing with the complexities of social communication and media operations."

Content analysis is seen as a quantitative technique which is both an objective and systematic method of analysis of the media's manifest content.<sup>3</sup> Stempel III has underlined the need for a formal content analysis by arguing that issues like violence and television are far too crucial to be left for "people's impressions."<sup>4</sup> The biggest advantage of drawing conclusions on the basis of a scientific content analysis is that it makes it possible to make "replicable and valid inferences from data to their context."

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It has been argued earlier that data per se serves no purpose and that it is essential to back the whole exercise of data analysis with a perspective of theoretical understanding. One of the disadvantages of a purely quantitative content analysis is that it runs the risk of losing the meaning of data in the same sense as one may confuse trees with the woods. That is why the exponents of a more qualitative approach find the quantitative approaches shallow and simplistic. But the old debate of quantitative versus qualitative content analysis has become less important today because the two perspectives of analysis are seen more as complementary rather than exclusive to each other. With the advent of new and diverse textual analysis techniques such as social semiotics and critical linguistics among others, and with the emergence of more eclectic and multi-disciplinary media analysis approaches, the abstractness of news discourse could be underpinned by sociological paradigms and its meaning could be understood in a more holistic sense. The importance of theory in content analysis is evident in the following lines: "We can recognise that data without adequate theory are intellectually sterile, but we must also acknowledge that theory, unless subjected to rigorous and wide-ranging empirical test, is merely polemic."<sup>6</sup>

In the present study, the coverage of violence has been analysed in Punjab's overall political setting and with reference to components of the media, insurgent terrorism and the state. To understand the process of news production at a macro level, Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model has been used. The model spells out forces in the 'free world' and democratic societies which cause the media to play a 'propaganda role' by mobilising bias against groups and individuals seen as the enemies of powerful institutions.<sup>7</sup> According to the model, the media construction of news involves a

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<sup>3</sup> Berelson (1952) has defined content analysis as a "...research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication." p. 18.

<sup>4</sup> Stempel III, (1989) p. 125

<sup>5</sup> Krippendorff, (1980) p. 21.

<sup>6</sup> Stevenson, R.L.(1983) p.262

<sup>7</sup> Herman and Chomsky (1988) have found the propaganda model very useful to analyse the global economic, political and military operations of the powerful Western states, their corporate and media

process in which raw material passes through successive filters which leave only the 'cleansed residue' to print. The process in which journalists construct their picture of 'reality' with the help of time-tested sets of professional practices is discussed in the earlier chapter. Apart from the propaganda model and the constructionist approach, an organisational perspective of news production has been utilised as a link between the newsroom and the outside world. The organisational perspective joins the media events with the source events and looks at the detection of news as a continuous process of interaction or negotiation between the media and society.<sup>8</sup> This combined approach has been subsequently applied to over 1200 news items from three sets of papers. The stories are content analysed to determine patterns of coverage and professional practices. All news items, features, editorials and letters etc. which were on or about insurgent or security forces violence were picked up for coding. Items which were not primarily about violence but which had a mere mention of 'terrorism' or 'terrorist' were excluded from analysis. All these items were subsequently analysed using the statistical computer package, SPSS.

Individual headlines of all the news items studied were noted in the coding schedule. Another computerised package, Micro OCP, is used to analyse the headline texts. A different strategy is employed to study the vocabulary and concordance of headline language in different papers. The main focus of this part of analysis is on studying the most frequently used words in their immediate and overall context of meaning construction (key-word-in-context or KWIC). The exact method used in the analysis is discussed step by step in the beginning of the chapter under 'design of the study.'

The media's seemingly deliberate omissions are as much a part of the present study as their distribution of concerns and agenda setting function. Actors who have been described as 'participants of the conflict' happen to be among the most frequently quoted sources of violence news. A combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis of the media content, texts of these interviews and concordances of headline language are employed to see the media's everyday construction of reality in the overall perspective of India's political processes. The study explains the very nature

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empires and the culture industry. The model, as discussed in Chapter three, has been applied on a macro level for developing an understanding of media and society and is used in conjunction with organisational and constructionist approaches.

<sup>8</sup> The propaganda model, and the constructionist and organisational approaches are discussed in conceptual framework chapter under macro and micro perspectives of news production. It has also been argued that the propaganda model of Herman and Chomsky presents an overall understanding of the processes of media and society which affect everyday production of news. That is why the propaganda model has been discussed under the heading "News Production at Macro Level" whereas the constructionist and organisational approaches are discussed under "News Production at Micro level" in the conceptual framework chapter.

of Punjab's conflict and examines the individual newspapers' attitude towards the Indian state and those perceived as its enemies. An attempt is made to determine how the state, media and society's powerful interests negotiate and exercise control over political dissent and tackle separatist violence.

The content analysis is designed to study basic determinants of a news story which is treated as a single unit of analysis. These determinants are: sources, themes, descriptions (characterisations of acts of violence and labels for perpetrators) and story judgements. This part of the analysis brings out (a) the manner in which a particular newspaper defines the conflict and other violence-related issues and (b) contrasts and similarities in the perceptions of these papers. The chapter on linguistic variations and word contexts conducts a linguistic analysis of headlines of these very stories to complement and fine focus the above objective. However, both these sections pertain to the area of the newspapers' manifest content. The analysis of interviews with the participants of the conflict examines media's coverage of violence from their own perspectives, independent of the media text. For instance, the content analysis brings out the most important themes and sources of violence-related news, as perceived by the individual newspapers. But the analysis of interviews also reveals the views of these sources on vital issues and their own hierarchy of themes in Punjab's conflict. Which sources and themes take precedence over others shows how the conflict is defined by the different papers. The analysis of interviews when compared to the results of the content analysis also exposes the media's most consistent omissions which go virtually unaccounted for in normal content analysis because they are not a part of the raw material to be processed.

A broad design and method have also been discussed in the beginning of each of the following chapters. In this chapter the overall methodology is discussed as the central strategy of research and its different approaches :

#### SELECTION OF PAPERS :

The present study has sought to analyse patterns of newspaper construction of 'terrorism' and 'counter-terrorism' in Punjab by the regional, national and Western (British) press. The nature and political economy of the India's national and regional press is discussed in the second chapter. It is argued in the conceptual framework chapter that the privately owned and profit-driven 'autonomous' media all over the 'free' world manufacture their product, news, using similar professional practices. However, their perceptions differ due to cultural, ethnic and religious diversities and

different world views of their consumers. The Punjab-based regional and vernacular press thrives on regional and local identities. The national press based in New Delhi identifies itself with fears and anxieties of the Indian state. The Western press, on its part, is closely identified with the 'West' and its wider world-wide interests which are often at cross purposes with that of the Third World democracies.

As argued in chapter two, India's national television (Doordarshan) and the All India Radio have been covering incidents of terrorism from a more official perspective. The way the two organisations have been reporting news and current affairs is more like the electronic media in other third world countries whereas the press in India is more than two hundred years old and is comparable only to the most developed democratic countries of the West.<sup>9</sup>

What is described as 'terrorism news' belongs broadly to the same genre in the regional, national and Western press. It is easy to identify this genre of news in any of the papers by its unique 'recurring form'. Dowling (1986) maintains that the "terrorists are so restrained by the situation and purpose that their acts form a distinct rhetorical genre."<sup>10</sup> It is different from crime and violence news in as much as political violence is different from general crime. Globalization of the media and the integration of large parts of the world in an international market economy have somewhat universalised newsworthiness of evocative issues such as terrorism. This is clearly reflected in the coverage of terrorism by the regional, national and international press. However, their readers' requirements and their different sets of ideologies lead to different perspectives of historicity and contexts of violence news. The Western media's coverage of terrorism is often taken very seriously by the Indian government and elite sections of society.

The coverage of terrorism by the Western press provides a reference point in the present analysis. It helps emphasise differences between the regional and national perspectives as much as it reflects the Western media's understanding of the conflict. Both the state and insurgents are highly interested in the Western audience because it is vital for their world-wide image. The Western papers' attitude towards the conflict is usually torn between the civil libertarian and anti-terrorism concerns of the West which, in different ways, are of crucial importance to the participants of the conflict.

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<sup>9</sup> J.S. Yadava (1991) has argued that the Indian press plays a significant role in the country's politics and the printed word has tremendous credibility and influence. p 132

<sup>10</sup> Dowling (1986) The author maintains that the acts of terrorism form a distinct genre which is more than the coincidental repetition of forms.

The following newspapers are selected for analysis:

1. Punjab based (regional) papers :

- (a) Ajit (Punjabi)
- (b) Punjab Kesari (Hindi)
- (c) The Tribune ( English)

2. Delhi based (national) papers:

- (a) The Hindustan Times
- (b) The Times of India
- (c) Indian Express

3. London based ( western) papers:

- (a) The Times
- (b) The Guardian

The three regional papers mentioned above represent all the three major languages spoken in Punjab. The readerships of these papers are also representative of Hindu, Sikh and English-educated middle and upper class people of Punjab. They are most influential and the largest circulation papers in their own categories with a wide network of reporters all over the state and bureaux in New Delhi. Another significant reason for their selection is that Punjab's Hindu and Sikh populace strongly patronise and identify with *Punjab Kesari* and *Ajit* respectively.<sup>11</sup> The *Tribune* is the most influential and powerful English language paper in Punjab and its adjoining areas. Its circulation is several times more than its nearest rivals. The three national papers selected for analysis are among the country's top selling English language dailies and according to popular belief, they represent three varying shades of political opinion. The *Hindustan Times* is considered to be very close to the ruling party while the *Indian Express* is the main Opposition newspaper. The *Times of India* figures somewhere in between the two. The two British newspapers mentioned above are chosen because they are among the UK's largest selling quality papers and they represent two different shades of political opinion.

The two vernacular papers -- Ajit (Punjabi) and Punjab Kesari (Hindi) -- are coded in the coding schedule exactly the same way as their English counterparts. Relevant issues of these papers were obtained during the field study in Punjab and they were

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<sup>11</sup> The caste or community-wise break-up of newspapers is not available and there is virtually no literature on readership profiles except rough projections of income groups available with the advertisement agencies and the individual papers' own ad. departments. However, an idea of the papers' readerships was offered by their editors who were interviewed for the analysis.

coded along with other papers. Owing to one's fluency in Hindi, and good command over spoken Punjabi, the process of coding was simple. However help was taken in reading the *Ajit* from a professional translator who read out the news items in Punjabi aloud while the author of this thesis coded them straight onto the coding sheet. The only change needed in the methodology to suit the use of three languages was in the story descriptions (characterisations and labels). These descriptions are reclustered in broad and flexible categories, 'positive', 'negative' and 'others' so that terms and expressions used in different languages to describe incidents of violence and their perpetrators are treated in a similar fashion. It turned out in the process of coding that the two vernacular papers mostly used very few specific expressions for 'terrorist' (Atwadi or Atankwadi); 'separatist' (Wakhwadi or Prathaktawadi); 'militant' (Kharku or militant in Roman) and other frequently repeated words.

Items for content analysis were selected on the basis of a brief pilot study, conducted before finalising this methodology. It was found that the number of stories on Punjab in the regional and national newspapers was very high and were scattered all over the papers. Selecting only the front and edit pages was not very useful because many important stories were printed on inside pages or in pull-out sections. Another observation in the pilot study was that some of the most significant stories were often poorly displayed. For instance several press releases and statements attributed to the 'terrorists' were usually not displayed very well even in *Ajit*, the only paper to have regularly used such statements. Similarly, news items about human rights violations by the security forces were given very little space by the Hindi paper *Punjab Kesari* and some national papers.

Going through every news item precludes the risk of leaving out poorly displayed news items. On the basis of the pilot study, it was decided to go through the entire newspaper along with its pull-outs and magazine sections rather than only the front and edit pages. It was found useful to select only those stories which were focused on insurgent activities, terrorism, counter-terrorism or Punjab's political dispute. This includes all the stories, comments and letters on issues related to actual or threatened violence by insurgents and the police, or statements concerning their violence. The process was cumbersome as well as time consuming but it covered the entire range of violence-related news in all the papers irrespective of their size, display or page number. It was relatively easier to select stories in the two British papers because they

were available on the *Financial Times* on-line database.<sup>12</sup> The search was made on the basis of different combinations of the following key words : India, Punjab, Sikh, Khalistan, terrorism, terrorist, militancy, separatism, violence, riots, bomb blast, explosion, massacre, killing and murder. A second check was done using the headline index of the two papers on the CD ROM. The stories were retrieved through the data base but the same papers were later physically checked for actual displays of the stories and their accompanying photos or visuals on micro-films at the British Newspaper library at Colindale, London.

#### TIME FRAME OF ANALYSIS :

Every attempt is made to make the samples representative and to study the coverage uniformly irrespective of the political settings.<sup>13</sup> The coverage during specific incidents of violence such as operation Bluestar and operation Blackthunder, were especially avoided because of the high degree of media management and press censorship involved. A decade's longitudinal study without operations like the above mentioned could have been representative as well as consistent but the long time period puts other restrictions on the study. For instance, it runs the risk of spreading the sample too thinly. It may also render the interviews unrealistic because of a long time difference between the beginning of the sample and the time of the interview. Another difficulty with a longer time period was that it restricted the possibility of applying various different but complimentary methods of analysis on account of the sheer bulk of text. After the pilot study it was found more useful to take two slices of time covering most backdrops of Punjab's political setting.

Two one-year long time periods between 1986 and 1992 were found to be both representative and uniform. Unlike pre-Bluestar days, when the militant groups in Punjab observed some form of unity of command under Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and the violence was more selective, in the post-Bluestar phase it was more indiscriminate. It continued all through the eighties when the state remained under President's rule and for some time after the election of the Congress government in

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<sup>12</sup> The Financial Times on-line database is a computerised information retrieval service which contains back issues of a large number of Western newspapers. The service was accessed through Leicester University Library and print-outs of these news reports were taken on the basis of key words.

<sup>13</sup> Political setting is the expression for different types of political backdrops against which one is studying news about violence. For instance President's rule was imposed several times in Punjab in the past ten years. There have also been two elected governments, the first led by the Sikh political party, Akali Dal, and the second by India's main political party, the Congress. It is often argued that the control on the flow of official information is much more tight during President's rule when compared to the elected government. Similarly, it is also argued that the incidents of violence go up during situations like election campaigns.



1992. An elected state government led by the Shiromani Akali Dal came to power in Sept. 1985 and was dismissed in April 1987. The end of 1992 witnessed a decline in insurgency which continues to date. The following two periods of study are selected for analysis :

- (I) December 1986 to November 1987; and
- (II) December 1991 to November 1992.

The first time period begins when an Akali government was in power. Elected in September 1985, this government was dismissed in April 1987. The period begins in December 1986, more than a year after the election. The incidents of violence were constantly on the rise, a trend which continued till the end of the eighties. This period ends in November 1987, seven months after the dismissal of the elected government and the simultaneous imposition of the president's rule in Punjab. The second period begins in December 1991 when President's rule was still on and the press was under pressure from the insurgents to refer to them by names other than 'terrorist.' Three months later election to the state assembly were held and another government, this time a Congress one, came to power with very thin majority. The second time period continues for the first nine months of its rule.

These time periods are representative of Punjab's chequered political background. They cover almost all backgrounds of Punjab's political setting, i.e., Akali rule, Congress rule, President's rule, local and state elections and the deployment of the army in the border districts. The political backgrounds are being taken into account in order not to restrict the study period to a particular political phase but to cover as many of them as possible. The sampling procedure was so randomised as not to spread the study too thinly and at the same time to cover all days of the week. Every 15th day's paper was taken. For the regional and national press, the number of newspaper issues to be studied were on an average 50 each. The regional papers have, on an average, carried more than 7 stories and the national papers less than four in each issue. The total number of stories coded and studied were 1204 out of which the regional, national and British papers accounted for 728, 380 and 96 stories respectively. The stories in the two British papers' were obtained through FT on-line database and headline index which accounted for all violence related stories on or related to Punjab in two years' papers.

#### THE CODING PROCEDURE :

The coding sheet lists several options under 20 variables over 13 pages.<sup>14</sup> The first six variables pertain to the bare facts about the items such as the name of the paper and its day, date and year. Every item has a unique item number. The next five variables note the position, display, accompanying visuals, author and dateline of the item. No attempt is made to measure the items in terms of wordage or column inches. More importance is given to their position and display i.e. whether an item is on the front page or any other page and whether it is displayed as first lead / second lead or in any other form under the 'news classification' variable. Stories which have been displayed well, irrespective of their position, are coded as 'prominent news story' and the very small and relatively smaller items have been coded under the 'other news item' category.

The variable 'Likely origin of the story' attempts to learn through 20 likely options whether there are indications to confirm the origin of the story. Similarly there are 21 possible fora where the news could have originated. There is some degree of overlap between origin and forum but they complement each other and between the two it is easy to determine the 'source setting' which suggests what kind of places or fora are more likely to get into print than the others. It is useful to know the forum and origin of the story as one can get an idea of the agenda setting process through them. These two variables have gone a long way in determining what kind of statements get into news more often than others and what kind of public platforms or fora furnish more newsworthy settings than others.

The coding schedule contains 46 different sources divided under the following four types : Official, non-official, insurgent and individual. Initially all sources which got mentioned during the pilot study were noted and some added while coding. During re-clustering, the above mentioned four types of sources were further recoded in sub-clusters (i.e., the official sources were subdivided into ruling party and security forces; non-official sources were subdivided into non-official political sources, NGOs, human rights organisations or religious sources etc.). A note is taken of all such stories in which no source is mentioned or which indicate that the author himself is the source. (It is common in all papers as a large number of violence related items are spot news stories covered directly by the correspondents.)

In the process of coding, 'primary sources' are seen differently from other sources. Up to three other sources are coded in each news item apart from the primary sources. In the final analysis only one distinction is made and that is between the 'primary

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<sup>14</sup> See appendix 1. Coding schedule.

sources' and 'other sources'. More often than not, it is difficult to differentiate between the secondary or tertiary source but the primary source is relatively easier to pick up and is also more significant. It is mostly that source without whose part the main story line has a good chance of collapsing. The primary source is coded irrespective of its order of appearance in the story.

The next variable on the coding schedule is the theme of the item and it carries 81 options subdivided into four types:

- (1) Violence / insurgency related themes;
- (2) Law enforcement themes;
- (3) Human rights, law, judiciary and constitution themes; and
- (4) Political themes.

As is clear from these titles, the violence / insurgency related themes pertain to an actual, alleged or threatened action by the insurgents. In the process of re-clustering, these themes were subdivided into 'violence' and 'struggle' themes. The law enforcement themes cover all aspects of the security forces' actions. The human rights, law, judiciary and constitution themes cover all related legal issues. They cover themes from the so called 'black laws' to the allegations of 'fake encounters'. The political themes cover the rest of the issues concerning Punjab's political, religious or ethnic dispute. This category covers statements of politicians of different hues and issues like elections and international relations. There is very little overlapping in these categories and the divisions are clear. They are, however, more qualitative and involve a thorough reading of the news item being coded, often more than a couple of times. For instance an incident of surrender by an insurgent is seen as a law enforcement theme rather than an insurgency theme.

The study of sources and themes is like pillars of content analysis. The significance of sources of news in meaning construction is discussed in the conceptual framework chapter. Several studies discussed and reviewed in the chapter indicate that the coverage of violence in newspapers and magazines is affected more by the choice of sources than most other attributes. That is why, perhaps, certain type of sources are to be found in the central core of stories, certain others in the fringes and some are simply out of bounds. Similarly, themes covered in a news story have a definite bearing on what purpose it serves. Like the sources of news, the themes have also been coded as 'primary themes' and four secondary (other) themes. The primary theme is the one which forms the major plank of the story irrespective of its order of appearance in the story. Usually the primary theme is the single most important aspect

of the story which defines what the story is all about. Once again the difference between the most important theme and the secondary themes is rather clear in the news stories. But no difference is made between say secondary and tertiary themes. This means that all themes except the primary theme are seen as 'other themes'. In the final analysis, themes are analysed either as 'primary themes' or as 'all themes' which is a combination of primary themes and all other themes present in a news story.

The variables after themes are about the characterisations, labels and judgements of acts of insurgent and security forces' violence. The characterisations are the words used to describe acts of violence which range from 'massacre' and 'terrorism' to 'self defence', 'revenge' and 'war'. There are 25 characterisations listed in the coding schedule for describing insurgent violence and are divided into positive, negative and other characterisations. The labels are the words used to describe the alleged or perceived perpetrators of insurgent violence and they range from 'terrorist', 'zealot' and 'coward' to 'heroic', 'innocent' and 'martyr'. In all, 30 negative, positive and other labels used for the insurgents are coded. The last in this series is the story judgement which is any explanation, justification or reason given in the story about insurgent violence. The judgements may be direct quotes or allegations of one of the sources or actors or they could be simply mentioned somewhere in the story. Twenty eight judgements are listed as options under the variable story judgement and they range from 'struggle for independence' and 'persecution of Sikhs' to 'insanity or madness' and 'state terrorism'. The next three variables are a repeat of the same characterisations, labels and judgements about security forces' violence. The dual coding of descriptions and judgements is useful for comparing the media's attitude to the insurgents and security forces.

The characterisations, labels and judgements -- for both insurgent and security forces' violence -- have been coded up to three layers. Just like the sources and themes, these descriptions are coded as 'primary' and 'others'. The difference between sources or themes and descriptions is that the 'primary descriptions' (whether characterisations, labels or judgements) are coded in order of their appearance in the story unlike the sources and themes which appear in the order of importance. The coding schedule also carries the news items' headlines in full.<sup>15</sup> The data thus coded was analysed using SPSS for Windows.

## LINGUISTIC VARIATIONS AND WORD CONTEXTS :

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

The raw material for the study of linguistic variations and word contexts is the headlines noted in the coding schedule. The text been analysed from a linguistic perspective. In the analysis of content in Chapter five, the emphasis is on sources, themes, agenda and descriptions of the entire news items while this part of the study focuses on 'key words' and their immediate and overall contexts. Key words are those words which have a direct bearing on a headline's meaning construction and which are used most frequently by all the papers. These words signify events, actors and processes and a comprehensive newspaper-wise list of most often used key words is given in Table 2.3 of Chapter six. A brief conceptual framework of this kind of language use is given in the beginning of Chapter six. The emphasis is on identifying ideological variations contained in the language of 'routine' headlines. The 'key words' used in headlines are analysed in their immediate as well as overall contexts to determine rhetorical patterns of their meaning. The attempt is to analyse the signs and other inherent features of language system in which the ideology is 'encoded' into news discourse.

The study uses a computer-based linguistics programme, Micro OCP, for examining vocabularies, and word contexts.<sup>16</sup> The text of headlines was already there in the original SPSS file. It was transferred from the SPSS (for Windows) file to the Micro OCP (DOS) file through a simple ASCII conversion. Micro OCP command files were constructed separately for every operation using the command file 'construction kit'.<sup>17</sup> First a 'wordlist' was created separately for each newspaper in descending order of frequency and this was examined to develop a feel for the most frequently used words. Before starting analysis of words and their contexts, a total vocabulary of individual papers was obtained.<sup>18</sup> The wordlists were then re-examined to check if there were any analogous words. Such words were joined with their synonyms or corresponding words to create 'discourse clusters' according to the purpose they perform. Finally a new list of key words and discourse clusters was made using only those frequently repeated words which were crucial to the headlines' meaning

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<sup>16</sup> Micro OCP stands for 'Micro-Oxford Concordance Programme' which is a further development of OCP version 2. Brought out by the Oxford University computing service and Oxford University Press, the programmes is a linguistics tool primarily used for investigation of styles, vocabulary distribution and concordances etc. ( See Micro OCP User Manual, OUP, 1989.)

<sup>17</sup> Micro OCP command files are created separately for each function, such as wordlist or concordance. Output files can be obtained in descending or ascending order of frequencies or alphabetically.

<sup>18</sup> It has been argued that the vocabularies of the regional, national and British papers about violence-related news are different in the same way as those of the British quality press from the popular press. The purpose of a newspaper's vocabulary and its relation with meaning construction has been discussed in Chapter six.

construction and which were, in a way, most common denominators of a particular newspaper's headlines.

These words are seen in their contexts using a list of concordances. The Micro OCP arranges the whole text file in such a way that the key word is kept in the middle for studying Key-Words In-Context (KWIC). The word contexts are examined both in relation to the 'associated words' as well as in terms of their specific usage.

Concordances are obtained in order to bring out the patterns of individual newspapers' portrayals of actors, actions, victims and processes. In other words, it examines patterns of 'who (actors) did what (actions or reactions) to whom (victims) and how has it been understood and described (process) in a particular newspaper or a category of newspapers. In the final analysis, the whole headline sentences or their major parts, rather than words, have been quoted and discussed to determine linguistic and ideological variations of different newspapers or different time periods.

#### INTERVIEWS WITH THE PARTICIPANTS:

The role of the conflict's participants is vital for the overall context of news production. Much of the media coverage of terrorism is on or about these actors. Most of the time they are quoted, interviewed, referred to, or talked about in various contexts. The sources' descriptions of violence, their opinions about the coverage and their own first-hand understanding of the conflict in Punjab locates their position vis a vis insurgency and law enforcement. Besides, the participants' own perceptions and their priorities give an idea of how they look at the 'news value' of the messages they themselves wish to put across as compared to a newspaper's criterion of news worthiness.

Different participants represent different interest groups. It is only expected that the insurgents and their sympathisers would have one set of opinions and these would be drastically different from that of the security forces and government. The opposition politicians represent the democratic buffers or the middle ground between the two contending groups. These opinions find their way into daily production of news in different proportions through journalists who mediate the message through a constant process of negotiations and 'give and take'. The content analysis brings out the ways in which the participants have defined the conflict as primary sources of violence related news. The analysis of interviews in Chapter seven presents the participants' first-hand impression about the media coverage of Punjab's political dispute and insurgent violence.

Interviews have been conducted on the same lines as the analysis of data with the purpose of emphasising the inter-relationship among the media, insurgents and the state. The focus of enquiry is what the different newspapers report on these issues and why. The interviews throw up a new understanding on how the principal actors themselves perceive and describe violence and conflict as against what comes out of the media coverage. It is significant that most of these participants also fall in the category of frequently quoted news sources. Journalists have also been interviewed because they mediate the message and help or hinder the various participants' attempts to set the agenda. Interviews are conducted with the following actors / participants :

- (a) Insurgents and their sympathisers;
- (b) Police and security forces officials;
- (c) Politicians; and
- (d) Journalists.

In the first category there are two former members and office bearers of two of Punjab's main armed underground organisations; two senior members of the pro-insurgent student movement, All India Sikh Students Federation (AISSF); and two sympathisers of the armed movement for Khalistan. All six respondents in this category have openly supported and justified their own use of violence. In the second category, six senior police officers, a part of whose job is to interact with the press, have been interviewed. These officers hold responsible operational positions and formulate counter-insurgency policy. Among the politicians interviewed are both ruling party and opposition members. The ruling party members include the party's acting chief, a Cabinet minister and the opposition leaders include the leader of the opposition in the Punjab Legislative Assembly. All the leaders interviewed have been or are spokesmen for their parties and have regularly interacted with the press. In the last category, 12 journalists of the six regional and national papers listed above are interviewed. Half of these journalists are Punjab-based reporters and the rest are their editors or news editors who take decisions about coverage.<sup>19</sup>

The interviews are semi-structured and are conducted in a conversation style. the questions were divided into two parts, confirmatory and exploratory. The confirmatory questions have been listed in a questionnaire which was filled in by respondents after the interview.<sup>20</sup> The answers given by the respondents in the

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<sup>19</sup> See the introduction part of Chapter seven.

<sup>20</sup> See questionnaire Appendix 2.

questionnaire have not been used separately. Its purpose is to strengthen the interviews in such a way that the 'yes' and 'no' type questions do not hinder the flow of interviews. The questionnaire contains questions about the respondents' media consumption habits and their views about the most important issues in Punjab. It has also been used to know the respondents' opinions about some of the most basic issues pertaining to the press coverage of political violence such as whether they blame the media for violence or not.

The conversations were tape-recorded and the interviewees were allowed to go beyond the specific questions. Some of the interviewees, especially the insurgents and their sympathisers and the police officers, requested that their names not be quoted anywhere as their submissions could get them into serious trouble. In order to keep their anonymity, the interviewees are given a number and introduced by the nature of their position and responsibilities within their organisation. Such introduction is tagged (in square brackets) at the end of the quotes. Wherever an explanation is added to a quote in the process of analysis, it is carried in a square bracket.

After transcribing the interviews in full, a preliminary 'tagging' was done on the basis of a list of categories prepared to analyse interviews. The 'tagging' involved marking the number of a category at the relevant or corresponding quote in an interview text. For example, if a quote roughly falls within the parameters of Sikh nationalism discourse and it justifies the Khalistan movement, the quote would be tagged as [1 (a)]. All the quotes with similar 'tags' were later collected together to examine similarities and differences of opinions. Following is a list of categories for preliminary tagging:

1. The Sikh nationalism discourse ( independence, freedom, Khalistan etc.).

- (a) Khalistan movement justified
- (b) Sikhs' discrimination / persecution stressed
- (c) Need for independence / freedom stressed
- (d) Broken promises and deceit
- (e) Media's role criticised

2. National / federal discourse

- (a) Unity, integrity, oneness, democracy of India stressed.
- (b) Foreign hand, external aggression stressed
- (c) Centre-state relations, autonomy, rights of the states etc. stressed.
- (d) Rights of minorities / Sikhs as minorities stressed
- (e) Regional issues of Punjab versus national politics



#### 4. Perceptions about the media

- (a) Is media seen as a friend / collaborator for one's or adversary's cause
- (b) Expectations from the media
- (c) Any stress on the media's negative role ?
- (d) Stress on difference of coverage by regional / national and foreign press

#### 5. Definition of terrorism

- (a) Any riders attached to the definition ?
- (b) Has the word 'kharku' made any difference ?

#### 6. Perceptions of terrorist violence

- (a) Has it been justified in any way ?
- (b) Any stress on indiscriminate violence ?
- (c) Divisions / weaknesses of the movement stressed
- (d) Media's role in reporting violence

#### 7. Perceptions of State violence

- (a) Has it been justified in any way ?
- (b) Any motives offered for state violence ?
- (c) Media's role in state's violence
- (d) Criticised or condemned

#### 8. Perceptions of vigilante violence.

- (a) Conceded ?
- (b) Justified ?
- (c) Denied ?
- (d) Criticised or condemned
- (e) Media's role in vigilante violence

#### 9. Perceptions of Human rights issues

- (a) Human rights of victims raised ?
- (b) Any positive / negative reference to international agencies ?
- (c) Violations criticised or condemned
- (d) Media's role in human rights situation.

The analysis of interviews is largely qualitative in nature. No attempt is made to study frequencies and occurrences of words and expressions in interviews though the language of interviews is taken into account. The interviews offer an alternative perspective independent of story text. The content analysis chapter examines the way media portray and represent the participants and their preferred agenda but the chapter on interviews investigates how various participants perceive the conflict and the newspapers' coverage of it.

In the analysis of interviews some interviewees have been quoted more often than others. There are two reasons for this. First, some interviewees are more articulate than others and they have summed up positions taken by others in their categories more succinctly and secondly, this part of the analysis is more qualitative in nature. However, in line with the practice of qualitative analysis some interviewees are quoted more often than others and the quotes essentially represent the range of opinions expressed.

As discussed in the beginning of the chapter, the analysis of content and linguistic variations bring out aspects of the media's mediation of the conflict in Punjab as far as the written word is concerned. The analysis of interviews, however, brings in an added element of participants' perceptions, which, in the final analysis are juxtaposed with the findings of the content analysis. It is indeed possible to come to different newspapers' ideologies through the analysis of the media's content but the interviews with reporters and editors offer a much more direct way of discussing their ideologies. Similarly, interviews with insurgents and their sympathisers, politicians and security forces officials reinforce their perceptions about the conflict and its media coverage. They also question some of the findings as well as corroborate some others as is evident from the discussion in the concluding chapter.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ANALYSIS OF NEWS CONTENT

This chapter aims to study patterns of press coverage of what is described as 'terrorism and 'counter-terrorism' through a systematic content analysis of individual story texts. The broad parameters of the study, which is both qualitative and quantitative, address the following specific questions :

(a) How do the regional, national and British newspapers portray violence and terrorism in Punjab and what are their most preferable sources, themes, agenda, descriptions and judgements. Is the content of news stories affected significantly by the choice of their sources ?

(b) Have the individual papers studied covered the incidents of violence differently? How have these papers treated insurgent violence, law enforcement and security forces violence in their routine coverage ?

(c) How is the distribution of themes and descriptions in news stories different in the two different time-periods chosen ? What is, if any, the newspapers' individual and collective response to the insurgents' 'code of conduct' ?

#### THE STUDY DESIGN :

As described in earlier chapters, the case study presents an analysis of three local newspapers of Punjab, three of India's main national newspapers published from New Delhi and two London-based British papers with correspondents in India. Of the three regional papers one each is in Punjabi and Hindi languages and one in English. The national papers are all English language papers.<sup>1</sup> The two time periods are selected as two representative slices in order to cover various political settings of Punjab.<sup>2</sup>

The content analysis takes into account any news item which is on or about 'terrorism' or 'counter terrorism.' Its findings are also indicative of ways in which the press

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<sup>1</sup> Tables and charts shown in the Chapter refer to these papers, apart from using their full name, in the following way : *Ajit* = full name; Punjab Kesari = Punj. Kesari / Punj. Kes. or PK; *Tribune* = Trbn.; *Hindustan Times* = HT or Hind. Times; *Times of India* = TOI or Times of Ind.; *Indian Express* = Ind. Ex. or Ind. Express; the *Guardian* = Gdn.; and *The Times* = Tms.

<sup>2</sup> A detailed criterion for the selection of newspapers and time periods is given in Chapter four.

defines and describes political violence in a liberal democratic set up. The unit of analysis is an individual news-story selected on the criterion of violence-related themes and events. The case study looks at the patterns of violence and counter-violence through the following elements :

- (a) Actors and sources
- (b) News Agenda
- (c) News Events and
- (d) Descriptions (characterisations and labels)

Actors are those people who, as main participants of the conflict, describe the situation and define issues in Punjab as 'main sources of news' or perpetrators of acts of violence. Most of these participants are directly quoted or mentioned in the stories. The news 'agenda' are mainly seen through the origin of the story, i.e. whether the story is media or source originated and is described as 'origin of the news' in the coding schedule. It is supplemented by a study of fora where the news is seen to be breaking. The 'themes' are seen in terms of the most important subject matter covered in a news story. The descriptions are studied to see how incidents of violence are described (characterisations) and by what names the actual or alleged perpetrators have been called (labels). These elements of news are not completely water-tight but every attempt is made to avoid overlapping.

Initially it was thought that the differences between the newspapers would be analysed at three levels : regional, national and international (British) papers. It was realised in the process of the pilot study and that the differences between the two regional papers, the Punjabi paper *Ajit* and the Hindi paper *Punjab Kesari*, were so sharp that in statistical terms figures representing the two papers' coverage tended to balance out each other.<sup>3</sup> The strategy of analysis was later changed to show the patterns of coverage in individual papers studied. It was found that the patterns of coverage in individual newspapers offered more flexibility and clarity since and it also made it possible to discuss the results in various new categories such as regional, national and international papers, all vernacular papers, all English language papers etc.

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<sup>3</sup> For example the tables and charts in the following pages have made it amply clear that the two papers have contrasting perspectives of source / theme selection or characterisations and labels. If the *Punjab Kesari* has maximum official sources, *Ajit* has minimum of them; or if *Ajit* has very high positive labels for the insurgents, *Punjab Kesari* has least number of them. Together in one category of regional papers, the picture can be confusing because the negative and positive factor tend to balance each other.

The study seeks to understand the press construction of 'terrorism' and 'counter-terrorism' through patterns of coverage and journalists' professional practices reflected in the news items. The findings in this chapter are supplemented with the analysis of interviews discussed in Chapter seven. If a reporter's sources are his main collaborators in defining issues and describing routine events, it should be possible to look at the events (themes), agenda and descriptions in the light of the commonly understood perspectives regularly thrown up in the stories. It is discussed in Chapter three that the newspapers construct their picture of 'reality' with the help of some participants of the conflict as news sources (and often at the cost of others).<sup>4</sup>

## SOURCES OF NEWS :

Sources of news have a direct and definitive bearing on the meaning construction of a news item. Journalists construct their picture of reality through a generally accepted set of professional practices which are devised, honed and perfected by journalists throughout their careers. In the process of newsmaking the elements used to construct a picture of reality have to pass through subsequent filters<sup>5</sup> of unwritten codes brought in by factors like the owners' interests, concerns of readers and the ideology of society's dominant sections.

Thus the processes and methods of gathering everyday news are such that they contribute to the distortion of reality<sup>6</sup> which could be intentional or unintentional and which is generally acceptable to a news organisation's hierarchy. Tony Atwater and Norma F Green (1988) have presented empirical evidence on how television network news personalises coverage of international terrorism through a selective use of sources.<sup>7</sup> The 'free' media's dependence on official sources is so vital that the proverbial sacrosanctness of accuracy of facts is often compromised in order to highlight the official accounts. Journalists achieve this rather easily by picking and choosing their sources in such a way that one particular angle or interpretation of reality consistently gets precedence over others. The whole process of producing nice and presentable packages of everyday 'reality' through a selective use of sources is affected and supervised by the editors or by their well understood expectations.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See media's construction of reality in Chapter three.

<sup>5</sup> Herman and Chomsky (1988). The filters have been used in this research to develop an overall understanding of media's functioning in a liberal democratic society.

<sup>6</sup> Altheide (1985)

<sup>7</sup> Atwater, Tony and Green Norma F (1988) pp 967-971

<sup>8</sup> Chibnal S (1977)

In the following analysis, the sources of news are coded in a multi-layered fashion and analysed likewise. The most important news source is described as the 'primary' source, and the subsequent ones as 'source2', 'source3' and 'source4' in order of importance. In the analysis, however, a distinction is made only between the 'primary' and 'other' sources. Source2, Source3 and Source4 are collectively called 'other' sources. The study analyses mainly the following three aspects of the sources' role in news construction : (a) How different sources interpret incidents of violence and describe their perpetrators; (b) which sources get precedence over others and (c) what are the 'source settings' in which the story is written.<sup>9</sup> The setting is seen in the following analysis through : ( i )" likely origin of the story" which notes whether a story is media originated or source originated and ( ii ) "news forum" which shows whether a source has spoken at a press conference, public meeting or a religious function. This helps us to understand which participants of the conflict in Punjab are quoted more often than others and who set the news agenda and how successfully.

In all, 46 different types of sources have been coded in the order of importance. These sources are divided into 'primary' and 'other' sources and analysed with SPSS. Many sources were later grouped together in eight different macro categories. For a broader outlook of participants of conflict being quoted as sources, all 46 sources are recoded in different sets of categories such as Official, Unofficial, Insurgent and Other sources. For instance, the official sources comprise, police and security forces, central and state governments, bureaucrats, intelligence and army officers, official experts etc. apart from policy documents and anonymous official sources. Table 1.1 shows all the sources quoted in the stories to present an overview of the hierarchy of their importance. It is clear from the table that in all the papers, official sources are the most often quoted sources of news. In seven of the eight papers shown in the table, official sources account for more stories than all the other sources put together.

The only exception to the overall trend shown in the table is the Punjabi paper *Ajit* which is patronised by Punjab's common Sikhs. *Ajit* differs with the rest of the papers in two ways. First it has quoted less number of official sources (31%) than the average of all other Indian papers (50%). Secondly it has quoted more 'insurgent' sources (26%) than all the other papers. It is several times more than the average of insurgent sources quoted by all the other Indian papers whose individual averages are in proximity with each other.

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<sup>9</sup> Source setting is the backdrop in which a source has been quoted. In Punjab's context, a source could be making a public speech, or he could be speaking at a religious or cultural function. He may even have held a press conference or given out a press release to the papers. All backdrops which are seen as location or fora of news have been called 'source setting'.

Even though *Ajit* has quoted more 'insurgent' sources than most other papers, it shares the same overall practice of sourcing with them. For instance official sources are the single most frequently quoted sources in every newspaper including *Ajit*. The common trend of sourcing in all the Indian papers--regional and national-- can also be determined by the fact that three out of five of the most important sources in all six papers are common. It becomes more clear when the break-up of primary sources is

**Table 1.1 A broad overview of all sources mentioned in the stories<sup>10</sup> :**

NEWSPAPERS	SOURCES OF NEWS (%)				
	Official	Unofficial	Insurgent	Others	Total
Ajit (n=419)	31.3	22.2	26	20.5	100
Punjab Kesari (n=474)	44.9	27.2	5.5	22.4	100
Tribune (n=339)	50.1	27.1	7.1	15.6	100
Hindustan Times (n=229)	56.3	18.8	3.5	21.4	100
Times of India (n=169)	46.7	31.4	5.9	16.0	100
Indian Express (n=227)	51.1	28.2	4.8	15.9	100
Guardian (n=99)	43.4	15.2	2.0	40.4	100
Times (n=66)	53.3	12.1	1.5	33.3	100

examined. Table 1.1 presented an overview of all (up to) four sources given anywhere in a news item studied while table 1.2 shows the primary sources, coded as the most important sources of the item.

Table 1.2 shows that the Punjabi paper *Ajit* shares with all other Indian papers the same attitude towards most or least often quoted primary sources of news. In other

<sup>10</sup> All the aggregates of total percentage figures in this table and all the subsequent tables are rounded up to 100 % . If simple addition is slightly less or more than 100 % it is still shown as 100%.

words, except quoting less number of official sources and larger number of 'insurgent' sources, *Ajit* shares with other Indian papers a similar attitude towards official and institutional non-official sources of news. The common attitude towards sourcing is reflected in the following (macro) categories of primary sources:

**Table 1.2 Newspaper-wise Primary Sources of news :**

SURCES	N E W S P A P E R S							
N =	Ajit (263)	P.K (236)	Tbn. (226)	H.T (143)	T.O.I (103)	I.Ex. (132)	Gdn. (56)	Tms. (40)
Official	40.3	55.9	56.2	62.9	61.2	58.3	55.4	60.0
Non-Official	10.6	18.6	14.2	11.9	14.6	15.9	7.1	00.0
NGOs etc.	2.7	1.3	7.1	2.1	0.9	3.9	00.0	00.0
Religious	1.9	1.7	1.8	2.1	2.9	1.5	1.8	2.5
Insurgent	28.9	3.0	7.9	2.8	4.9	1.5	1.8	00.0
Layperson	3.0	5.9	2.7	2.8	5.8	1.5	8.9	2.5
Author / None	10.3	13.1	7.5	13.3	9.7	12.9	23.2	32.5
Others	2.3	0.4	2.7	2.1	00.0	4.5	1.8	2.5
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Institutional 'Non-official' sources (mainly regular political parties of different caste and communal affiliations); Non-overnmental organisations or 'NGOs etc.' (trade unions, business and other establishments and human rights groups); 'Religious sources'; and 'layperson' sources (common man, housewives, eye-witnesses etc.). Even the author himself or 'author / none' (together with no source mentioned <sup>11</sup>) is one of the main sources of news in *Ajit* just as it is in the rest of the papers.

<sup>11</sup> When no source is mentioned at all, not even anonymous sources, the author himself is usually the source. These two categories, i.e., 'no source mentioned' and 'author himself' have been combined.



The analysis of primary sources shows that all the papers studied rely more on state rather than non-state sources and institutional rather than on non-institutional sources.

<sup>12</sup> It is common among journalists both in India and in Britain to seek the opinion of the institutional sources of non-state type (such as leaders of mainline opposition parties) on issues of policy implications. The Akali leaders of Punjab are the most handy institutional sources to quote on political matters, just as the Shadow Home Secretary of Britain is seen as the most eligible person --apart from the home secretary himself-- to comment on policy implications of an anti-terrorism legislation. Aware of the vitality of their role in the media's daily construction of reality, the political parties run well-oiled public relations departments to provide their share of news, views and opinions to the reporters. The opposition ideologues, experts and policy researchers also figure in on the media's handy map of 'relevant knowers' for a quick reference.<sup>13</sup>

Table 1.2 shows after the Official sources, the second most frequently quoted sources of news are the Institutional non-state ones. (Except *Ajit*, in which 'insurgent' sources are quoted more often than the mainline political parties.) The next most important primary source of news is the Author himself. In violence related news stories the author is often required to visit the spot of violence and relies on his own account or does not feel it necessary to quote any source at all. The categories of 'no source mentioned' and 'author himself' are recoded under the latter category of sources which is the next most frequent category of sourcing after 'non-official' sources in all the papers. It is noteworthy here that despite variation in numbers, *Ajit* shares overall trends of sourcing with all other papers studied. Even though the Punjabi paper has quoted more 'insurgent' sources as primary sources of news, it quotes all other sources almost as frequently as any other paper.

The paramount status of the Official source is something British papers share with their Indian counterparts. Just like the Indian papers, both *Guardian* and the *Times* have relied more on official sources than all other sources put together. The second most important category of sources in the British papers is "author himself or no source mentioned" which is also very high on the list of Indian papers' sources.<sup>14</sup> In

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<sup>12</sup> Apart from the state sources, political sources such as main parties also represent institutional sources because they are also part of the paraphernalia of a liberal democratic state. Hence they have been called 'institutional non-official' sources and shown as 'non-official' in the tables.

<sup>13</sup> Fishman (1980) suggests that irrespective of what happens, there are always some officials and authorities who are in a structural position to know.

<sup>14</sup> Though the *Guardian* has quoted a few 'layperson' and mainline political sources but their number is far too insignificant to be cited as a trend. The *Times* has more or less ignored both 'layperson' and political sources. Between the two papers, The *Guardian* has a wider range of sources than the *Times* even though they share a common trend of news attribution.

short, the British papers depend a great deal on official sources for news on or about violence in Punjab. Alternatively they have relied more on their own judgement rather than that of any participants of the conflict.

It is assumed that the sources' role is not limited to passively describing a situation to a reporter. The interaction between a journalist and his source is more like negotiations and it takes various shapes in different situations and fulfils a variety of requirement for news construction. At times the sources themselves define a news story and give it away to news hungry reporters as the day's main event. At other times, they organise leaks and highly selective disclosures to chosen reporters. Sometimes they use baits and brokers to push their point of view into news columns. The rest of the time the institutional sources, who are in the business of public affairs, are simply available to newsmen with 'authoritative' accounts of incidents or simply with their 'expert' opinion as and when the need arises.

#### SOURCES AND NEWS AGENDA :

Table 1.3 shows the relationship between the sources of news and its origin. All news stories studied and coded for analysis are divided into 'media originated' and 'source originated' categories. Determining the origin of the story and separating one from another in a precise way is certainly difficult. The objective of finding out a story's origin is to get a rough idea as to who is setting the agenda and through what means or strategies. The media originated stories are the ones which may not have been published without an extra initiative of the newspapers.<sup>15</sup> In contrast, the source originated stories are there as a result of other individuals' or organisations' actions or efforts. The media originated stories include editorials, opinion-based stories such as comments, judgements and backgrounders, investigations and travelogues etc.

Source originated stories are the ones which originate at a press conference or at the site of a leader's speech or through a statement made by him. Stories originating from violent actions of the police or 'terrorists' are also source originated because violence is almost a compulsive news story for the media.<sup>16</sup> The stories based on 'terrorist'

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<sup>15</sup> It is arguable that an editorial could be source originated and not media originated because it may well have been inspired by somebody else's 'extraordinary' action. Similarly an investigative story could well have been handed over to a reporter by a politician who has an axe to grind. These stories become media originated because an editor chooses to write an editorial on an action or a reporter decides to / or is assigned to, investigate something. The choice is significant because there are a large number of people and groups who want the media to take notice of their actions and hundreds of stories are handed over to reporters by disgruntled people as possible scoops.

<sup>16</sup> Gerbner (1988)

action are treated as source originated stories because the perpetrators of a violent act are conveying a message through the shock value of the violent event. The 'counter-terrorism' stories also convey a similar message to the state's enemies.

Table 1.3 further confirms that the ratio of media and source originated stories in all the papers is more or less the same.<sup>17</sup> The media originated stories are around or below 15% whereas source originated stories account for about 85%. The ratio clearly shows that journalists construct news with the help of their regular sources who belong to important institutions such as the security forces and mainline political parties. In other

**Table 1.3 Origin of a story ( % of Media and Source originated stories) :**

	MEDIA ORIGIN	SOURC E ORIGIN	TOTAL
Ajit	12.5	87.5	100
Punjab Kesari	16.3	83.7	100
Tribune	13.1	86.9	100
Hindustan Times	15.3	84.7	100
Times of India	12.7	87.3	100
Indian Express	13.6	86.4	100
The Guardian	9.6	90.4	100
The Times	18.4	81.6	100

words it can be said that these sources have a lot to do with setting the agenda of daily news on or about violence. The process does not take place crudely in a dictated

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<sup>17</sup> It may be argued that the British press also follows the same pattern even though there is a minor variation between the two papers.

fashion but it involves constant interaction, negotiation and occasional friction between the press and its institutional sources.<sup>18</sup>

The overwhelming percentage of the source originated stories and the predominance of official sources indicates that the role played by the society's dominant sections in media's agenda setting is anything but incidental. It is clear from table 1.3 that this role is pivotal as far as news on or about violence is concerned. It may be interpreted from the above pattern of sourcing that journalists actively select certain type of people as main sources who define certain types of incidents and comments, as against other types, as news.

**Table 1.4 : Break-up of source based stories (%) :**

SOURCES	N E W S P A P E R S							
	Ajit (256)	P.K (233)	Tbn. (226)	H.T (142)	T.O.I (103)	I.Ex. (131)	Gdn. (55)	Tms. (40)
Terrorists' Action	23.7	27.7	19.3	24.1	22.5	23.1	29.8	19.4
Police Action	18.7	22.6	25.3	31.1	26.9	26.9	17.0	29.0
Parties' Action	3.6	5.6	6.5	9.4	5.6	12.9	25.5	9.7
Statements	41.5	13.8	23.1	12.1	12.4	13.9	4.3	00.0
Others	12.5	30.3	25.8	23.3	32.6	23.1	23.4	41.9
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

The break-up of all source originated stories also shows that most such stories are limited to very few sub-types, a trend further confirmed in the study of themes and characterisations in the following pages. All the commercial newspapers, irrespective of their political proclivities and alignments follow similar procedures of news and source selection. This is because most 'free' press organisations share with each other the bulk of their professional practices, irrespective of editorial lines. It is only logical,

<sup>18</sup> Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1989)

therefore, that their common product -- news -- as a cultural package depends more on the forces that produce it rather than on the events it claims to portray.<sup>19</sup>

Table 1.4 Shows a break-up of all source-originated stories. It shows that the 'terrorist' and police action-based stories are the most frequent among source originated stories. Source originated stories are the ones which originate at a press conference or at the site of a leader's speech or from a statement made by him. Stories originating from violent actions of the police or 'terrorists' are also source originated because a violent event is a compulsive news story for the press.<sup>20</sup> The stories based on 'terrorist' action are treated as source originated stories because the perpetrators of a violent act are conveying a message through the shock value of the violent event. The 'counter-terrorism' stories also convey a similar message to the state's enemies.

Putting tables 1.3 and 1.4 together, it becomes clear as to which participants of the conflict dominate access to the press and how successfully. It was seen in table 1.2 that about 85% of all stories on or about violence or 'terrorism' were source originated. A break-up of these confirms that more than two third of source originated stories are based upon : 'terrorist' action ; police action; political parties' action and statements and hand-outs. While the first three categories are self explanatory, the fourth one (statements etc.) is a combination of statements, hand-outs, interviews and rejoinders etc. These statements are issued by parties, institutions and organisations which have stakes in the ongoing violence. Their routine interaction with media organisations can be best understood in an 'organisational' perspective of news production.<sup>21</sup>

The organisational perspective determines that much of everyday news coverage takes place as inter-organisational interaction. It is clear from the break-up of primary sources (Table 1.2) that up to two third of all sources are either official or institutional non-official sources. It is these state and institutional non-state sources which form the bedrock of daily organisational communication. Sources that figure in high on the knowledge or information hierarchy<sup>22</sup> (could be read as power hierarchy) originate several times more news than their adversaries and are invariably given more importance and credibility by the press. However, when compared to the state sources, the institutional non-state sources have a limited say in news production. Their role is, however, substantially more than the non-state, non-institutional sources

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<sup>19</sup> Golding and Elliot, (1979)

<sup>20</sup> Gerbner (1988)

<sup>21</sup> Schudson M (1989); Gitlin (1980) and Tuchman (1978). The organisational perspective of news production has also been discussed in Chapter three.

<sup>22</sup> Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1989)

such as individuals, unrecognised political parties, a little known organisation or a union of not-so-important people.

Table 1.4 also shows that the most successful form of communication for the 'terrorists' is perpetration of violence. Laqueur (1977) argues that in the sixties the guerrilla warfare shifted from rural terrain to the city centres for the sake of publicity.

<sup>23</sup> The whole argument about terrorism being a form of communication follows the assumption that an act of terrorism has everything that the media thrives on : suddenness, drama, sentimentality and an inescapable shock value. Laqueur has gone to the extent of calling modern terrorists "super entertainers of our times"<sup>24</sup> To say that the aim of all terrorist actions is to hog the media attention would, perhaps, be overstretching this argument. As discussed in conceptual framework chapter every act of terrorism can not be understood as an act of communication even though the violent and innovative methods of the so called terrorists have immense news value for any commercial paper. Table 1.2 shows all the papers except *Ajit* have quoted very few insurgent sources which shows how difficult it is for the insurgents to make it to the news pages. Table 1.4 shows they overcome this difficulty rather easily by their violent actions.

For the 'delegitimised' opponents of a democratic system, violence is the most effective and convenient method of communication. It is effective because they can draw literally a whole nation's attention to their existence and demands almost at will. (In fact with the Globalization of the media industry a daring siege, a hijacking or a high profile hostage drama can provide them several days of prime time TV coverage and front-page newspaper headlines all over the world). The terror-factor also ensures effectiveness. The audience of a bomb blast being shown on television is invariably shaken by the incidental nature of the victims (tomorrow they could be among them). This kind of violent communication ensures phenomenal response to the protagonists, irrespective of the actual strength or the extent of mass following their organisation commands.

The break-up of source originated stories in table 1.4 shows that about a quarter of all violence related stories in all the papers are terrorists' action based stories. It is common for these stories to get prominent displays. Compared to their actions, the statements issued by the underground organisations are hardly taken seriously by all papers except *Ajit* which is consistent in its use of 'insurgent' sources. It is clear that

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<sup>23</sup> Laqueur (1977) p 109.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

the statements carrying the organisations' opinions and viewpoints on various issues are hardly considered newsworthy by the press. In other words, it is almost impossible for the 'delegitimised' organisations to participate in routine construction of news in the same way as other participants of the conflict such as the security forces or the politicians do.

#### THEMES OF NEWS :

Themes are the main subject matter of a news item. It is divided into primary and other (four) themes. Primary themes are the ones which cover the most important issue tackled in a news item and other themes are the other issues discussed or referred to somewhere in the story either by the reporter or by one of his primary sources. Primary themes tell us what a particular news item is all about. In all, 80 themes have been coded for analysis.<sup>25</sup> Almost every single item has a primary theme and most others have at least one or more other themes (up to five have been coded). All themes except the primary ones are coded as "other themes" because it is difficult to decide after a stage why a theme is secondary and not tertiary or vice versa. It is even more difficult to differentiate between the fourth and fifth most important themes. A way out could be to record themes in order of appearance but it serves no purpose because the present study is more concerned about the significance of themes rather than the order of their appearance. Hence, 'Theme-2' to 'Theme-5' are collectively called "other themes" and together their number is much higher than that of the primary themes.

All the 80 themes coded for content analysis have been recoded into eight macro themes which are : violence, struggle, enforcement, human rights, political, unity, critical and others. A theme is recoded as 'violence' if it is about an incident of killing, hijacking, assassination, robbery etc. or public statements about them. 'Struggle' covers themes which highlight the aspect of struggle by the insurgents. It includes the responsibilities claimed by 'terrorists' for their actions, a mention of their aim or 'Khalistan', a mention of 'martyrs' and things like their challenges to the state and the security forces. 'Enforcement' covers all law enforcement themes and cases of official violence, often called 'counter-terrorism'. 'Human rights' themes cover 'fake encounters', all illegal and unlawful activities attributed to the security forces and the 'black laws'.<sup>26</sup> Themes concerning the 'Punjab problem' or its water and territorial

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<sup>25</sup> See 'Themes' in the coding schedule, Appendix 1. Also see in Chapter four.

<sup>26</sup> A 'fake encounter' is a term which Indian newspapers and human rights organisations use for extra-judicial executions. As discussed earlier, it is alleged to be one of the methods used by the security

dispute are covered under 'political' themes. 'Critical' covers themes that criticise or condemn the 'terrorists', the underground organisations, their leaders or their cause.<sup>27</sup>

The themes are divided into two different time periods. The most important difference between the two periods is that the number of violent incidents was much higher in the first period and in the second time period a 'code of conduct' was forced on the press under which the insurgents made it a 'punishable' offence to describe their activists or members as 'terrorists' or their actions as 'terrorism'.<sup>28</sup>

**Table 1.5 Distribution of Primary Theme :**

THEMES	N E W S P A P E R S							
% (n) =	Ajit (245)	PK (223)	Tbn. (203)	HT (127)	TOI (95)	I.Ex. (120)	Gdn. (49)	Tms. (35)
Violence	29.4	35.4	29.6	40.2	34.7	36.7	44.9	28.6
Struggle	17.6	4.0	5.4	3.1	5.3	6.6	2.0	5.7
Enforce- ment	18.4	27.4	23.6	26.8	22.1	21.7	12.2	20.0
Human Rights	19.2	1.4	14.8	7.9	1.1	6.6	6.1	8.6
Political	4.9	8.1	6.4	9.4	17.8	10.0	26.5	11.4
Unity	2.0	8.9	5.9	3.9	4.2	7.5	0.0	0.0
Critical	6.1	13.0	11.3	7.9	13.7	9.2	8.2	22.9
Others	2.4	1.8	2.9	0.8	1.1	1.7	0.0	2.8
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

forces as a part of their counter-terrorism offensive. Also see Chapter two under the heading Counter Terrorism: The Official Violence.

<sup>27</sup> See 'themes' in Chapter four for details about recoding etc. Also see appendix 1, Coding Schedule.

<sup>28</sup> See 'time periods' in Chapter four.



Table 1.5 shows a broad overview of newspaper-wise distribution of macro themes in both time periods put together. Similar to the patterns of primary sources, the three most frequently mentioned primary themes are common to all papers with matching frequencies. These themes are : "violence", "enforcement" and "critical" which are part of the state's most favoured agenda. All papers except *Ajit* have quoted these three themes between 65% and 75% times leaving as little as between one fourth and one third space for all other themes put together.

*Ajit*, which quoted more insurgent sources than all other papers put together (Table 1.2), has once again differentiated itself by mentioning more struggle and human rights themes (Table 1.5). The Punjabi language paper has mentioned an unusually high number of "struggle" (17.55%) and "human rights" themes (19.18%) and considerably lesser number of "critical" themes (6.12%). It is noteworthy here that in spite of these 'aberrations', *Ajit* has given a proportionate coverage to themes which top the list among other papers (i.e. "violence", "enforcement" and "critical" are still among the top five themes of *Ajit*)

In sharp contrast to *Ajit*, the Hindi language paper *Punjab Kesari* has quoted very few "struggle" (4.03%) and "human rights" (1.34%) themes. As is predictable in a polarised situation between the chiefly Sikh readership of the *Ajit* and the predominantly Hindu readership of the *Punjab Kesari*, the latter has made up for this in the "violence", "law enforcement" and "critical" themes which are significantly higher in its stories than the rest of the papers.<sup>29</sup> Another important category from the state's point of view is that of the "unity" themes. It is argued in the conceptual framework chapter that the official sources, particularly the central government and the police, often see external aggression and foreign involvement behind Punjab's 'terrorist' violence. Danger to India's unity and integrity is part of the state's defence mechanism against terrorism. This is covered under the "unity" themes in Table 1.5.

It is clear from the table that the paper with mostly Hindu readership (*Punjab Kesari*) has the highest number of "unity" themes (8.96%) and its rival (*Ajit*) with mainly Sikh readership contains the least number of them (2.04%). All the other papers fall in between. Results confirm the argument that the news text is not just a straight, one sided communications with its readers but it contains a strong element of its readers

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<sup>29</sup> Trends of contrasting perceptions between *Ajit* and *Punjab Kesari* is reflected in the two papers' choice of sources as well. *Ajit* has quoted a very high number of insurgent sources (28.9%) whereas *Punjab Kesari* has quoted very few of them (2.9%). Similarly *Punjab Kesari* has quoted 10% more official sources than *Ajit*

wishes and aspirations.<sup>30</sup> The third regional paper, *Tribune*, has a mixed readership. It is a Punjab-based English language newspaper with readership among elites of both Hindu and Sikh communities. Going by the perspective that the readership affects a paper's selective perception, *Tribune* should be balancing between the two extreme views that the *Ajit* and *Punjab Kesari* have taken. It is interesting to note from Table 1.5 that the *Tribune* seems to have done just that. Its (pro-militant) "struggle" themes are more than *Punjab Kesari* but less than *Ajit*. Its (pro-state) law "enforcement" and "unity" themes are more than *Ajit* but less than *Punjab Kesari*. Even the (anti-militant) "critical" themes quoted by *Tribune* are more than *Ajit* but less than *Punjab Kesari*.

A close look at the frequency tables of sources (Tables 1.1 and 1.2) together with the distribution of primary themes (Table 1.5) shows that the two Punjab-based vernacular papers which have covered almost similar events of violence have emphasised different points in news stories. It is significant that the "unity" themes which have been considered so important by the Indian papers are completely ignored by the foreign press. It is obvious that the British papers don't associate the problem of 'terrorism' in Punjab with India's unity and integrity.

The two regional vernacular papers, *Ajit* (Punjabi) and the *Punjab Kesari* (Hindi), have taken completely contrasting views on almost everything and their source and theme selection is also drastically opposed to that of each other. It may be emphasised here that public opinion wise, the Punjabi and Hindu populations of Punjab view the conflict from opposite points of view. But it would certainly be erroneous and misleading to take a simplistic view that the media discourse is the cause of this contrasting public opinion. As argued earlier, media discourse and public opinion are two parallel streams which interact with each other.<sup>31</sup> The two vernacular papers represent contrasting packages in the same sense as described by Gamson and Modigliani (1989) in their study of nuclear power issues.<sup>32</sup> Their packages are not just two political positions vis a vis political violence but they are frames within which exist various points of consensus and disagreement. Many critical researchers have focused on structural and content data to track what Jansen has called the "production of audience consciousness."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Gamson and Modigliani (1989)

<sup>31</sup> It has been argued in Chapter three that the media is a part of the society's overall power structure but certainly not its prime movers. Gamson and Modigliani (1989) have argued that "media discourse is part of the process by which individuals construct meaning, and public opinion is part of the process by which journalists and other cultural entrepreneurs develop and crystallise meaning in public discourse." pp 1-2.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Jansen (1987) p. 22.

Table 1.5 also shows some kind of consensus on institutional versus fringe and legitimate versus delegitimised organisations. Just as the non-institutional or fringe sources and unconventional fora were almost completely ignored by the papers (except *Ajit* which mentioned significantly high number of insurgent sources and recognised fora like "secret" meetings), themes which show the 'terrorists' as political people (coded as "struggle" themes) get very limited coverage. The "struggle" theme is coupled by another category in the analysis called "critical" which is roughly its opposite. It covers all themes that show the protagonists of violence as brutal and inhuman killers or as confused and misguided people. A comparison of the "struggle" and "critical" themes in Table 1.5 shows that themes which might favour the Khalistan supporters are minimal whereas themes that present them in bad light have occurred up to three times more often. This gap between the "struggle" and "critical" themes becomes even bigger in the two British papers. Apart from the British papers' dependence on official sources, perhaps, it could also be a reflection of the Western societies' virtual consensus against 'terrorism.'

The patterns of sourcing and themes show that *Ajit* is the only paper to recognise that 'terrorists' are political people with opinions on political issues of the day. It is observed in Table 1.5 that the themes which highlight the struggle of the 'terrorists' are bare minimum as compared to the violence and law enforcement themes. A closer look at the construction of news items which reflect these themes vis a vis their sources would explain how the newspapers differentiate between the adversary participants of the conflict, i.e. the state and 'secessionists.'

As discussed earlier, the "violence" news is mostly put on the agenda by the perpetrators of 'terrorism.' (table 1.4) An insurgent might decide to commit a violent action in order to get wide media coverage. However, in most cases, the role of the perpetrator of violence ends with such truncated agenda setting and does not extend into the sphere of news construction about the action. A cross tabulation of violence related news and its main sources reveals that most 'terrorist' originated stories have the security forces as their primary sources. Chart 1.1 makes it clear :

**Chart 1.1 Sources of news about 'terrorism' :**

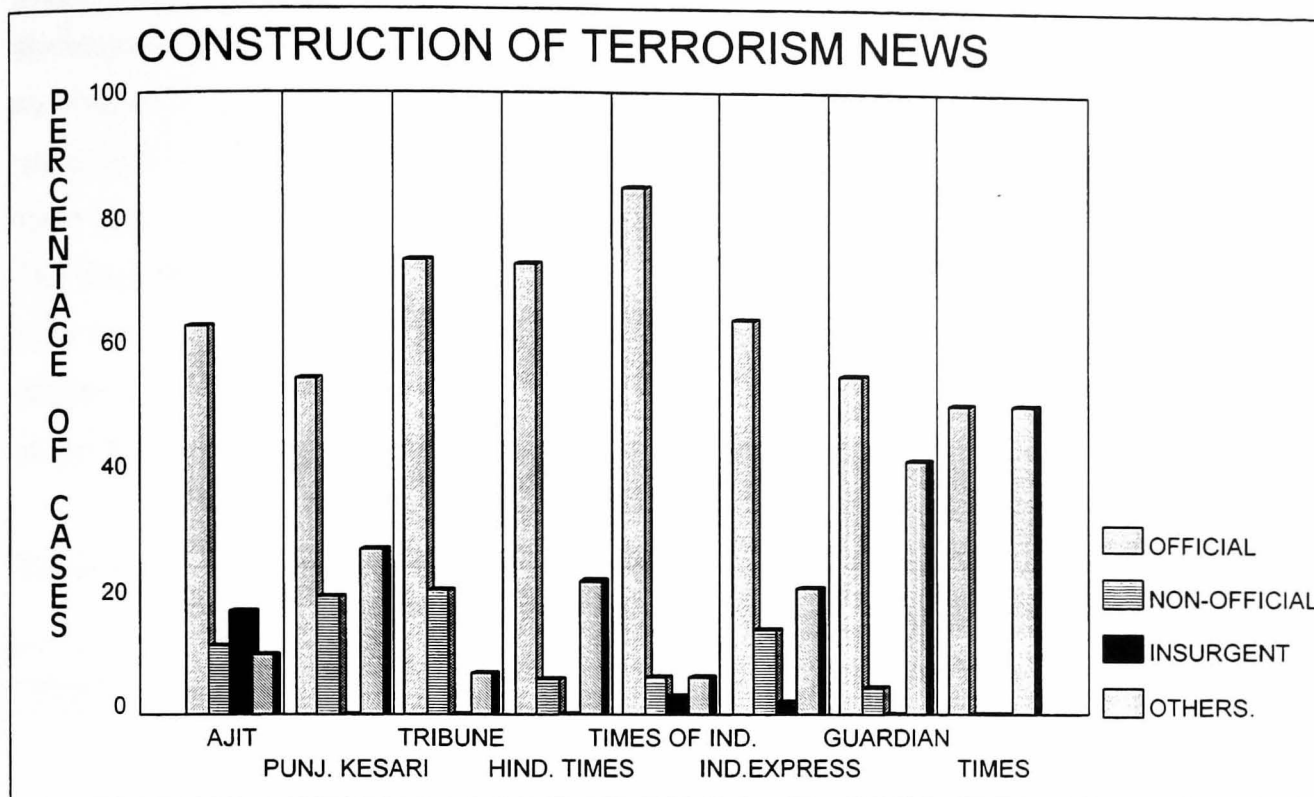


Chart 1.1 shows the break-up of primary sources of any news item on or about 'terrorism'. Official sources are the security forces, army and intelligence officers, bureaucrats or the central or state government authorities. Unofficial sources include mainly important political parties and their leaders, and a few NGOs. The sources are shown as 'insurgents' if the story has an alleged or self proclaimed activist or sympathiser of one of the armed organisations as a main source of news. Members and supporters of the insurgents' main front organisation, the All Indian Sikh Students Federation (AISSF), are also included in the above category. The 'others' category in the chart includes laypersons, such as eye-witnesses, the author himself as a source or instances where no source is mentioned.

Chart 1.1 shows that the only consistent and regular source of news about violent incidents perpetrated by 'terrorists' are the security forces and other state officials. A fraction of this number are the non-official sources in most Indian papers. The insurgent sources are restricted to *Ajit* and are almost negligible in other papers. The British papers have also given maximum importance to the official sources but they have quoted more 'other' sources than the Indian papers.

*Ajit* is the only paper to have quoted insurgent sources (in 16.7% cases) as the primary sources of news. However, compared to the insurgents, it has quoted many times more

sources in the security forces or the government (62.5% cases) just like any other paper. All other papers have avoided using members of such organisations, their spokesmen or even sympathisers as primary sources in incidents which are described as 'terrorism' but they have all quoted between 55% and 85% of official sources. It is understandable that the underground organisations are difficult to contact, particularly soon after a serious incident, but they often ring up newspapers to own responsibility. The security forces have a head on advantage over other sources because they are the ones who usually inform the press of an incident and are, therefore, the first ones to define it. A journalist with good contacts among the forces is likely to get scoops about the progress of investigations in follow up stories.

**Table 1.6 Primary themes in First time period (1986-87):**

THEMES	N E W S P A P E R S ( NO. OF CASES and %)							
% n=	AJIT (140)	PK (135)	Tbn. (119)	HT (59)	TOI (62)	I Ex (68)	Gdn. (31)	Tms. (25)
Violence	35.7	41.5	36.1	52.5	41.9	45.6	58.1	36
Struggle	11.4	5.2	6.7	1.7	4.8	4.4	00.0	8.0
Enforce- ment	15.7	20.0	18.5	20.3	19.4	14.7	9.7	20.0
Human Rights	22.1	2.2	10.9	1.7	00.0	4.4	6.4	4.0
Political	5.0	8.9	5.0	8.5	11.3	5.9	16.1	00.0
Unity	2.9	5.9	5.9	1.7	3.2	7.4	00.0	00.0
Critical	6.4	14.8	15.9	13.6	19.4	16.2	9.7	28.0
Others	0.7	1.5	0.8	00.0	00.0	00.0	00.0	4.0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

The fact that the terrorist organisations, their known sympathisers and spokesmen are hardly quoted as primary sources of news also indicates that any news item which is about violence and has originated from an insurgent organisation is perhaps rarely

newsworthy for most Indian and British papers.<sup>34</sup> A virtual absence of 'terrorists' and their front organisations, in the process of news construction about 'terrorism' suggests that the perpetrators' role more or less finishes with the act of violence and the security forces have a virtual monopoly over defining them. It comes out even more clearly in the analysis of newspaper's 'characterisations' and 'labels' in the following pages.

The pattern of themes have shown significant differences in the two time periods. In the first time period (1986-87) when the number of killings were very high and the underground organisations wielded considerable influence, violence was the most frequent theme. But in the second time period (1991-92) when the security forces killed or arrested a very large number of 'terrorists' there was a sudden drop in the number of violent incidents. So it was natural that the number of incidents covered under 'violence' recorded a large drop in the second time period. It is curious that the law 'enforcement' themes increased drastically (upto 30%) during this period in all regional and national papers. Logically, the law enforcement themes should increase or decrease with the ups and downs in the number of crime-related events. (If one is studying stories on crime prevention over a long span of time, one would expect it to be related to the general crime index.)

The very term "counter-terrorism" suggests that it is seen as a reaction to what is described as 'terrorism'. In normal circumstances, therefore, the "law enforcement" themes should be proportionate to "violence" themes.<sup>35</sup> However, tables 1.6 and 1.7 show a different trend. The number of law enforcement themes did not fall in the second time period with the fall in the number of 'terrorist' crime shown as "violence" themes.

Table 1.7 shows that the drop in the number of violence related events during 1991-92 as against 1986-87 was substantial and was reflected uniformly by all papers. In the regional papers the drop is around 15%, in national papers it is around 21% and in British papers even higher than that. The gradual and almost orderly difference in the percentage of cases in the regional, national and British papers is, perhaps, due to the 'proximity' factor of news worthiness which is followed by the 'free' media almost

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<sup>34</sup> Apart from 16.7% insurgent sources quoted by *Ajit*, *Times of India* and *Indian Express* have one instance each which is more like an exception to a rule.

<sup>35</sup> Individual themes have been coded under the macro theme 'law enforcement' and they include security forces' actions, their encounters and raids or other actions covered under "counter-terrorism." Similarly 'violence' themes consist of all the violent activities which fall under the purview of 'terrorism.'

uniformly.<sup>36</sup> In the British papers, however, the huge gap between the two themes is bridged in the second time period. Due to the 'proximity factor' the drop in the violence related stories is maximum in the British papers. (The drop in the national and regional papers follows in that order)

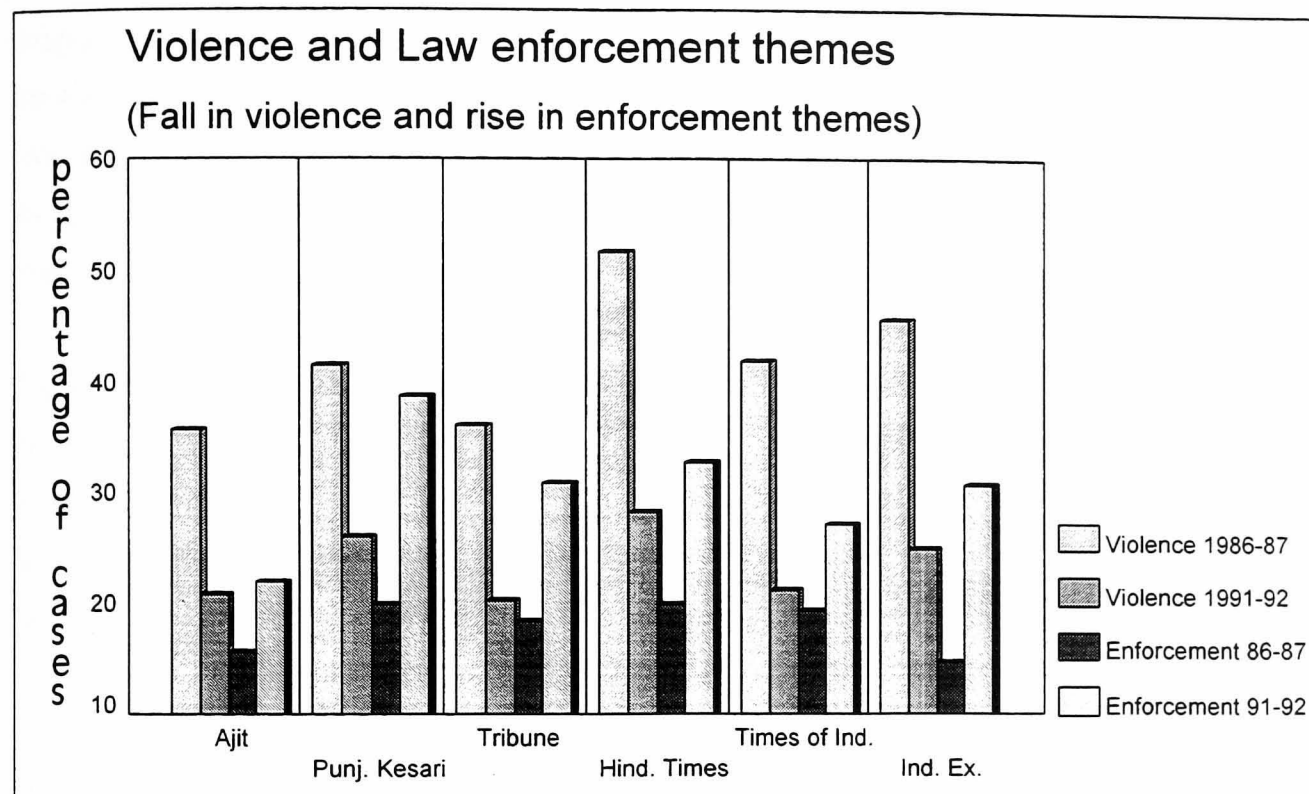
**Table 1.7 Primary themes in the second time period (1991-92):**

THEMES	N E W S P A P E R S (NO. OF CASES AND %)							
% n=	<i>Ajit</i> (105)	P.K (88)	Tbn. (84)	H.T (67)	T.O.I (33)	I.Ex. (52)	Gdn. (18)	Tms. (10)
Violence	20.9	26.1	20.2	28.4	21.2	25	22.2	10.0
Struggle	25.7	2.3	3.6	4.5	6.1	9.6	5.5	00.0
Enforce- ment	21.9	38.7	30.9	32.8	27.3	30.8	16.7	20.0
Human Rights	15.2	00.0	20.2	13.4	3.0	9.6	5.6	20.0
Political	4.8	6.8	8.3	10.4	30.3	15.4	44.4	40.0
Unity	0.9	13.6	5.9	5.9	6.1	7.7	00.0	00.0
Critical	5.7	10.2	4.8	2.9	3.0	00.0	5.6	10.0
Others	4.8	2.3	5.9	1.5	3.0	1.9	00.0	00.0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

<sup>36</sup> If the number of killings is very small, say just a couple, the incident is unlikely to get into print in the national papers. It stands even a lesser chance of coverage in the international press. In the second period, the number of massacres and big crimes by the 'terrorists' had dropped to just a few from very high in the first time period. Hence the national papers considered fewer incidents of violence newsworthy when compared to the regional press and the international press still fewer than the national press. In other words, the criterion of news worthiness in different papers is certainly related to higher threshold of violence.

Contrary to the above mentioned relationship between violence and law enforcement themes, the latter has gone up rather than come down with a let up in violence. Tables

**Chart 1.2 Violence and law enforcement themes in different time periods :**



1.6 and 1.7 show that in every Indian paper, the law enforcement themes have gone up in the second time period. Chart 1.2 shows the difference in the violence and law enforcement themes in the two time periods. It also highlights that the fall in violence related themes in the Indian papers in second time period is coupled with a substantial rise in the law enforcement themes.

The fall in the number of violence-related news denotes almost an automatic and mechanical process. Going by the principle that hard news about violence is a part of media's 'staple diet', it is next to impossible for the commercial media to ignore news about violence.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, the fall in violence related themes reflects an actual decline in the number of killings and general terrorism-related incidents in Punjab which is further corroborated by the official statistics. The trend is both uniform and stable in all the papers.

The unexpected increase in the number of law enforcement themes is reflected in Table 1.7 in the second time period despite a marked improvement in the law and order situation. The phenomenon is explained, albeit indirectly by Punjab's senior

<sup>37</sup> Gerbner (1989)



police officers interviewed for the study. Almost all of them have emphasised on the need for fighting terrorism on the media front.<sup>38</sup> It is a strong possibility that the security forces coupled their counter-insurgency efforts, which were more successful towards the second time period, with a simultaneous propaganda offensive. Interviews with the participants of the conflict suggest that the security forces achieved their hugely acclaimed 'success' in fighting terrorism in the second time period through strategies and tactics considered questionable by many.<sup>39</sup> Almost all politicians and a number of journalists and insurgents have directly -- and some police officers indirectly -- conceded that complaints of human rights violations went up during the state's 'counter-terrorism' drive.

However, the increase in the law enforcement themes in the British papers is not in proportion to that in their Indian counterparts. It is obvious that the British papers have not published mainly official information on law enforcement in the same way as the Indian papers have done, particularly at a time when violence was on the decline. The British papers have, while reporting incidents of violence, continued to give maximum importance to official sources and law enforcement themes. But they did so only when there were incidents of violence to report and virtually stopped using law enforcement themes when they were not reporting incidents of violence.

#### CHARACTERISATIONS AND LABELS :

This part of the study concentrates on the newspaper's characterisations of acts of political violence and their labels for the perpetrators.<sup>40</sup> The relationship between sources and themes is discussed earlier in this chapter. The characterisations and labels will be examined in the light of actors and events. In the coding schedule 25 characterisations and 30 labels have been listed.<sup>41</sup>

Both characterisations and labels are further divided into macro themes on the basis of their tone: negative, positive and others. The negative and positive categories contain words with straight connotations such as 'massacre', 'carnage', 'hijacking', 'bloodshed' or conversely 'heroic', 'revenge', 'freedom struggle' etc. The 'other' category contains

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<sup>38</sup> See security forces' perception in Chapter seven.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> A newspaper story's lead paragraph is often incomplete without characterisations and labels. One basic rule of thumb for writing a simple and wholesome lead sentence is to succinctly carry the 5Ws and 1H (Who, what, when, where, whom and how) the characterisations relate to "what happened" and labels "who did it". It is hard to find a violence-related news story without these two elements in the very first sentence.

<sup>41</sup> The list has been drawn on the basis of characterisations and labels which are used by journalists for describing violent incidents or news about violence and their actual and alleged perpetrators.

words without a straight or unambiguous meaning in the context of 'terrorist' violence. A simple word like 'encounter' which falls under 'other' category is used sometimes interchangeably with similar words such as action, raid, ambush and attack which are very often found to be positive in the context of the insurgents' success in hitting their target. It has been avoided describing the third category 'neutral' even though it falls in between negative and positive and has a neutrality about it. The same criterion is followed for the labels. Both labels and characterisations are coded carefully in order to grasp the overall effect of a word in its context rather than plain usage. This caution is particularly relevant for this study because it qualitatively analyses newspapers in three different languages (Punjabi, Hindi and English).<sup>42</sup>

The most important descriptions are the ones which are most prominent in the story and are referred to as the 'primary' characterisation or label. The next two are called 'other' characterisations / labels. Unlike the primary themes and sources which are based mostly on the importance rather than chronological order, the primary characterisations and labels appear first, mostly in the lead paragraph of a story.

Table 1.8 shows a newspaper-wise broad overview of primary characterisations used in the stories studied. The table shows how the individual papers have described incidents of violence. The table shows that except *Ajit*, all other papers have a near consensus on describing incidents of violence. *Ajit* shows the difference in all three types of characterisations studied. Its negative ones are about a third less than the other papers and yet, they are substantially high in number when compared to its own positive descriptions. However, *Ajit* is the only paper with a high percentage of positive characterisations.

In all other papers, British papers included, the trend is uniform. The high number of negative characterisations show that these papers have described between 93 % and 96% of actual, attempted or alleged incidents of violence by clearly negative terms such as terrorism, carnage, murder, hijacking or bombing etc. Secondly, most of these papers have avoided describing violent actions as self defence, revenge or simply as 'action'. Even the 'other' characterisations which include more or less neutral descriptions such as firing, encounters or operation are very limited in number.

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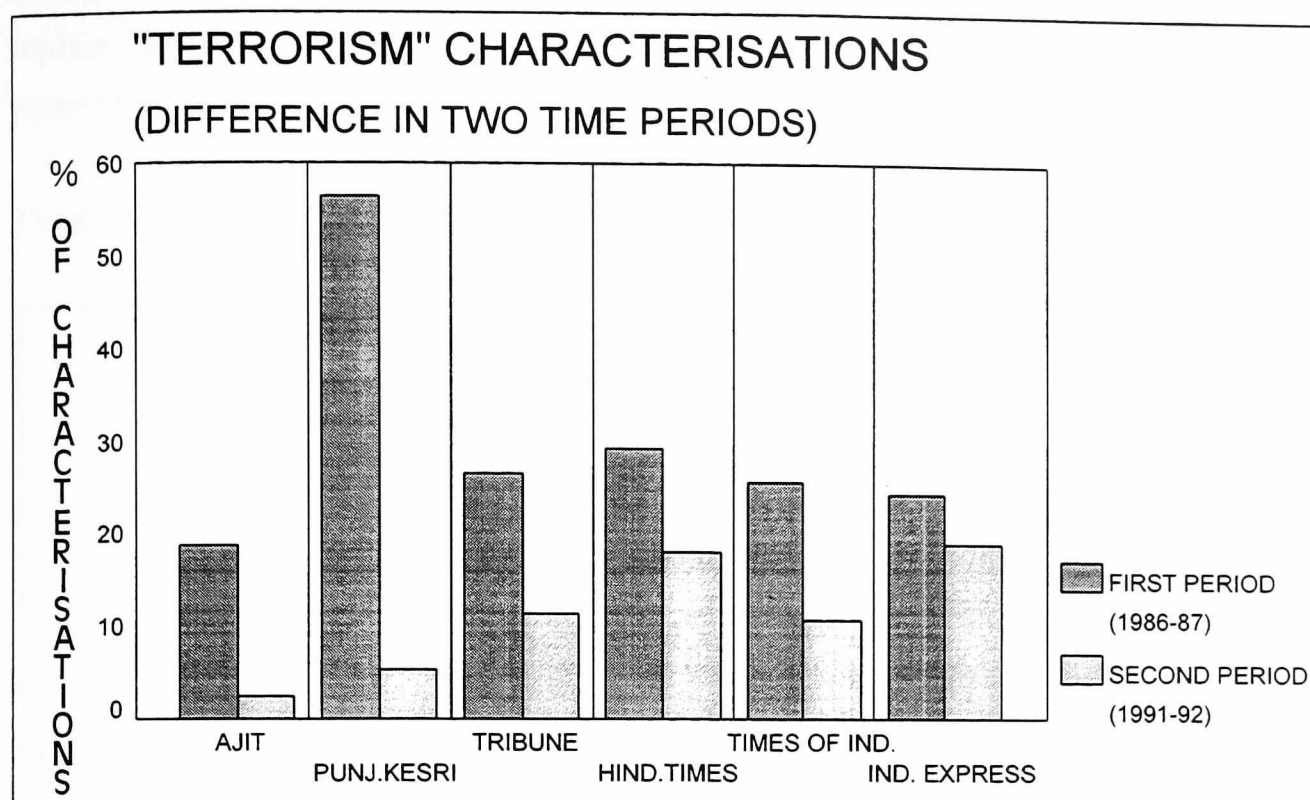
<sup>42</sup> See Chapter four for more details.

**Table 1.8 Primary characterisations for insurgent violence (%):**

Papers	Negative	Positive	Others	Total
Ajit (n=169)	64.5	33.7	1.8	100
Punjab Kesari (n=207)	95.6	2.9	1.4	100
Tribune (n=138)	94.2	4.3	1.4	100
Hindustan Times (n=106)	95.3	2.8	1.9	100
Times of India (n=80)	96.3	3.7	00.0	100
Indian Express (n=89)	93.3	4.5	2.2	100
The Guardian (n=45)	93.3	4.4	2.2	100
The Times (n=25)	96	00.0	4.0	100

Chart 1.3 shows that the use of the 'terrorism' characterisation dropped in the second time period in all the Indian papers. The British papers are excluded because of the very small number of cases in the second time period. The chart shows a clear decline in the rate of usage of 'terrorism' in the second time period. The drop is maximum in *Ajit* which also has several times more positive primary characterisations (Table 1.8) than the rest of the papers.

**Chart 1.3 Newspaper-wise use of 'terrorism' characterisation :**



Characterisations and labels together explain the way a story has described occurrence of political violence and its actual or perceived perpetrators. Characterisations depict the process of violence whereas labels show the names used for perpetrators. Labels used by the individual papers in table 1.9 show the same overall trend as of characterisations in Table 1.8. With the exception of the Punjabi paper *Ajit*, all the other Indian and British papers have used a very large number of negative labels, few positive labels and fewer other labels. It is however, clear from a comparison between Tables 1.8 and 1.9 that the papers are more cautious in their use of negative labels. While between 93% and 96% of incidents of violence had been characterised as negative, between 58% and 77% of perpetrators have been given negative labels by all papers except *Ajit*.

Similarly positive labels in table 1.9 are substantially more in number when compared to positive characterisations in Table 1.8. Positive characterisations stayed around 3% but positive labels go up to 38% in all the papers except *Ajit*. The Punjabi paper is following more or less the same trend which it showed in its patterns of sourcing and choice of themes, i.e., its negative labels are much fewer and positive much higher than the average of other papers. The reason for this difference becomes more clear

while looking at the break-up of the labels in two time periods studied.<sup>43</sup> After the 'terrorist' organisations succeeded in getting the government controlled television to replace the word 'terrorist' by 'militant' in news bulletins, all regional and national papers followed suit.

**Table 1.9 Primary labels for insurgents:**

	Negative	Positive	Others	Total
Ajit (n=227)	35.6	57.3	7.1	100
Punjab Kesari (n=219)	58.4	37.9	3.7	100
Tribune (n=138)	57.7	36.8	5.5	100
Hindustan Times (n=106)	65.5	29.4	5.0	100
Times of India (n=80)	62.9	32.6	4.5	100
Indian Express (n=89)	68.2	27.3	4.5	100
The Guardian (n=45)	77.1	12.5	10.4	100
The Times (n=25)	61.1	25.0	13.9	100

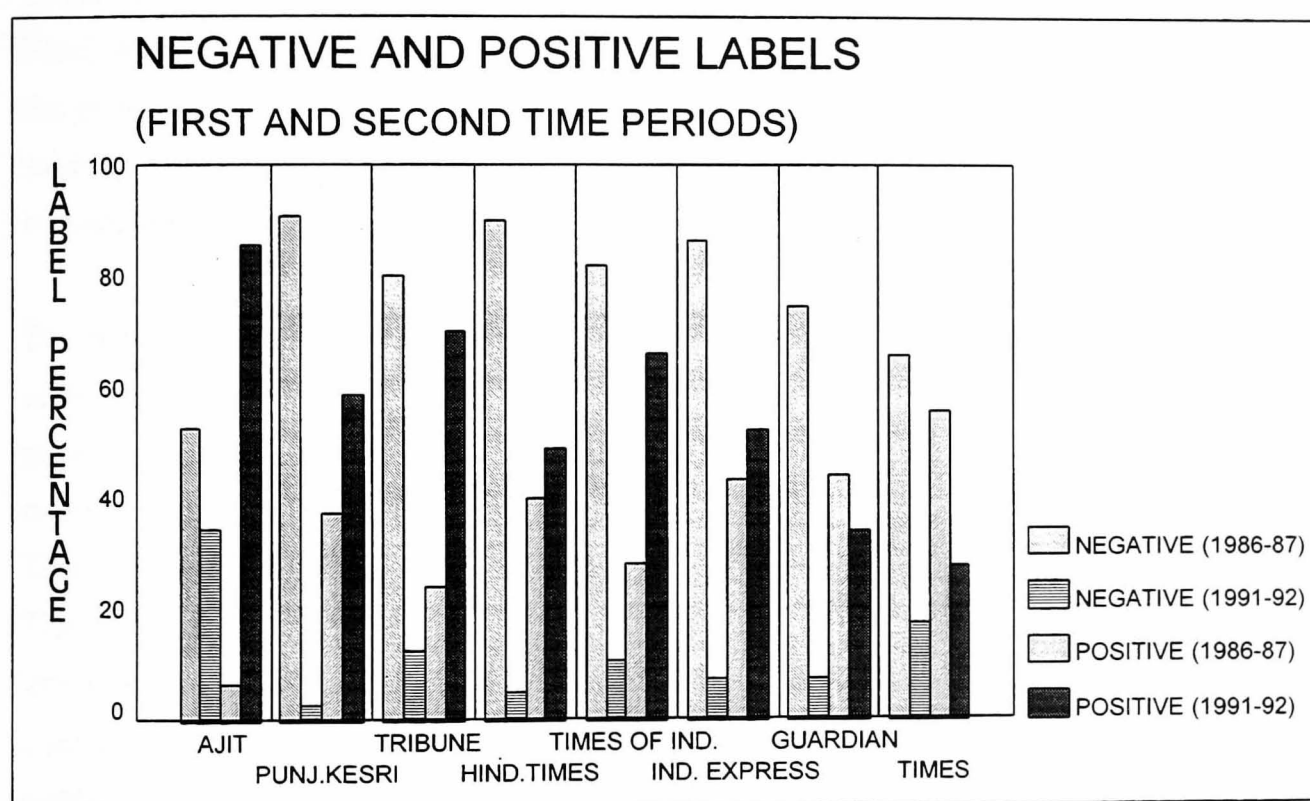
Chart 1.4 shows the difference between usage of negative and positive labels in the two time periods. In the first time period, the use of negative labels is very high and that of positive labels quite low. Except *Ajit* which has 34% positive labels all other papers have used between 2% and 17% labels that could be regarded as favourable to 'terrorists'. The chart also shows that the drop in negative labels is quite substantial in the second time period. But the increase in the use of positive labels in all regional and national papers is quite dramatic. It clearly shows while doing so they did not stop using negative labels. This is because the papers discontinued using 'terrorist' but did

<sup>43</sup> In the first time period the papers used labels of their choice to describe the actual or alleged perpetrators but in the second time period a 'code of conduct' was forced on the media by Punjab's insurgents. Several journalists working for newspapers and electronic media were killed, attacked or directly threatened during this period. Also see Chapter two on Punjab.

not stop using other negative or criminal labels (such as assassin, killer, robber, extortionist etc.) which had not been 'banned' by the insurgents.

When these labels shown in chart 1.4 are seen in conjunction with characterisations (chart 1.3) it is found that the newspaper's overall attitude to violence related news remained fundamentally the same. Chart 1.3 shows that the use of 'terrorism' characterisation dropped in the second time period to about a half but it did not stop altogether. It is significant that the papers reduced only the use of the words 'terrorism' and 'terrorist' and not the other criminal or negative characterisations and labels.

**Chart 1.4 Negative and positive labels in two time periods :**



Among the negative labels the most evocative one is 'terrorist' which is used 41% times while the positive label 'militant' is used 27% times as primary labels for perpetrators of violence in all the papers studied. However, the picture does not become clear till the patterns of usage in different time periods is examined. In the first time period there are 601 negative, positive and other primary labels out of which 'terrorist' is used 63% times. In the second time period the total number of primary labels is 429 out of which 'terrorist' gets used only 10.3% times. It has clearly fallen both in percentage and absolute terms. Similarly label 'militant' is hardly used (5.5%) in the first time period as compared to more negative and evocative 'terrorist'. But in

the second time period it goes up to a dramatic 57%. The trend is shared by characterisations as well and is common to all papers.

As discussed in the earlier chapter the 'code of conduct' introduced by Punjab's underground organisations was their second major success after their 'social reform movement' carried out by burning liquor vends and attacking bars, hotels and barber shops and by punishing the 'offenders'.<sup>44</sup> A large number of ordinary people and police men were shot and injured in the spate of violence that followed the 'social reform movement' and the number of killings continued to be on the rise in 1987 and 1988.<sup>45</sup> The 'code of conduct' was issued when the incidents of violence were on the rise and can be best understood in this backdrop. According to details provided by the Chief Editor and owner of the Hind Samachar group of papers which publishes the Hindi daily *Punjab Kesari*, over a dozen regular and freelance journalists working for the group had been assassinated in different incidents. The number increased after the 'code of conduct' was issued and a large number of hawkers and newspaper shop owners were killed in its aftermath.<sup>46</sup>

The newspapers' response to the 'code of conduct' forced by the 'terrorists' was certainly more sophisticated than meets the eye. The following table shows how the papers constructed their reports and opinions and above all meaning attributions in order to nullify the impact of the 'code of conduct' enforced virtually at gun point. Table 2.0 gives a simple break-up of primary characterisations and primary labels. The scheme of display reveals how the newspapers have used the labels 'terrorist' and 'militant' almost interchangeably in order to propose a new set of meaning construction. Interviews with Punjab and Delhi-based journalists and editors also confirm that the process of news production did not change after the imposition of the 'code of conduct'.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> See militants' censorship in Chapter two.

<sup>45</sup> According to the United News of India (UNI Backgrounder, June 16, 1988, Vol. XIII, No. 24. p. 1) The number of people killed in whole of 1987 was 910 including policemen. But in the first four months of 1988, the number of people killed was 777 which included 36 policemen. The UNI backgrounder quotes Mr Rebeiro, a former Director General of Police in Punjab, that "the terrorists killed 1,411 innocent persons in Punjab in the past three years (upto October, 1987). They included 81 women and 22 children." (UNI Backgrounder, October 22, 1987, Vol. XII No 43)

<sup>46</sup> According to statistics provided by the chief editor of the Hind Samachar Group at the time of his interview to the author of this research, 2 chief editors, one each of a news editor and chief sub-editor, 12 reporters, 20 agents and sub-agents, 22 hawkers and two drivers of delivery vans of the Hind Samachar group of papers had been killed by insurgent organisations between 1981 and 1993.

<sup>47</sup> See Chapter seven on interviews.

The table shows that the 'code of conduct' did very little to alter the process of meaning construction even though the papers ostensibly gave in to the insurgents' press 'censorship.' It can be argued here on the basis of Table 2.0 that in spite of the change in the frequencies of negative and positive labels and to an extent characterisations, the overall perception of a newspaper about violence did not change with the 'code of conduct'. The replacement of the label 'terrorist' by 'militant' could not alter the broader meaning of the news stories because the actions associated with the actors did not change with the replacement.<sup>48</sup>

**Table 2.0 Time period wise usage pattern of 'terrorist' and 'militant':**

ACTION (characterisation)	ACTOR = TERRORIST FIRST PERIOD (n=392)	ACTOR = MILITANT SECOND PERIOD (n = 216)
Terrorism	28.6%	4.2%
Murder, assassination, killing, etc.	46.7%	47.2%
Massacre, carnage, etc.	8.7%	5.6%
Brutal, senseless, inhuman, etc.	3.8%	6.9%
Revenge, retaliation, etc.	0.3%	5.6%
Blast, explosion, bombing, etc.	0.5%	3.2%
Action, raid, ambush, etc.	0.3%	3.2%
Robbery, money extortion, etc.	2.0%	2.3%
Violence	2.0%	4.2%
Other characterisations	7.1%	17.6%

<sup>48</sup> Table 2.0 offers a very broad overview of which actions were associated with what characterisations in the intro sentences of news stories. A more detailed study of associated words and linguistic contexts of selected key words in the headlines of different newspapers is carried out in Chapter six.



The two most frequently quoted labels 'terrorist' and 'militant' also represent the two time periods. In the first time period the most frequently quoted negative label was 'terrorist' and it was quoted 63.1% times. 'Militant' was seen as a positive replacement because insurgents themselves had favoured it. They instructed journalists to use either 'militant' or its rough Punjabi equivalent, 'Kharku', in place of the usual 'terrorist'. As a result, the use of the label 'terrorist' dropped to 10% in the second time period and the usage of 'militant' or 'kharku' increased from under 6% to 57%.

On the face of it the change in the pattern of labels shows that the press, when pushed to the wall, gave in to the 'terrorists' demand. (see Chart 1.4). The papers started using the label 'militant' more often but did not abandon the label 'terrorist' altogether. At the same time there are several other words which have similar, evocative connotations. Since newspapers in three different languages are being studied here, it is difficult (and also, perhaps, unnecessary) to differentiate between the exact connotations of these words. Together these words are shown in Table 1.9 as negative labels. The following list contains some of these words to give a broad idea of the meaning categories under which they fall:

- (a) Terrorist labels : Terrorist, member of 'terror' gang, 'Atankwadi' 'Ugrawadi' and 'Atwadi' (Hindi and Punjabi) and 'Dahshatpasand' (Urdu, but commonly used in both Hindi and Punjabi)
- (b) Criminal labels : Killer, assassin, murderer, attacker, rapist, thug, robber, dacoit etc.
- (c) Extremist labels : Extremist, ultra, radical, 'Charampanthi' (Hindi) etc.
- (d) Fanatic labels : Fundamentalist, zealot, fanatic etc.
- (e) Dangerous labels: Dangerous, hard-core, dreaded, notorious, 'wanted', blood-thirsty, savage, brutal, senseless, coward, dastardly, non-heroic, 'A' grade, 'B' grade and 'carrying reward' etc.
- (f) Anti-national : Anti-national, Khalistani, separatist, secessionist, 'foreign backed' or Pakistan-supported etc.
- (g) Backward labels : Backward, straying, directionless, uneducated, illiterate, misguided etc.

It is observed that these labels (and their matching characterisations) mostly appear in conjunction with one another. This leads to two things. First it bombards a reader with similar expressions each leading to the same ideological message and secondly it blurs the semantic difference between the most often repeated words which fall in different categories of the above list and are often used interchangeably. If repeatedly

used as a matter of policy it may lead to what is referred to as 'over-lexicalisation'.<sup>49</sup> It is a highly ideological aspect of a certain kind of language use which is aimed at changing attitudes. The phenomenon is explained by Tony Trew in the following lines while analysing two British tabloids' coverage of the Notting Hill Carnival violence in London : "Coming all at once in one short text, they are almost like an incantation and have a kind of axiomatic, tautological effect that forecloses all discussion."<sup>50</sup>

A repeated use of the negative labels given in the above list and similar characterisations certainly make the language tautological or incantations as described by Trew in the above quote. The following text is from a concluding paragraph of a typical *Punjab Kesari* editorial written after some Hindu religious gurus brought out a peace march.<sup>51</sup>

"It clearly means that more such (peace) marches and efforts would come up again and the *poor*, *innocent* and *unarmed* people of both communities would (continue to) be *martyred* like in the past; *more* blood will have to be offered, *more* women would be *widowed*, children would be *orphaned* and the aged would be *snatched* of their support. They will have to wait for someone to apply balm to their *festering wounds*, (someone to) alleviate their *agony*."<sup>52</sup>

Clearly the usage is both tautological and axiomatic and is full of value judgements. The reference in the passage is to terrorists' victims although the same language with similar expressions could equally apply to the victims of a police firing. The above paragraph is the conclusion of a long first edit dealing with several violence related themes. It is noticeable that there is no perpetrator in the above para. In fact there is no perpetrator in the entire editorial. It is left, axiomatically, for the understanding of the readers to make out who the culprit is.

There is a contrast between the language of the editorials and the news stories. While the edits are suggestive and based on some kind of shared understanding, the news stories are mostly direct and unambiguous. That editorials and news stories are two different genres of write ups is clear from the study of their typical language use. A hard news story in the first time period published on the front page of the same paper

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<sup>49</sup> Halliday, M.A.K (1976)

<sup>50</sup> Tony Trew (1979) p. 136

<sup>51</sup> *Punjab Kesari* Signed editorial, March 18, 1987 titled "Goodwill march aimed at clearing the air" (English translation)

<sup>52</sup> Parenthesis contain explanations of contexts of the preceding words or sentence and some words have been italicised for underlining their effect.

carried over 20 labels in the first eight paragraphs.<sup>53</sup> The story uses the label 'terrorist' twice each in the main headline and the sub-headlines; four times in the intro. paragraph and eight times in the subsequent paragraphs. Besides, there are one each of 'unidentified terrorist', 'suspected terrorist', 'B-grade', and 'wanted' terrorist. Also there are indirect references such as 'prisoner who escaped' and a 'supporter' of terrorists. The story is also typical of news stories appearing on the front page in the first time period.

One only has to glance at some of the news stories in the second time period to see what had actually changed in the language after the papers started following the 'code of conduct' as mentioned in the above pages. The difference in the usage of labels is clear for a critical eye though the overall style of the story is not very different. A similar news story on the front page in the same paper carries labels 'lt. general', 'notorious', and 'militant' in the main headline while once 'suspected militant' and four times 'militant' in the sub headlines.<sup>54</sup> Subsequent paragraphs carry 'militant' about nine times along with other negative labels such as 'dangerous.'

The use of the language in above examples is highly ideological and it does not get altered by removing one set of characterisations or labels. If the inherent ideology in the language use remains the same, different words may be 'programmed' to mean the same thing. Or conversely, similar words may mean opposite things.<sup>55</sup> Specific words do have their specific meanings and connotations but they can be warped, shaded or even changed by a specific use of language. What is observed in the Indian newspapers' coverage of 'terrorism' in Punjab (See Table 2.0) is that the label 'Militant' which had a more positive connotation in the first time period assumes a less positive meaning and gets interchangeably used with other negative labels, particularly with 'terrorist.'

## STORY JUDGEMENTS :

Apart from negative and positive characterisations and labels, news stories also carry regular value judgements, explanations, reasons or justification. Collectively they have been called story judgements in the following analysis. A judgement may creep

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<sup>53</sup> Punjab Kesari, May 17, 1987, front page, second lead story.

<sup>54</sup> Punjab Kesari Dec. 18, 1991 front page II lead story.

<sup>55</sup> The process has been established in the Chapter six through a concordance of news headlines. It has been observed that the papers whose headlines mean diametrically opposite things have used similar key words in different permutations and combinations just as labels 'terrorist' and 'militant' have been used in the story texts.

in between the story lines through an axiomatic reference, an ironic parallel or a bit of selective background added by the reporter. It may even come by a seemingly innocuous juxtaposition of facts to suit a point of view. Judgements are coded in a more qualitative fashion. In the coding schedule 29 different types of judgements have been coded under four different frames, i.e. injustice, rebellion, incitement and condemnation. The 'Injustice frame' includes any justifications or reasons which talk about the political injustice meted out to Punjab or to the Sikhs. The 'Rebellion frame' take into account the underground organisations' revolt against the Indian state and their revenge and retaliation etc. The 'Incitement frame' cover suggestions or references to 'foreign hand' or 'external aggression' in violence and the 'Condemnation frame' includes all pointed criticisms and condemnations of the 'terrorists' and their 'contemptible' actions.<sup>1</sup> A fifth 'Development frame' was also coded in the schedule which included explanations based on economic disparity etc. but it is dropped in the analysis because of a very small number of responses. The two British papers have also been excluded from this part of the analysis for the same reason.

**Chart 1.5 Judgement contained in news stories :**

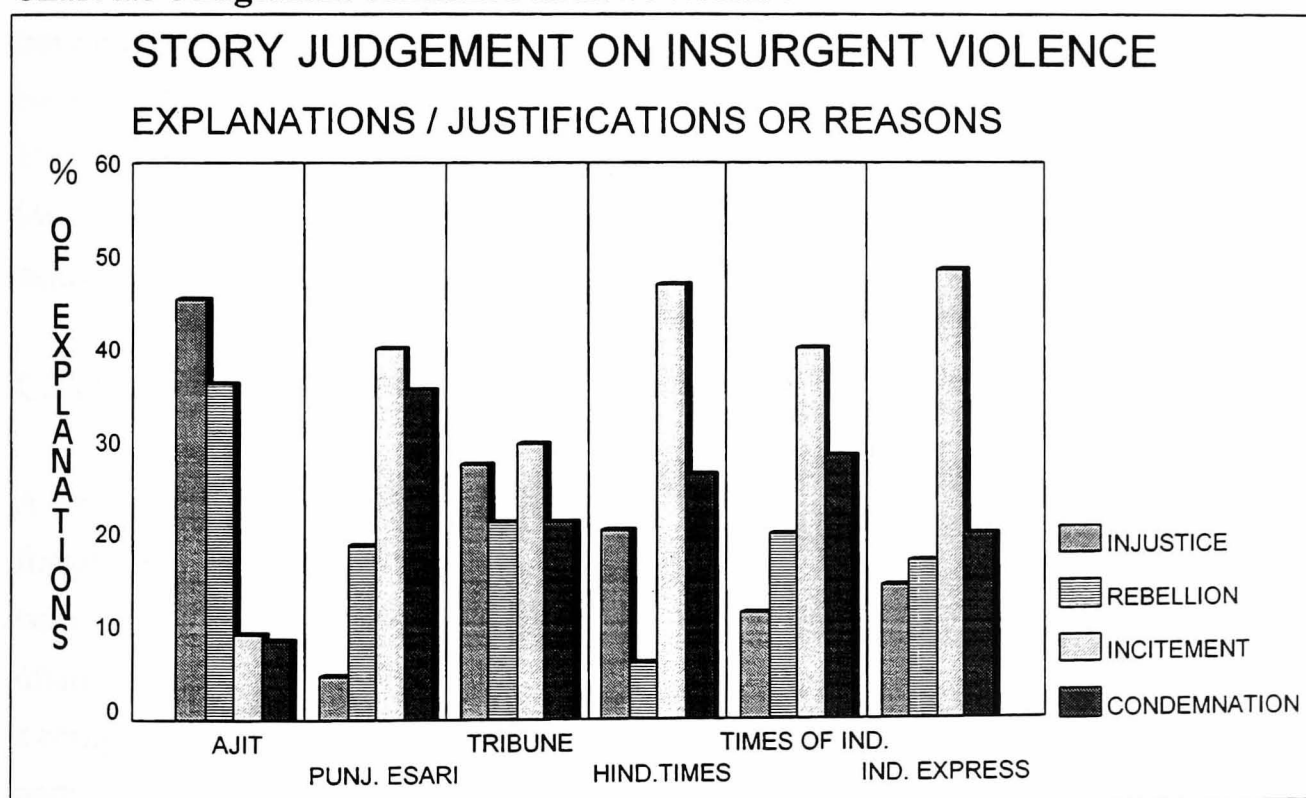


Chart 1.5 shows that the incitement and condemnation frames exhibit a better consensus among five of the six papers. Except *Ajit*, all other papers have devoted about 30% to 50% of their total judgements to incitement frames. In all these papers

<sup>1</sup> For details, see the coding sheet under 'Explanations / justifications for insurgent violence' in appendix. 1

the condemnation frames vary between 20% and 35% which is fairly high. Between these two frames the message which emerges upto 85% times is: "those referred to as 'terrorists' in our news reports are despicable people; are threatening the unity and integrity of the country with active support from India's enemies." The third most frequently quoted frame is the rebellion frame. These explanations express concern about issues of dismemberment of the nation, the insurgents' revenge and retaliation for various things. The extent of rebellious frames covered by the papers (except *Ajit*), also shows a high degree of consensus. The Injustice frame is also quoted in the national and regional papers but with lesser consensus.

A different trend emerges out of explanations and justifications offered by the Punjabi paper *Ajit*. Stories in the paper have offered a high number of injustice (45.39%) and rebellion frames (36.19%) and a low number of incitement (9.20%) and condemnation (8.58%) frames unlike the rest of the papers. The two British papers have covered rebellion and condemnation frames significantly (*Guardian* 83% rebellion and 9% condemnation while the *Times* 72% rebellion and 12% condemnation) the two papers have covered other frames also but they have not been included in the analysis because of the very small number of cases. However, it is significant that the two British papers have not offered a single explanation concerning the foreign hand under incitement frames just as they completely ignored primary themes about external aggression.<sup>57</sup>

#### COVERAGE OF COUNTER TERRORISM OR OFFICIAL VIOLENCE :

A total dependence on the manifest content for an analysis of political violence is fraught with confinements. Even the most sophisticated studies can read only 'between the lines' and not 'beyond the lines'. In other words media's omissions are often excluded from analyses. However, this could be overcome to an extent through a comparative framework of analysis and by interviewing sources, journalists and participants of the conflict. By comparing the manifest content of a wide variety of newspapers with clashing points of view, one may figure out aspects of violence omitted by one set of papers. Similarly, interviews could bring out issues ignored by the press. Both these objectives have been followed in this research.<sup>58</sup>

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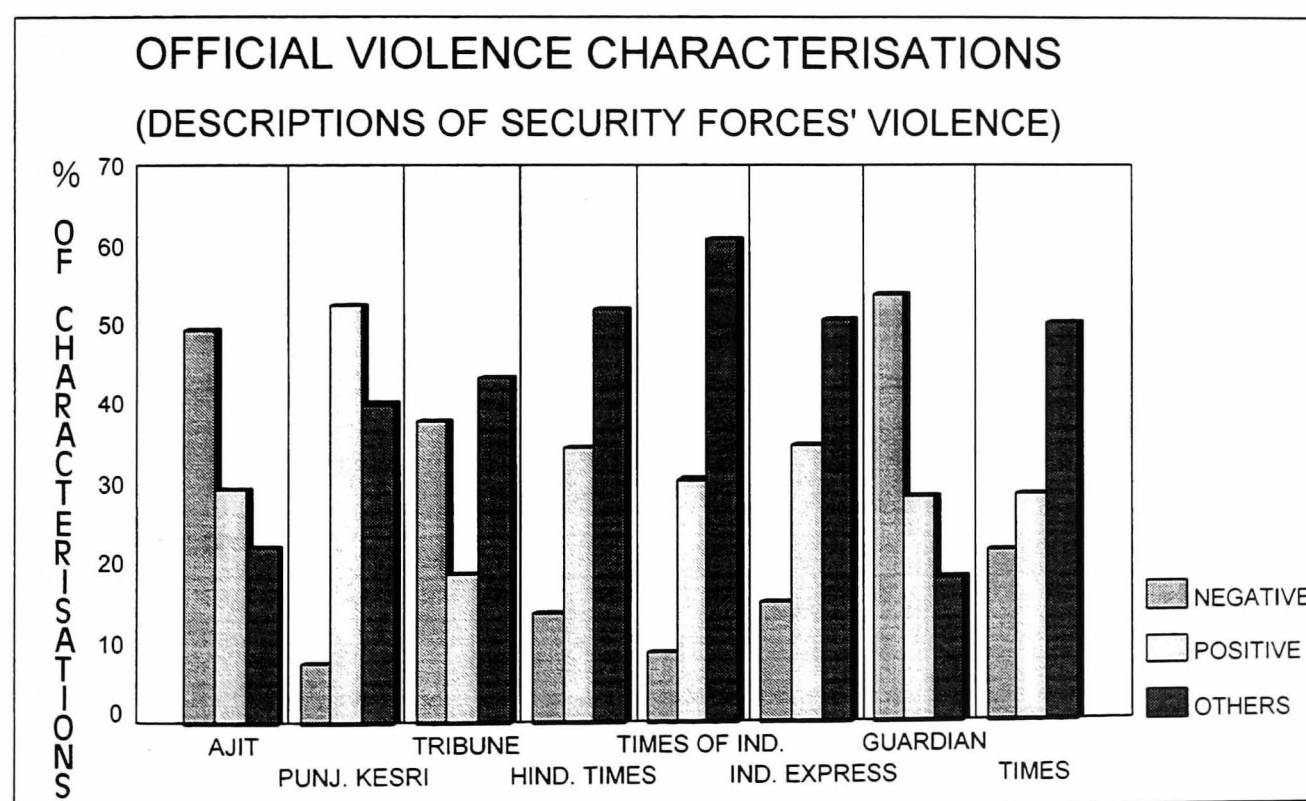
<sup>57</sup> The two British papers have completely ignored the external aggression themes and those about the unity and integrity of the country, see Table 1.5

<sup>58</sup> The issue has been discussed separately in Chapters four and seven.

But for the patterns of sourcing and agenda offered by the Punjabi paper *Ajit*, the study might have missed the fora used by the insurgent organisations. Without comparing the themes used by *Ajit* vis a vis other papers it would be difficult to conclude that the security forces' violence is among Punjab's burning issues. *Ajit* is also the only paper to use characterisations like 'murder', 'terrorism' and 'brutal act' etc. for some of the security forces' actions. Similarly, the Punjabi paper has extensively quoted sources who have used criminal and anti-social labels for the perpetrators of 'counter-terrorism'. The contrasting coverage of 'counter-violence' shows us the sacrosance with which the papers by and large treat the state's law and order machinery.

Chart 1.6 shows that most often security forces' actions get covered under the 'other' category. The list of categories under 'other' characterisations in the coding schedule

**Chart 1.6 Characterisations of security forces' 'counter-terrorism' :**



reveals that most of these actions have a 'respectable' name such as 'interrogation', 'operation', 'encounter' or 'investigation' etc. It is hardly difficult to imagine that in a terrorism-affected area where the state machinery possesses extraordinary legal and judicial powers, an interrogation is not just a cordial question-answer session. According to Indian and international human rights organisations, interrogations are

often a euphemism for torture in custody.<sup>59</sup> An 'operation' may cover virtually anything that a committed 'police party' is capable of doing. In Punjab the most controversial operation of the security forces is the 'encounter.'<sup>60</sup>

Second most frequently used characterisations in the chart (1.6) are positive ones. As shown in the coding schedule, the positive characterisations denote things which are favourable to the security forces. One of the most frequently published news photographs in all the papers is about officers standing beside a cache of arms or other things 'recovered' or 'seized' from the 'terrorists'. Negative characterisations are predictably high in the Punjabi paper *Ajit*. They are also high in the English language regional paper *Tribune* and the British paper *Guardian*. It is clear from the chart that all the papers studied have used at least some negative characterisations for the security forces (they are negligible only in the Hindi paper *Punjab Kesari*.) A better picture of their attitude to 'counter-terrorism' would emerge as the labels for the security forces are examined.

Chart 1.7 shows that the security forces are almost always called by either positive or other names. Labels covered under 'other' label are the most nominal ones such as troops, jawans, forces, constables and reinforcements etc. It is normal to call the security forces by these names even in worst of situations. The chart shows that they often get addressed by more generous 'positive' labels such as 'dutiful', 'heroic', 'commando' or simply the 'chief' or 'top brass' shown in the chart as positive labels.

Together charts 1.6 and 1.7 show that the characterisations of official actions are more often negative than the labels. (For insurgent violence the negative characterisations and labels were both very high.<sup>61</sup>) In fact there are hardly any negative labels for the security forces in chart 1.7. The results show that perpetrator of a murder or a 'shooting' has a very good chance of being called anything from an 'attacker' or 'murderer' to a 'terrorist' but a policeman is likely to be called just a policeman, even if it is allegedly his second or third 'crime'.

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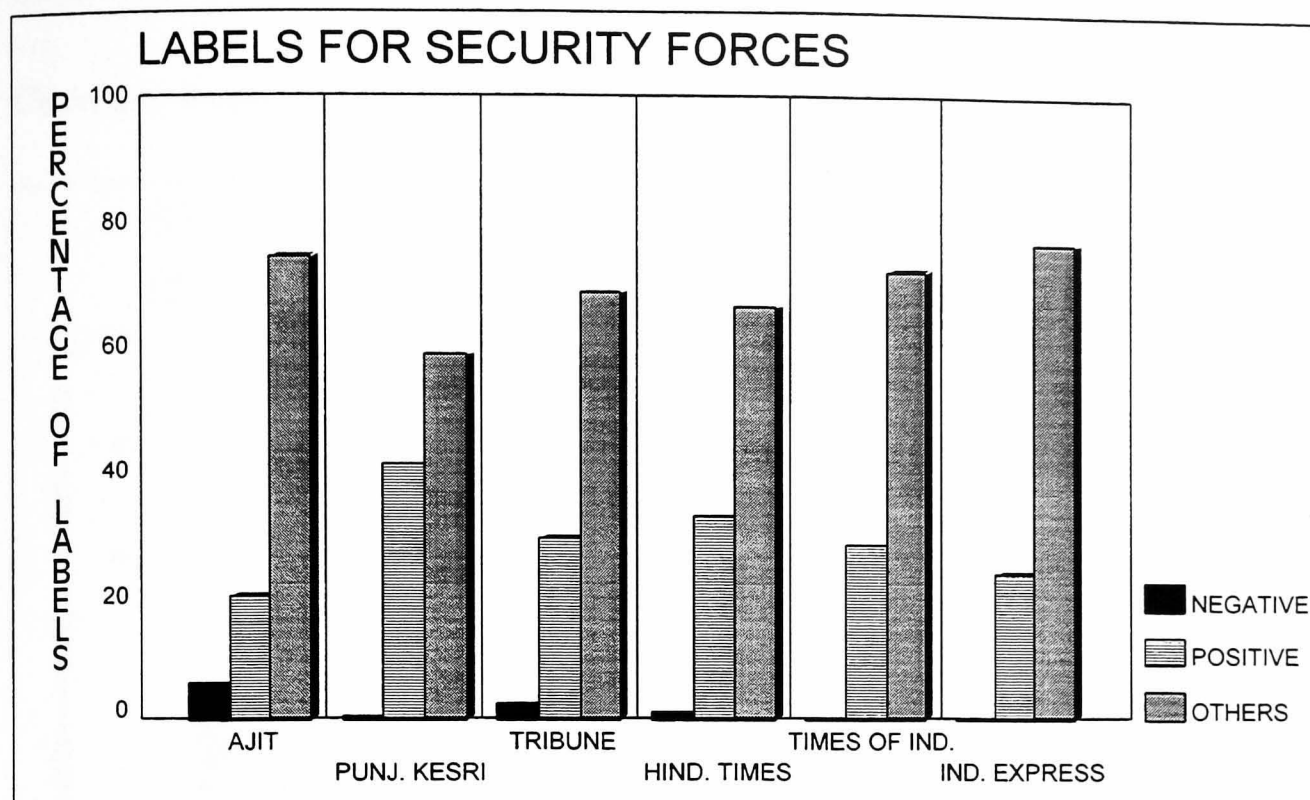
<sup>59</sup> 'India' in Amnesty International report 1994 pp. 157-158 and Amnesty International Report on Harjit Singh's disappearance, AI Index: ASA 20/12/95. Also See chapter two on Punjab.

<sup>60</sup> Citizens for democracy report to the nation (1985) 'fake encounters' (pp 35-36) ; Amnesty International Report, 1994, pp. 157-160. Also see counter terrorism in Chapter two and three.

<sup>61</sup> See Tables 1.8 and 1.9



**Chart 1.7 Labels for security forces in news stories :**



In the final part of the analysis of 'counter-terrorism' some direct or indirect judgements thrown up by the stories would be analysed. Just as the judgements about insurgent violence (Chart 1.5), this is coded in a more qualitative fashion. If a story about police excesses also regrets about something like excesses being a painful necessity for protecting the national unity, the reference is seen as an indirect judgement or justification. Similarly, actions of the security forces are often justified by comparing the situation with a war. As discussed earlier, calling action against terrorism a war 'simplifies' matters for the state.<sup>62</sup> Nobody talks about civil liberties in a war. In war-like situations a lot of things can become 'less regrettable' than in normal times such as deaths of innocent civilians in a cross-fire.

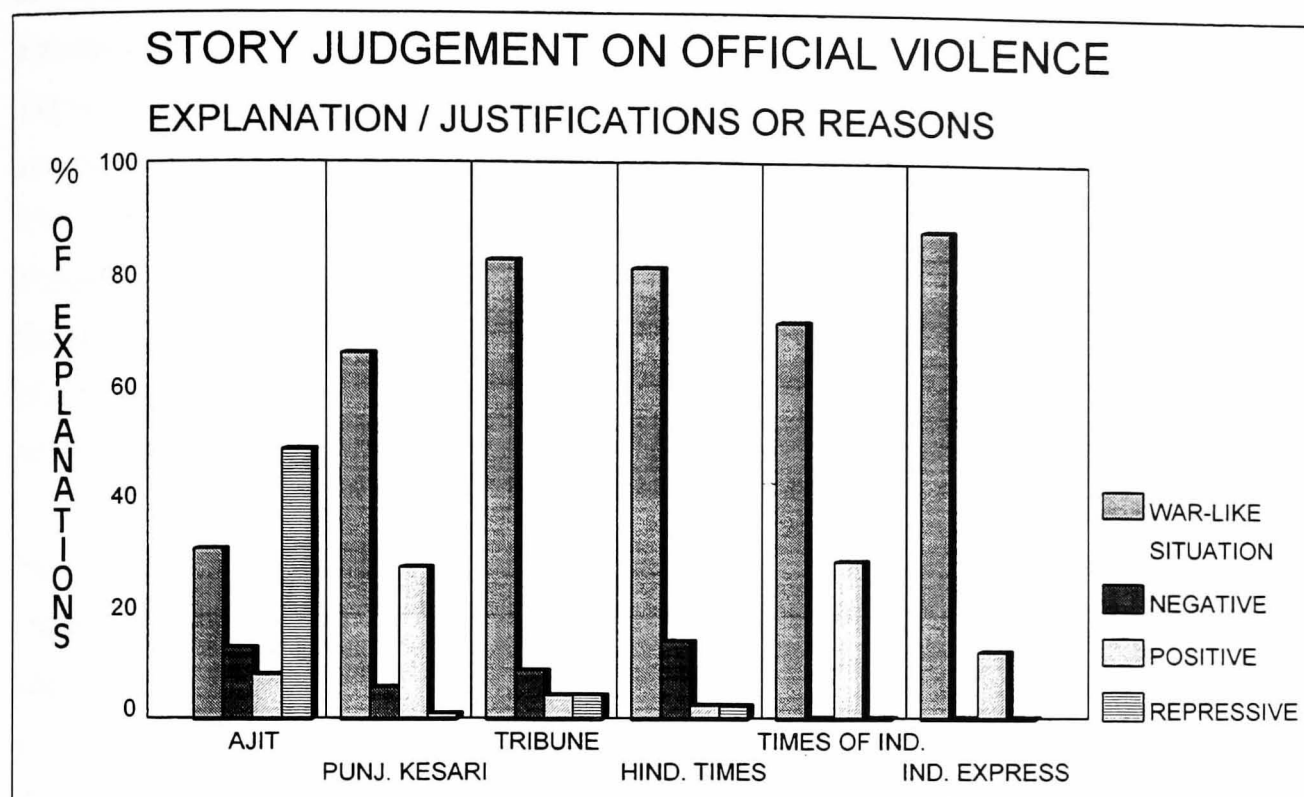
Chart 1.8 shows that the majority of explanations, justifications or reasons given for the security forces actions reinforce the 'war scenario.' The explanations offered under 'war-like situation' suggest that the situation in Punjab is extraordinary and it demands drastic measures to be taken. Those under 'negative' indicate that the security forces have not acted in fair and responsible manner while the 'positive' ones commend them for their appropriate handling of the situation. Judgements and explanations under the 'repressive' category blame the security forces' for suppressing the Sikhs and discriminating against them. Except the Punjabi paper *Ajit*, all other papers have used

<sup>62</sup> Schlesinger, Murdock and Elliot (1983) p. 111



from 66% to 87% of their explanations or justifications to suggest that the security forces are locked in an extraordinary and war-like situation. All other papers have

**Chart 1.8. Explanations, justifications or reasons about official violence :**



used only a sprinkling of other reasons. It is significant that *Ajit* stories have thrown up much fewer justifications for the 'war-like' situation unlike all other papers. The paper has suggested more reasons or explanations (48%) from the angle of state repression in Punjab ('repressive' category in the above chart) which is ignored by all the other papers.

#### SUMMARY :

The analysis of sources, themes, descriptions and judgements shows that 'free' press in a democratic society treats the clashing participants of a conflict completely differently. The coverage strengthens the state's 'legitimacy' in the 'war' against 'terrorism' and 'delegitimises' its enemies. It is observed in the tables showing patterns of sourcing that the official and institutional sources command almost a complete hold over defining characteristics of a dispute. Between the two, the official sources have a clear and decisive edge. Most often it is they who set the agenda, control a great deal of information flow, define the issues and describe incidents and perpetrators in the way suited to them. The papers consistently ignore the parallel channels of

information coming from the 'less legitimate' or 'delegitimised' participants, or from those on the fringes of society, which is virtually a trickle when compared to the massive official channels.

It is true that the violent opponents of the state do not have democratic society's sanction at large and the media's attitude may also reflect public opinion. The Hindi paper *Punjab Kesari* and the Punjabi paper *Ajit* represent rival sets of public opinion and hence they look at incidents of political violence in an extremely polarised way. The larger Indian society's consensus (excluding the Sikhs who are in majority in Punjab but are a small minority in the whole of India) against 'terrorism' is shown by the fact that all other papers, including the two British papers, come closer to the Hindi paper rather than the Punjabi one. The state definitely works from this point of advantage over its enemies.

But the problem appears when the state acquires a near-total control over privately owned, advert-revenue-run 'free' press. It is discussed in the conceptual framework chapter that the modern state is among the worst violators of an individual's human rights and that applies to liberal democratic societies as well. It is also argued earlier that the 'counter-terrorism' efforts of the modern democratic states, including those of the West, are often 'reflective' of the methods used by their 'delegitimised' enemies.<sup>63</sup> Hence it is highly likely that two similar acts of illegitimate violence against innocent victims -- one by the 'terrorists' and the other by the state's law and order machinery -- would get different treatment by the media. This is discussed in Chapter seven as one of the omissions by the press. The journalist's dependence on official and institutional non-official sources in the daily construction of news questions the 'liberalism' of a liberal democratic society and the 'freedom' of the 'free' media. The very political economy of the media coupled with society's 'common-sense ideology' helps protect the existing order, guarding against 'undesirable' social or political change.

The above content analysis of daily news about violence establishes that the link between the newspapers' most frequently quoted sources and the dominant themes and descriptions of news items is a matter of routine. The study of themes, characterisations and labels in the two time periods brings out the range of interplay that language use facilitates in meaning construction. The Indian press did not change its ideology and continued to fulfil the state's propaganda objective despite visibly giving in to the 'code of conduct' as mentioned above. This happened in the regional and national papers' reporting of Punjab despite a dramatic increase in the use of the

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<sup>63</sup> Leeman (1991)

label 'militant' favoured by the 'terrorists' themselves. The process eventually 'loaded' the meaning which was usually associated with 'terrorists' in the replacement word 'militant'. It could be achieved simply by an interplay of characterisations and labels shown in the analysis. It is not being suggested that the journalists did it as some kind of conspiracy or well orchestrated policy. It was inevitable because the 'code of conduct' did not change the media's ideology or 'professional' practices of news production.

The results of the content analysis support the view that news is not to be seen "as it happens" but "as it is reported".<sup>64</sup> It has also been observed that a certain ideological purpose is fulfilled by the overlexicalised use of language. It is obvious that language use is the best tool with the press to discriminate between 'friendly' and 'unfriendly' victims or perpetrators. The newspapers' consistency in ignoring 'unfriendly' participants of the conflict also supports the cynical view that violence is the only form of communication which gets noticed. It is interesting that the 'delegitimised' participants' attempts to 'discipline' the press (just as the state does with 'flak'<sup>65</sup>) are unsuccessful because of a subtle use of language.

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<sup>64</sup> Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1987)

<sup>65</sup> Herman and Chomsky (1988) last filter of the propaganda model .

## CHAPTER SIX

### WORD CONTEXTS AND IDEOLOGICAL VARIATIONS

This chapter analyses headlines of violence related news from a linguistic perspective. In the content analysis chapter varying selective perceptions of the papers were examined. The emphasis in this chapter is on the role that 'routinised' language plays in mediating the 'reality.' The analysis is focused on linguistic variations and word contexts in headlines. The attempt is to identify ideological variations contained in the messages that the regional, national and British papers carry in their coverage of violence. Patterns of language use and the selectivity of key words is seen in this part of the analysis as crucial for determining a story's ideological content. The analysis has also sought to study key words in their immediate and overall contexts to examine rhetorical patterns. Van Dijk (1988) has argued that a 'rhetorical analysis cannot be fully independent of a semantic and ideological analysis of news discourse.'<sup>1</sup> It is discussed in earlier chapters how several powerful social forces determine the ideology of news discourse. The attempt in this chapter is to take this premise further by analysing the sign and language system in which the ideology is 'encoded' into news discourse.

Hartley (1982) maintains that the need for studying 'semiotic determinants' of a story is as essential for understanding news as the role of social forces 'relevant to its meaning'.<sup>2</sup> Many other social scientists have stressed the need for understanding news through the structure and context of its language. (Van Dijk, 1988; Bell, 1991; Hartley, 1982; Hansen, 1990,1992; Holsti, 1969, Trew, 1979). However, there is a noticeable dearth in mass communication literature of case studies which have directly and electronically applied linguistic contexts and concordances to large media texts. It is difficult to ignore the kind of facilities computerised linguistic packages provide. It is true that the statistics *per se* serves no purpose. But if used in conjunction with other programmes and on sound theoretical basis, 'it can confirm, within seconds and in hard figures, what everyone knows...'<sup>3</sup> There is a growing number of social scientists who consider it necessary to look at the media's professional practices apart from its language to determine the 'construction' of news as a cultural product. (Herman and Chomsky, 1986, 1988; Gans, 1979; Gitlin 1980; Schlesinger, 1991; Schudson, 1989; Hansen 1991 and 1994) In the present chapter,

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<sup>1</sup> Van Dijk, (1988) p 94.

<sup>2</sup> Hartley (1982)

<sup>3</sup> Hansen (1992)

the language use is studied electronically and used in conjunction with a study of media's professional practices discussed in chapters three, five and seven.

The present study is not an audience or effect study. However, it is assumed and argued in the conceptual framework that the audience is not removed from the media text. The various newspapers studied here have used terrorism news more or less as the same genre of media text. As seen in the content analysis and interviews chapters, the individual newspapers' professional practices, such as their source and theme selection strategies, are broadly similar. And yet, there are huge differences in their approaches to covering terrorism. It can hardly be coincidental that the different types of papers, that have shown clear differences in their ideological approaches to individual and state terrorism, have different audiences. The audiences are neither direct participants in, nor sources of, routine news items published in their preferred newspapers. But their role in terms of expectations, feedback or shared understanding cannot be underestimated. Allen Bell (1991) has argued that as 'apparently passive receivers', the audience members 'bring the power of their own choices, understandings and preconceptions to media reception.'<sup>4</sup> Bell maintains that the most obvious difference in the readers' expectations is reflected in the contrast between the 'popular' and 'quality' British press. For the author, the form and content of news stories, their presentation and writing styles in different newspapers, are 'responsive' to their audiences.<sup>5</sup>

It has been discussed how crucial the sources of news are to the overall message of a news story. It is also observed in the content analysis chapter that the official sources have an active role in defining the conflict in a particular way and that the journalists' mediation of these events is equally significant. This underlines the need for studying language use more closely. A simple analysis of words defining perpetrators and characterisations have shown that a set of similar words, with or without a few other associated words, may be used differently to mean different things.<sup>6</sup> Thus a linguistic analysis can be used for developing a better understanding of the ideological processes which are used in the production of a certain type of discourse.<sup>7</sup> It was observed in the content analysis chapter that the suggestions contained in the editorials of the Hindi and Punjabi papers banked upon the general world view of their

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<sup>4</sup> Bell (1991) p 8

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp 105-7.

<sup>6</sup> See the use of 'terrorist' and 'militant' in the two time periods in Chapter five.

<sup>7</sup> Trew (1979b) has concluded after a qualitative study of media coverage of violent police actions in erstwhile Rhodesia in 1975 that such linguistic analysis also raises vital questions about the nature of the conflict and the various ideologies at work.

readers and often communicated with them 'axiomatically.'<sup>8</sup> This brings out some more basic aspects of language. For the images created by the language have a strong connection with the 'social bond' which exists within a group of people and which may not make similar sense to another group of people. It may even outrage a different audience. Saussure has explained the underlying structuralist assumption in language use in the following words:

"If we could embrace the sum of word images stored in the minds of all individuals, we could identify the social bond that constitutes language. It is a storehouse filled by the members of a given community through their active use of speaking, a grammatical system that has a potential existence in each brain, or, more specifically, in the brain of a group of individuals. For language is not complete in any speaker; it exists perfectly only within a collectivity."<sup>9</sup>

Tacit to the above understanding of "word images" in a group of individuals is the role of the social forces that affect, influence or govern a "collectivity." Fowler (1991) has maintained that "the sense relations among words affect a classification of experience and ideas appropriate to the ideology of the community of the discourse."

<sup>10</sup> The social forces come into the picture when a "collectivity" or a community is sought to be understood in its socio-political or cultural environment. Some of these forces are discussed in the theoretical perspective as also in the content analysis and interview chapters. The attempt in the present chapter is to analyse news texts of individual newspapers through key words in their linguistic as well as cultural contexts. These variations would later be seen in a more macro context of political violence in multi-ethnic and liberal democratic societies.

#### METHOD AND DESIGN :

The textual analysis in this chapter is fundamentally on the same lines as conducted in the content analysis and interview chapters. The aim is to identify ways in which different newspapers have covered political violence. At the same time the reasons for these differences are being searched in the media's content, its professional practices as well as in Punjab's social, cultural and political environment. The scope and time schedule of this research did not allow a more exhaustive and purely linguistic study

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<sup>8</sup> Trew (1979b)

<sup>9</sup> Saussure Ferdinand de (1916).

<sup>10</sup> Fowler (1991) p 94.

of each of over 1200 story texts. However, in this chapter the headline language of these news items has been studied. The study is conducted through a computer-based linguistics programme, Micro OCP.<sup>11</sup> Mainly used for specialised linguistic analyses, the programme can be applied for studying word contexts in a large body of text. In Mass Communication research it can be used for examining 'vocabularies, word-uses and word contexts'.<sup>12</sup>

Robert G Picard and Paul D Adams (1987) have differentiated between 'nominal' and 'descriptive' words in their analysis of "Characterisations of Acts and Perpetrators of Political Violence in Three Elite US Daily newspapers."<sup>13</sup> Like John Alan Lee's study of the "Seal War in the Media", Picard and Adams have differentiated between the sources of the key words.<sup>14</sup> Lee has called the sources "voices" which are mainly the speakers of the "moral topic" being referred to. Picard and Adam's content analysis is based on the word count and frequency of the 'nominal' and 'descriptive' characterisations. In the study of the seal war, however, the accent is on 'key words'. Both the studies have focused attention on some form of 'key words' but none have seen these words in their linguistic contexts. One criticism of Picard and Adam's analysis is that the categorisation of terms as 'nominal' and 'descriptive' may be 'based upon unsupported assumptions'.<sup>15</sup> Attempt in the following study is made to obviate this difficulty. Key words are sought to be located in the overall pattern of a headline's meaning construction. At the micro level the basic unit of analysis is a headline sentence. The 'key word' is first examined in relation to its relative frequencies and associated words. This perspective, on a more macro level, is seen in conjunction with the content analysis and interviews with the participants. The following analysis does differentiate between 'nominal' and 'emotive' key words but it does not separate them at this stage according to their sources. (A detailed break-up of the individual story themes and their sources is given in the content analysis chapter)

In the first part of the chapter the headline text has been analysed using Micro OCP. The text of headlines was initially filled separately in string format in the spreadsheet type SPSS columns. The SPSS gives the facility to group these headlines in different

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<sup>11</sup> See Micro OCP User Manual, OUP. (1989). Micro OCP stands for 'Micro Oxford Concordance Programme' which is a further development of OCP version 2. Brought out by the Oxford University computing service and the Oxford University Press, the programme is a linguistics tool primarily used for things like investigation of styles, vocabulary distribution and concordances.

<sup>12</sup> Hansen (1992)

<sup>13</sup> Picard and Adams (1991) pp 12- 22. The authors have classified acts of violence and their descriptions according to their sources -- officials, witnesses or journalists themselves. Also see Chapter three.

<sup>14</sup> Lee (1989)

<sup>15</sup> Simmons (1991)

sets.<sup>16</sup> First of all a general feel of the individual newspaper headlines was developed by looking at the comprehensive 'wordlists' of each of the papers. Apart from text files of individual papers, two separate text files containing headlines of two different time periods were also made. A preliminary list of most frequently used words was then made using the Micro OCP 'wordlist' in descending frequency order. The words were subsequently divided into "discourse clusters" denoting processes and participants.<sup>17</sup> The processes are 'terrorism', or 'law enforcement' and other related matters whereas the participants are actors who could be both, perpetrators as well as victims of these acts.<sup>18</sup> On the basis of 'discourse clusters' thus prepared, a simple 'concordance' of the key words is taken out for analysis of their contexts.<sup>19</sup>

### KEY WORDS AND VOCABULARIES:

Key words are those words which have been used in the headlines considerably more often than other words and which have a direct bearing on the headline's meaning construction. These are mostly descriptive words signifying events, actors or processes. The process of key word selection involved three simple steps : First of all a 'wordlist' for each one of the eight papers studied was taken through their 'text files' which contained the headlines of all news items filled in the coding schedule of SPSS.<sup>20</sup> The Micro OCP 'wordlists' were obtained in descending order of their frequency. In the second stage, the most frequently used words were printed along with figures of their occurrences.<sup>21</sup> The whole wordlist was then scrutinised once again to check if there were other words anywhere with analogous meanings. For instance 'killed' and 'shot' were generally present in all the wordlists as high frequency words but their other variants were also found elsewhere on the list, sometimes deep down.<sup>22</sup> These variants such as kill, kills, shoot or shoots etc. in this case were clubbed under the 'action' key word 'kill'.<sup>23</sup> Words occurring less than ten times in case of the regional

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<sup>16</sup> Such as regional, national or foreign papers, under individual newspaper titles or simply divided into two time periods.

<sup>17</sup> Hansen Anders (1992) p. 22

<sup>18</sup> The idea behind perpetrators and the processes is the same as studied in Chapter five.

<sup>19</sup> The use of the wordlist, concordance, vocabulary and discourse cluster is given in Chapter four.

<sup>20</sup> The files were transferred directly from the SPSS to Microsoft Word 2.0 through Windows conversion and then moved to the Micro OCP on DOS as ASCII text files.

<sup>21</sup> Articles and several words like on, at, in about over etc. were ignored in the process.

<sup>22</sup> There is no doubt that different synonyms or variants of the same word often differ in their connotations. But the main purpose of clustering is to collect words used in the headlines of the Punjabi, Hindi and English newspapers on the basis of the broad similarity of their role in the headlines.

<sup>23</sup> The headlines which form the individual 'textfiles' have been translated from Hindi and Punjabi as well. To accommodate minor anomalies which invariably creep in the translated text, the key words have been treated more like broad categories or groups of several words. However, these words have been more closely studied when their 'concordances' are taken later in this chapter.



papers and less than five times in the national and British papers have not been listed. Following is the newspaper-wise break-up of the most frequently used words in the headlines studied:

Table 2.3 (a) : Main key words in regional papers

R E G I O N A L P R E S S		
<i>AJIT</i> (PUNJABI) (n=419)	<i>PUNJAB KESARI</i> (HINDI) (n=474)	<i>THE TRIBUNE</i> (ENGLISH) (n=339)
kill (71) Punjab (38) police (37) militant (36) AISSF, KCF etc. (28) people (25) terrorist (19) responsibility (16) suspect (15) arrested (17)	kill (75) militant (69) Punjab (68) terrorist (60) police (38) people (15) arrested (15) encounter (13) Khalistan (11) Government (10)	kill (50) Punjab (34) terrorist (34) militant (27) police (21) arrested (18) AISSF, KCF etc. (11)
N A T I O N A L P R E S S		
<i>THE HINDUSTAN TIMES</i> (n=229)	<i>THE TIMES OF INDIA</i> (n=169)	<i>INDIAN EXPRESS</i> (n=227)
kill (38) Punjab (31) terrorist (24) militant (17) police (12)	Punjab (30) kill (30) terrorist (18) militant (11)	Punjab (42) kill (33) terrorist (23) militant (13) arrested (11)
B R I T I S H P R E S S		
<i>THE GUARDIAN</i> (n=99)	<i>THE TIMES</i> (n=66)	
Punjab (20) Sikh (25) kill (11) India (8) police (6) Gandhi (6)	Punjab (18) Sikh (13) kill (10) Gandhi (8) police (6)	

The usage and frequencies of the key words in different papers in the above table show remarkable similarity. The only significant difference within one single category is in the regional papers. *Punjab Kesari* and *Tribune* have exactly same variants in the first five categories. (i.e., kill, Punjab, terrorist, militant and police). These key words and even their broad order, is shared by the national papers as well. Even the two British papers have not exhibited a significant difference from the trend. At the first glance, Punjabi paper *Ajit* stands out. It has three new categories of words in headlines: 'AISSF, KCF etc.', 'responsibility' and 'suspect'. The *Tribune* has also used names of insurgent organisations but the number is not as high. *Ajit* has given 'suspect' or 'suspected' more importance than 'terrorist' (it has preferred "suspect arrested" over

"terrorist arrested). *Punjab Kesari* has used three unique words : 'Khalistan', 'encounter' and 'government'. Both the vernacular papers have used the key word 'people'. It would be clear in the analysis of concordances and contexts how the most common of these key words are used differently, and in association with different types of accompanying words, to suggest contrasting meanings.

Average readers often recognise that different types of papers have different vocabularies. They often have an intuitive feel of them. The electronic analyses do this job more effectively and accurately. The 'hard figures' obtained through concordance programmes may confirm a reader's intuitive feeling about the language universe of a given paper.<sup>24</sup> Following is a list of individual papers' vocabularies. The

Table 2.4 : Newspaper-wise total vocabularies :

	Words read	Words sampled*	Total vocabulary
Ajit	2089	1775	901
Punjab Kesari	2743	2328	1143
Tribune	1088	976	560
Hind. Times	703	630	377
Times of India	566	493	326
Indian Express	704	618	386
Guardian	493	432	288
Times	230	203	140

\* common articles, prepositions and conjunctions have been excluded from the words sampled.

total number of words used in the regional papers' headlines are much more than those of the national and British papers but the vocabularies in table 2.4 are being compared

<sup>24</sup> Hansen (1992)

because there is no direct proportion between total number of words and the vocabulary.<sup>25</sup>

The table shows that the two vernacular papers have the broadest vocabulary range.<sup>26</sup> The third regional paper, *Tribune*, which shared more patterns with the national papers than the regional ones in content analysis, has a vocabulary closer to the national rather than regional papers. The national papers' vocabulary is narrower than the regional papers but broader than the two British papers. The difference is significant in the same way as the tabloid press in Britain has more restricted vocabulary when compared to the quality press.<sup>27</sup> The two vernacular papers have more involvement in local issues and their coverage is more extensive and detailed. It is seen in the analysis of content that the threshold of violence is also much lower for the regional papers than the national and international papers. The regional English paper, *Tribune*, caters to the English speaking regional elite among both Hindus and Sikhs of the area. It reaches out to a broader ethnic band of readership when compared to the two vernacular papers but its coverage is less detailed than the other two.

The national papers, with their reach throughout the country, are patronised by readers belonging to a variety of ethnic and linguistic groups. Most of these readers see Punjab related news in a national or international perspective. These papers, as seen in the content analysis chapter, look for 'nuts and bolts' of violence news rather than too many details. Therefore, the national papers exhibit a more restricted range of vocabulary when compared to the three regional papers. The regional English paper, *Tribune*, comes closest to the national papers in terms of vocabulary range. The two 'quality' British papers are clearly more distant from Punjab, both in the sense of physical and cultural proximity. They have to generalise and simplify issues, much more than the national press, for an audience which has little knowledge or understanding of India in general and Punjab in particular. Hence their vocabulary is even narrower than the national papers.

The two vernacular papers cover Punjab more vividly and extensively than the English language papers. They have correspondents in virtually every important town and district of Punjab. The *Tribune* also has correspondents or stringers in almost

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<sup>25</sup> The relationship between the total words used and the total vocabulary is not a linear one. This means in the process of the analysis of text there comes a stage when the vocabulary stops increasing with the increase in the number of stories on the same subject.

<sup>26</sup> Utmost care is taken in the process of translating the headlines of Punjabi and Hindi papers so that the vocabularies do not get affected.

<sup>27</sup> Hansen (1992) p. 23

every district. The tendency of simplifying issues and rounding up several incidents of violence under one 'umbrella headline' is more common in the national papers when compared to the regional ones. However, consistent with the content analysis trends, the *Tribune* comes closer to the national papers. This is reflected in the total number of violence related stories carried in the individual papers.<sup>28</sup>

Compared to the two vernacular papers, the *Tribune* has carried lesser number of items but its figure is convincingly more than the national papers. As anticipated, the two foreign papers have carried the least number of news items. Table 2.4 shows that the closer the paper is to the events and the more stakes its readers have in the province, the more extensive and broad its coverage and vocabulary are likely to be. The following analysis would show how the papers with broader range of vocabularies tend to have more 'emotive' coverage.

#### DISCOURSE CLUSTERS AND CONCORDANCES :

A first look at the most frequently used words showed striking similarities in the eight newspapers studied in spite of differences in readership profiles and vocabularies. An attempt is made in the following table to subdivide these words into clusters in order to study what function they perform in the mosaic of meaning construction. The words are rearranged under : action, actor, process and victims. Actions are mostly those words, which, irrespective of their general grammatical function, define 'what happened.' As in Picard and Adam's study these acts have been described as 'characterisations'.<sup>29</sup> It is on the basis of the relative importance of these acts that an occurrence becomes newsworthy. Actors are actual, alleged or perceived perpetrators of violent acts. Victims are those individuals who have suffered because of the acts of violence. Process is the selective perception of an actor's action. Though these categories are more or less mutually exclusive, some overlapping is inevitable. The basic purpose of clustering is to examine through linguistic concordances the specific functions played by these words in the process of meaning construction.

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<sup>28</sup> Average number of items per issues is given in Chapter four shows that the Punjabi and Hindi papers have considerably more violence related news items than the national.

<sup>29</sup> Picard and Adam (1991) Also see characterisations and labels in Chapter five.

Table 2.5 : Discourse clusters of frequent usage :

ACTION	ACTOR	VICTIMS	PROCESS
kill	terrorist	numbers	terrorism
shoot	militant	people	encounter
murder	suspect	actors	militancy
massacre	proper names		
arrest	organisations		
own up responsibility	police / sec. forces etc.		
criticise	army		
	government		
	people		

A micro OCP command arranges the headline text of individual newspapers in such a way that the key words are kept in the middle. Hence command files were programmed to output concordances of key words shown under one discourse cluster in the above table. Because three different languages are being dealt with, each word shown in the above table represents a somewhat broader spectrum of its synonyms and other analogous terms.

The analysis of concordances shows that the words which were most commonly used in headlines by all papers appear with different 'associated' words.<sup>30</sup> Even an insouciant switching of discourse cluster combinations in a given sentence renders completely different meanings. That is how some papers have described certain actions as 'terrorism' while the others have seen them as a part of 'law enforcement' using identical words. The list of concordances of key words offers a more precise and accurate break up of who (actors) did what (actions or reactions) to whom (victims) and how has it been understood and described (process). This way of looking at 'who-did-what-to-whom-as also how and why' is particularly useful in mass communication research.<sup>31</sup> It divides the items to be studied into replicable determinants and makes

<sup>30</sup> The words immediately preceding or following the key word or those placed very close to it have been treated as 'associated' words, which are significant in the context of the key words. The attempt has been to look into the overall context in which a key word has been used.

<sup>31</sup> Gans (1983) p.177

comparisons in terms of actors or processes very simple. The advantage of using key-words-in-context (KWIC) through a concordance list is that it can handle bulky text with ease and accuracy. In the following analysis the use of key words by the individual papers would be analysed according to the discourse clusters defined in Table 2.5 followed by a discussion on the patterns of the contexts in which they are used by different newspapers :

## 1. KEY WORDS AND CONCORDANCES:

### (a). ACTIONS :

The action key words are the most frequently used words in almost all papers' headlines. In the Punjabi paper, *Ajit*, there are 64 words analogous to 'killed', 'murdered' or 'shot'. Words like 'killed' or 'shot', which are more 'nominal' in nature are used 56 times and 'murder' and 'massacre' which are more 'emotive' are used only 5 times and three times respectively. Out of these five times, twice the victim of 'murder' is a bus conductor who was allegedly killed by a security man, and once each a 'suspect', a Sikh temple official, and 'innocents'. The perpetrator of an action key word 'murder' has never been an actor key word 'terrorist' in *Ajit*'s headlines. The concordance list shows that most of the times words 'militants' or 'terrorists' are neither immediately preceding nor following an action word 'killed' or 'murdered'. It is obvious that the lack of a perpetrator puts the agents of violence in a 'less focal position'.<sup>32</sup> As for the other 'emotive' word, 'massacre', the *Ajit* has used it only thrice out of which once it is used for highlighting the woes of the Sikhs in the neighbouring province of Haryana, and on the other occasion for clarifying that the 'massacre' was a sad result of some terrorist groups' internal divisions:

1. *Alleged* accused of bus **massacre** arrested
2. What was experienced by Haryana's Sikhs after Lalru and Fatehabad **massacres** ?
3. *What happened was what they did not want*; Shahpur **massacre**; the story of *terrorists'* own *divisions*.

Just like the Punjabi paper *Ajit*, Hindi paper *Punjab Kesari* also has action words analogous to 'killed', 'murdered' or 'shot' as the most frequently used key words. But the concordance list shows that the use of the action words is different in the paper right from the outset. In *Punjab Kesari*, there are 86 words for violent actions describing killings. The Hindi paper has used relatively 'nominal' actions 'killed' or '

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<sup>32</sup> Trew (1979) p 98

shot' 53 times, more or less in line with the Punjabi paper. However, it has used the 'emotive' action 'murder' 24 times (as against only five times in *Ajit*). In a sharp contrast with *Ajit* in which action words are rarely associated with insurgents, *Punjab Kesari* directly attributes one third of these 'murders' to the actor key words 'terrorists' or 'militants'. As for 'killed' and 'shot', most of the times these action words are immediately preceded or followed by either 'terrorist' (14 times) or by 'militant' (27 times). A couple of times the action words are followed by names and aliases of the underground insurgents. The difference between the two papers' approaches could be seen in their references to 'massacres' or 'slaughters'. *Punjab Kesari* has used the term 9 times as against thrice of *Ajit* and each time it either expresses the peoples' concern or fears over violent incidents or it discloses something about the alleged perpetrators. Following *Punjab Kesari* headlines demonstrate this:

1. *Strike* in Punjab *against* Khuda **massacre** continues
2. A group of 1000 Punjabis would *march* to Delhi with last remains of Khuda **massacre victims**.
3. Congress-I *walkout against* Ramdas **massacre**
4. Punjab has become a **slaughter** house; Hindus and Sikhs inseparable : Ray
5. Jinda's nephew *involved* in Greater Kailash **massacre**
6. *Concern* over Sangrur **massacre** in Rajya Sabha
7. *People* still *frightened* after militants **massacred**, victims did not get govt. aid.
8. *Militants* who **massacred** people in Ludhiana had also gone to BJP leader's house
9. Will the house of **massacre** ever erode ?

Punjab's English paper, *Tribune*, has used action word 'killed' 50 times which is substantially less than the two vernacular papers but which is still the most frequently used key word in the paper's headlines. (It is argued earlier in the chapter that the number of stories used by the 'elite' English papers are less than the vernacular papers because they attempt to wrap up the day's scattered incidents of violence in one single story and under one 'umbrella' headline.) The paper has used 'murder' only once and rest of the times used the more nominal 'killed' or 'shot'. However, the key word 'killed' or 'shot' is immediately preceded or followed by either a 'militant' or a 'terrorist' in the paper's headlines 20 out of 50 times.

The three national papers, the *Hindustan Times*, the *Times of India* and the *Indian Express* have used the action word 'killed' or 'shot' almost equal number of times (32, 28 and 32 times). These key words are followed or preceded by a 'militant' or a 'terrorist' quite often (18, 11 and 8 times) in the three papers. The English language

papers including the *Tribune* have almost ignored the word 'murder' in incidents involving insurgents. They have mostly used the word 'killed'.<sup>33</sup> Similarly these papers have avoided use of the word 'massacre'. The only paper to have used it a couple of times is the *Indian Express* (The use in both the instances is in editorials for single word headlines and is not for describing an incident of violence). The pattern shows that the English language regional paper and the national papers have almost always used 'nominal' expressions for describing incidents of violence in news headlines. Clearly the paper has restrained from using 'emotive' terms for describing incidents of violence but it has not avoided placing the agents of insurgent violence in the headlines.

After 'killed' or 'shot', the second most important action key word in *Ajit* is 'responsibility'. The 'responsibility' in the headlines denote insurgents owning up violent actions. The concordance list shows that the 'responsibility' key word is used 16 times in *Ajit*'s headlines, either as a single word headline or immediately preceded or followed by 'tributes' (paid to the members of the underground organisations who have been killed in an 'action') or by the name of the insurgent organisation which has owned up the act of violence.

The 'responsibility' action words are unique to the *Ajit*. Other papers may have mentioned the point of some organisation owing up an assassination or bomb blast somewhere in the story text, but it is not displayed in the headlines.<sup>34</sup> Another action key word 'arrested' has occurred quite frequently in the headlines of the regional papers. In *Ajit*, *Punjab Kesari* and *Tribune* it is given equal prominence in the headlines ( it has appeared 17, 15 and 18 times respectively). In the national papers its frequency is much less. This is a marker of the regional papers' concern for local incidents which are rarely of similar interest for the national press whose threshold of news worthiness seems to be higher in terms of the extent of violence.

#### (b). ACTORS AND VICTIMS :

The main actors or victims quoted, interviewed or mentioned by the individual papers studied are : Militants, terrorists, police, insurgent organisations, people and government. The first three actors are the same in all papers while the last three have

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<sup>33</sup> The *Tribune* and the *Hindustan Times* have used the emotive action word 'murder' only once each and the reference is to a local politician's killing. The *Indian Express* has also used it once but the reference is to an irrelevant murder case against a politician.

<sup>34</sup> It was observed in Chapter five that except *Ajit*, most other papers have rarely used insurgents' statements owning responsibilities of their actions.



been found only in the regional papers. Table 2.3 shows the frequencies of these words in different newspapers. The contexts of most of these words would be seen in the headlines of the different papers studied. The Table shows that the key words 'militant' and 'terrorist' are in close proximity with each other. The usage of the key word 'terrorist' is considerably high in the Hindi paper *Punjab Kesari* (60 times) while it is considerably low in the Punjabi paper *Ajit* (19 times). Curiously, *Punjab Kesari*, which has been using the maximum number of 'emotive' words, has used the 'nominal' key word 'militant' 69 times which is close to double of *Ajit* (34 times). According to the trend, the Punjabi paper should have used more 'nominal' words than the Hindi paper. The concordance list shows that the reason could be in the Punjabi paper's very approach to insurgents and their organisations. Instead of using a common 'nominal' word 'militant', *Ajit* has referred to insurgents in two other significant ways : by their proper names and aliases and by the name of their organisations. *Ajit* has 23 references to militant organisations such as the AISSF (referred to as the 'Federation'), Babbars or the Babbar Khalsa, KLF, Mini Commando Force, Khalistan Force and other organisations or their known sympathisers.

All these names and the key word 'militant' and its variants were used as key words for obtaining a list of concordances. The contexts of the words shown on the concordance list establish that the word 'militant' has been used in *Ajit* headlines when the news is about incidents of violence. As many as 28 out of 34 headlines in which 'militant' is either a perpetrator or a victim are about incidents of violence. The remaining six headlines are about the militants' demands and their unity etc. However in the other headlines where insurgents have almost always been referred to in a positive vein, the *Ajit* has referred to them by name. Out of 23 references of these organisations, contexts of 21 are largely positive. Following headlines in *Ajit* show this very clearly :

1. **Federation** criticises Dhanna Singh's arrest: govt. warned
2. Observe Jan. 26 as *black day*: **Federation** demands
3. **Federation** would hold district level elections.
4. Police guilty of arresting over 200 **Federation** members.
5. **Federation** would take *stringent action*: meeting on 7th.
6. **Federation** to make *important announcement* on June 6.
7. **Federation** calls on students to *observe strike* today and tomorrow.
8. Tohra must resign: **Federation** leaders demand.
9. **Federation** to hold training camps
10. **Federation's** appeal welcomed

11. **Khalistan Force** *owns responsibility.*
12. **BTFK, KLF** *meeting*
13. *Meeting of the Babbars*
14. *Proof about Sant Bhindranwale be given : Babbars*
15. **Panthic Committee** *demands photos of martyrs.*

In the above headlines, the 'Federation' or the organisations mentioned come across as formidable groups which mean business and which have a say in Punjab's political matters. The word list has revealed that apart from 'militant' and the name of the underground organisations mentioned in the above list, *Ajit's* has referred to insurgents by using proper names and aliases. Since all the Sikh names have 'Singh' as a common surname or middle name, it was easy to list most proper names under key word 'Singh'.<sup>35</sup> Many other names of the prominent underground insurgents have carried the prefix 'Bhai' roughly equivalent to the English word, 'brother' used for reverence, particularly in the church hierarchy. Apart from 'Singh' and 'Bhai', other names and aliases were chosen out of the word list and subsequently their concordance was obtained.

The proper names of the underground insurgents -- as actors or victims -- have been mentioned 28 times in *Ajit's* headlines. All these names have been used in such a way as to impart reverence or authority to the protagonists. Most references are either about an encounter with the police or about an insurgent leader's statement. Many of these statements carry an authoritative warning to the government or security forces. In some other references, their whereabouts are news even though the story may be attributed to the police. It may be assumed that only those names from the story text get thrown up to the headline which have some meaning for the readers, particularly when the name of the organisation or his 'rank' is not given. The following examples suggest that the names and aliases of these actors have been used in the headlines because they are already well known in the 'collectivity' of the newspaper's readers.<sup>36</sup> Except Halwara, which is a surname, all the proper names in the following headlines in *Ajit* are aliases of presumably well known insurgent leaders :

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<sup>35</sup> Names of the insurgent leaders were picked up from the general concordance list of Singh, a common surname to all Sikhs, and separated for analysis. Many other aliases and proper names were taken from the wordlist obtained through OCP command file.

<sup>36</sup> However, it is quite another thing that the headlines like this might have something to do with the names becoming well known. It is often argued that the prominent displays of insurgents' names and their photographs makes them popular which is equally often negated by the stock counter argument that their popularity gets them the displays. This has been discussed in Chapter three under 'contagion effect of media coverage of terrorism.'

1. **Sukha-Jinda** ( joint headline of six letters to the editor)
2. **Lakha** escapes from custody.
3. Where is **Moni** ?
4. **Malli** given 5 day police remand.
5. Samagam on 21st in **Halwara's** memory.

In all the headlines, there is a hidden actor (police or the state) apart from the insurgent leader whose aliases are shown in bold letters. Sukha and Jinda had been arrested by the police after a dramatic pursuit which is quite a legend in itself. The letters are about their trial and subsequent death sentence. Lakha's escape is from police custody and Malli is given police remand. Halwara was also killed in police encounter and the samagam (congregation) in his memory is most likely to end up as an anti-police rally as is the case with most such meetings. 'Where is Moni' is about disappearance of a young man and the suggestion is that the police may have something to do with it.

Many other headlines carrying proper names and aliases of insurgent leaders are about their killings by the police. All the rest are about their statements challenging the government or the security forces. Many leaders have expressed doubts about police 'encounters' or demanded an enquiry. The pattern of usage is not different from the above examples. Their names have been used just as the names of prominent politicians are used in normal newspaper reports. Most headlines do not carry the rank or the designation of the insurgents quoted. The authority these names seem to exude in the *Ajit* headline suggest that the paper does not treat them as 'delegitimised' or 'anti-social' elements as is the case with the rest of the papers.<sup>37</sup> Some of the headlines in *Ajit* which demonstrate this point are listed below:

1. Liberation force's warning about *Bhai* **Amrik Singh** and **Dhanna Singh**
2. *Bhai* **Manjit Singh** elected chief of Federation again
3. **Avtar Singh** to contest election from jail.
4. *Bhai* **Gurjeet Singh** warns the police.
5. Federation criticises **Dhanna Singh's** arrest: Government warned
6. The story of **Joginder Singh's** escape from custody false
7. **Chandra, Disha** and **Buta Singh's** ashes consigned to the river.
8. Different organisations condemn *Bhai* **Sukha's** and *Bhai* **Jinda's** hanging
9. Militants should unite, **Rana** and brother caught and killed : **Muchchhad**
10. Dialogue possible in Geneva only : **Manochal**

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<sup>37</sup> See characterisations and labels in Chapter five.

The headlines in the above list treat proper names as any other political sources. In "Bhai Manjit Singh elected..." and "Bhai Gurjeet Singh warns the police..." the use of the term Bhai gives them a pedestal and the reference to "Bhai Sukha's and Bhai Jinda's hanging..." presents them not as two assassins who had been convicted by the supreme court of India but as respectable people victimised by the judiciary. No other paper has referred to them in a similar fashion. "...Rana and brother caught and killed..." is a direct reference to police capturing insurgents and executing them without fulfilling legal formalities. The names in the last two headlines exude authority and they have been used just as the names of politicians are used in routine newspaper reports.

The only other paper to have often carried names of insurgents in headlines as a matter of routine is the Hindi paper *Punjab Kesari*. The paper has used 17 proper names and aliases of members of underground organisations. Unlike the Punjabi paper *Ajit*, the names do not exude authority in their overall contexts. Nor do they highlight the insurgents' struggle. The overall image emerging out of their linguistic contexts in *Punjab Kesari*'s headlines is of a desperate armed bandit who is on the run after committing dastardly crimes and who is being chased by the police. Each time the name or alias is accompanied by associated words in *Punjab Kesari* headlines which convey a negative meaning :

1. *Terrorist Nishan Singh* killed while trying to *escape*.
2. How did **Ranjit Singh Rana** become a *terrorist* ?
3. Nephew of **Jinda** involved in Greater Kailash *massacre*.
4. **Avtar Singh** of Khalistan Commando Force has main role in the *massacre*.
5. **Satnam Singh** *lent looted money* to industrialists.
6. *Dreaded* militant **Binda** killed in encounter.
7. BTFK Lt. General **Galna** and *dreaded* militant **Minibaba Pakistani** killed
8. Raid on **Sukhdev Singh Babbar's bungalow**, *lover* and son arrested...
9. Three militants including **Kala Nag** killed
10. Mand raided after tip off that **Pipal Singh gang** was hiding there.

The contrast between the contextual usage of proper names in the Hindi and Punjabi papers is indeed stark. In the above headlines the names and aliases of the insurgents appear in association with other words which impart them morally condemnable contexts. Apart from committing massacres and robberies, some of the insurgents appearing in the headlines are identified as "dreaded" and "terrorists". Some of them

are there for having lent looted money for profit or for having lived in bungalows with a lover which is not allowed under Sikhism and which is contrary to an insurgent's image. There are instances where aliases themselves are loaded with formidable meaning. Kala Nag means black cobra both in Hindi and Punjabi. Another insurgent's name Minibaba Pakistani suggests somebody who has obvious connection with the neighbouring country Pakistan, which according to the Indian government's allegation, has been fomenting trouble in Punjab.

There are about a dozen odd references in the *Punjab Kesari* headlines where ranks of insurgents killed in encounters with the security forces are used. The Punjabi paper *Ajit* has not used a single rank in the 28 headlines carrying names of insurgents. It has used an occasional 'Bhai' with the names which is a marker of respect in local parlance. However, the Hindi paper has often used Lt. general, area commander and chief or deputy chief etc. with the names of insurgents. In the interviews, almost all police officers have frequently used martial ranks for the insurgent leaders. It is noteworthy that both the former insurgents interviewed have rarely referred to their own leaders with their ranks and have maintained that they themselves did not have a formal martial rank in the hierarchy.<sup>38</sup> It is interesting that the police and security forces are more interested in insurgents' ranks than the insurgents themselves and that the *Punjab Kesari* recognises them with their martial ranks, especially when they are killed in an encounter with the police. It is equally interesting that the Punjabi paper *Ajit* has almost completely ignored the insurgents' ranks.

The most positive way of referring to the insurgent actors in the *Ajit* headlines is to call them by their own names or by the names of their organisations. Similarly, calling the members of various violent political organisations 'terrorists' delegitimises them and denies them any political ideology whatsoever. In Punjab's unusual circumstances, the linguistic boundary between 'terrorist' and 'militant' got blurred, particularly in the second time period when the insurgents enforced their 'code of conduct' under which any newspaper reporter calling them a 'terrorist' were 'punished'.<sup>39</sup> As discussed in the content analysis chapter, there is little difference between the newspapers' usage patterns of the two words i.e. 'terrorist' and 'militant'. This would be later examined more closely in the following analysis in the light of word contexts. But the significance of the differences in individual papers' approaches to these words could be seen in their sheer frequency in Table 2.3.

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<sup>38</sup> See interviews with police officers and insurgents in Chapter seven

<sup>39</sup> See Chapter two on Punjab. Also see the two time periods in Chapter four.

Unlike the Punjabi *Ajit* which has used the word 'militant' almost as a neutral word for describing actors in the incidents of insurgent violence, the Hindi *Punjab Kesari* has used it in clearly negative context. In the Hindi paper, the key word militant is directly preceded or succeeded by some clearly negative 'associated words.' Following are some examples from the concordance list of *Punjab Kesari* headlines :

1. *Dreaded* **militant** Binda killed in encounter
2. *Dreaded* **militant** Minibaba *Pakistani* killed;
3. **Militants**, who *murdered* 10 year old girl after *raping* her, arrested.
4. People still *frightened* after **militants** *massacred*; victims did not get govt aid.
5. Ragi willing to return to Amritsar if **militants** *concede mistake*.
6. **Militants** who *massacred* people in Ludhiana had also gone to BJP activist's house
7. **Militants** *kidnap* brother of Gulzar Singh
8. **Militants** involved in *murders and loot*.
9. *Khalistani* **militants** want to make atmosphere *communal*.
10. *Dreaded* **militants** *surrender* in Rampuraphool.

It is clear from the associated words (italics) in the above examples that the 'militants' appear to be morally more reprehensible in *Punjab Kesari* headlines than in *Ajit*. The *Punjab Kesari* headlines show that the use of 'militant' becomes morally condemnable not only because of the associated words and immediate contexts but also by the overall meaning of the whole headline sentence:

1. 'What did the **militants** get after *destroying* my home ?'
2. **Militants** *must know* the bullet would not spare anyone in an encounter...
3. **Militants** *ruining their own homes* by *sabotaging* govt. property...
4. *Nexus* between **militants** and *anti-social elements* is taking a *dangerous* turn...
5. **Militants** *eyeing* only *prosperity* of Terai Sikhs.

The usage of the 'elite' English language papers is once again different from both the vernacular papers. The regional English paper *Tribune* and the three national papers have used the two terms more or less equal number of times. It is significant that the most often used associated words with 'militant' actors in these papers are verbs such as shot, killed, held, arrested, captured etc. All these papers have preferred 'top militant' to 'dreaded militant' unlike the *Punjab Kesari*. Nor have the 'elite' papers' headlines treated 'militants' legitimately like the Punjabi paper *Ajit*. There is occasional use of 'surrender', 'warn' or 'challenge' but this hardly makes a trend. Following are some of the typical news headlines from the 'elite' English papers :

1. Top **militant** shot dead in UP.
2. Public surrender of **Militants** flayed
3. **Militants** still call the shots in Punjab
4. Ten **militants** killed
5. Top **militant** shot dead in Nainital
6. **Militants'** warning to SGPC
7. **Militants** shot in Bombay suburb
8. Unity move by Punjab **militants**
9. **Militant** beaten to death by villagers
10. **Militant** killed in encounter

The headlines in the elite English language papers are significantly shorter than in the vernacular papers. The elite papers have concentrated on the bare 'facts' or 'nuts and bolts' of a news story.<sup>40</sup> As shown in Table 2.3, the elite English papers have used four common key words (kill, Punjab, terrorist, militant) considerably more frequently than any other words. A straight sentence with minimum 'nuts and bolts' of 'facts' such as the number of those killed or venue of the incident etc.-- along with an 'emotive' label such as 'terrorist'-- is perhaps discreet enough negative headline for a quality paper.<sup>41</sup> As discussed in the above pages, the readership of these papers is not as coherent as that of the two vernacular papers. The diversity of readership range is also reflected in these papers narrower range of vocabulary shown in Table 2.4.

However, the diversity of the range of readership does not mean that the pattern of discourse in the national papers' headlines cannot be typified. The readership in these papers is indeed more diverse only in relation to the regional papers. It is seen in the interviews chapter that the editors and senior journalists of the national papers have clearly demarcated boundaries of editorial liberalism for news content.<sup>42</sup> Most editors believed the unity and integrity of the nation could not be compromised and the abatement of terrorism by external forces was a serious threat to Indian democracy.

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<sup>40</sup> It is not being argued that the English papers stick to 'facts' in news reports and do not push interpretations. As discussed earlier, the national papers are more like the quality press. Their language is always less screaming than that of the regional papers which are closer to the popular press. At the same time, the stories appearing in the national press take care of their ideology without excessive use of negative or positive terms. A constructionist framework necessitates values to be inbuilt in language use and in journalists' professional practices. The national papers' use of negative language has been more subtle and 'discreet'.

<sup>41</sup> Arguably, it is considered a good practice for the English quality papers' journalists to convey meaning in more subdued rather than hard-hitting way. In other words, understatement carries little stylistic premium in Hindi and Punjabi papers.

<sup>42</sup> See Chapter seven under 'Journalists' perceptions'.

They agreed that the human rights violations must stop but also added that the state was not the only violator of the individuals' human rights. Table 1.6 shows the consistency of external aggression frames in the subject matter of news stories in the national papers as well as in *Tribune*. It was also seen later in the content analysis chapter that the threat of external aggression formed a major part of story judgements in all Indian papers except the Punjabi *Ajit*.<sup>43</sup> The national press also used 'war' terminology to underline such a threat. The regional English paper *Tribune* has also subscribed to more or less the same ideology as the national press.<sup>44</sup> The following headlines in these English language papers illustrate that the elite papers' headlines reflect their ideology as discussed above :

1. **WSO**<sup>45</sup> : Terrorists' command Centre
2. Militants active in **Nankana Sahab**<sup>46</sup>
3. All out **war** on terrorism sought
4. Many forms of **Pak aid** to terrorists
5. Declare **war** against terrorism
6. Army has to be used to **combat** terrorism
7. Concern at [human] **rights violations** by terrorists
8. **FBI** man, terrorists discussed price to blow up AI plane.
9. Terrorists given land on **border** : BJP
10. **Kashmir** militants aiding Punjab ultras
11. **Bush**, Rao discuss **GATT**, terrorism
12. Manhunt on for others; terrorists, SI dies in fierce **gun battle**.

References to WSO, Nankana Sahab, GATT, FBI, Kashmir militants and 'border' in news headlines support the foreign aid dimension of insurgency in Punjab.<sup>47</sup>

Similarly, words like "War", "gun battle" or "combat" strengthen the war scenario suggestion of the national and elite press as seen in the story judgements in the content analysis chapter. As discussed earlier in this chapter the news threshold of the regional press is lower than the national press. Hence, a mere 'arrest' hardly made news in the national press whereas 'killings' were mostly covered by them. It shows

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<sup>43</sup> See story judgements in Chapter five.

<sup>44</sup> See Chapter seven. The chief Editor of the *Tribune* had also made it clear in his interview that his main aim was to 'win the Sikhs back for India' by upholding democratic values and by exposing violations of human rights. Once again the 'elite' English paper has shown that it shares its ideology with the 'quality' national press rather than with the fellow regional papers.

<sup>45</sup> World Sikh Organisation which is believed to be operating from Europe and North America.

<sup>46</sup> Nankana Sahab is the birth place of Nanak, the first guru of the Sikhs, and is a place of pilgrimage for the followers of the faith. It is now situated in Pakistan.

<sup>47</sup> Unlike Punjab, the Kashmir problem is amply internationalised and the area there has always been a bone of contention between India and Pakistan.



that the national press has preferred news items about foreign hand dimensions over many other incidents in Punjab which fall short of a killing. Apart from this, the elite English language papers have often carried news items that offer an 'in-depth' understanding of the phenomenon of political violence in the 'quality' press tradition :

1. *Talking with* **terrorists**
2. The *dialectic* of **terrorism**
3. Punjab hosts *seminar* on **terrorism**
4. *Anatomy* of a **terrorist**
5. Fighting the **terrorist design**; what the press can do ?

The above headlines suggest that the items about 'dialectic' or 'anatomy' are meant to provide insights, presumably into phenomena which spawn political violence. On the face of it, the national papers are trying to understand the phenomenon of political violence with an open mind. But calling them 'terrorists' in the headline is marker of a judgement which forecloses any further discussion on what kind of labels are appropriate for the perpetrators. The same can be said about the 'seminar on terrorism' or about 'what the press can do?'. It is clear that the seminar is on 'terrorism' which is something morally condemnable. It may be assumed that the seminar would hardly consider whether goings on in Punjab could be called anything other than 'terrorism.' The press has more or less been allocated a role in the innocuous looking headline itself. They are hardly compelled to identify forces which drive some individuals to violence. They only have to react to fight the 'terrorist design'.

The second most important actor or victim in most papers are the police or the security forces. In the Punjabi paper *Ajit*, the police, army and security forces are referred to 36 times. The concordance list shows that the most common usage of the security forces in the headlines is for negative reasons. It is noteworthy that 18 times the references to police actions are clearly questionable. They show the police indulging in either illegal and repressive acts or directly in confrontation with the 'people'. It comes across as an inefficient and insensitive force with no regard for places of worship. Following is a list of references taken from the concordance list of *Ajit* headlines. (The negative reference points are italicised) :

1. Labourer killed in *fake* **security forces** encounter
2. Tension in Kapurthala during bandh; lathi [baton] charge on people; *stone pelted* on **police** and buses, traffic jam for several hours.
3. **Police** enters *Jhawan gurdwara*; took away offerings; Granthi [priest] beaten up

4. **Police** *guilty* of arresting over 200 Federation members
5. **Police** entry *condemned*
6. **Police** party which went to arrest terrorists in Gujarat lands up in jail.
7. **Police** enters *gurdwara* Bangla Sahab.
8. **Police** entry of *Shri Darbar Sahab* condemned.
9. Bhai Gurjeet Singh warns the **police**.
10. Second consecutive day against **police** *loot and firing*.
11. Why does the **police** *harass* the leaders' families ?
12. Joginder Singh's *escape* from **police** custody *false*.
13. **Police** makes *militant* out of [a] blind man.
14. People of Ambala area *reeling* under **police** *repression*.
15. **Police** caught '*kar sewaks*' and *masons* working at *gurdwara*.

Most references to the police or the security forces on the above list project them as an unpopular and repressive force. Apart from repressive actions there is considerable stress on police entry into gurdwaras. Other papers have either not carried such items or not mentioned them in headlines. Barring odd exceptions the *Ajit* headlines present the security forces in negative light.

In a clear contrast, the concordance of *Punjab Kesari* headlines shows the police and security forces in a positive light. As expected, the paper's headlines have shown the police as a firm and effective force. The sharp contrast with the *Ajit* is clear in the following headlines of *Punjab Kesari* stories. (The associated words which highlight their positive role are italicised.) :

1. **Security forces** *foiled* attempted bank robbery in Mohali
2. Suspected terrorist *killed in encounter* with **security forces** near Jabbowal; *extensive search* in Tarn Taran area.
3. Dialogue with terrorists impossible; **para military forces** now *working very well*, terrorists are murderers of innocent people
4. **Security forces** *nab* suspected terrorists; stolen cars, and scooters *recovered*.
5. **Security forces** *conduct* house to house *search* in Amritsar, Kapurthala and Hoshiarpur
6. Action be taken against those spreading *motivated* stories *against* **security forces** : Gupta
- 7 **Security forces** *enhancing capability* to *control* militancy...
8. **Security forces** *got* 3 *kidnapped* *released*
9. *Kudos* to Punjab **police** : Beant Singh

10. 70 per cent *militants wiped out* in Punjab: Gill; training camps for **police** officers in Mand to *tackle* militants...

Unlike in the Punjabi paper *Ajit*, the security forces in the above headlines come across as a dynamic and much maligned or misunderstood force. They 'tackle' perpetrators and 'foil' their nefarious attempts. They 'nab' and 'search' and 'free' the kidnapped and are praised for all these actions.

In the English language regional paper *Tribune*, the pattern falls somewhere in between the two extremes defined by the Punjabi and Hindi papers. As seen in the content analysis chapter, the characterisations and labels used by the *Tribune* were very much in line with all other papers except *Ajit*, whereas human rights themes covered by the paper were comparable to those of *Ajit*.<sup>48</sup> The same trend continues in the headlines used by the *Tribune* :

1. *Withdraw* **cops** from colleges, varsities
2. *Guilty* **CRPF** men still in Brahmpura
3. Conductor's death: **CRPF** held *guilty*
4. Rs.1 lakh *relief* for *killing* by **CRPF**
5. **Police** for *disarming* the civilians
6. Who *demoralises* the **police** ?
7. Tighten *noose* : Ray tells **police**
8. Gurjeet was *killed* in **police custody**
9. **Police** asked *not to harass* people
10. **Police**, *public* to have *closer ties*

In the above headlines in the *Tribune*, the police are shown both as custodians of law and order like the *Punjab Kesari* and as violators of human rights like the *Ajit*. The usage pattern of headlines in the paper shows that the regional newspaper has been consistent with its earlier approach of giving good coverage to human rights themes as well as supporting the 'war' against 'terrorism' like the other English language dailies. In the content analysis chapter it was seen (Table 1.5) that barring its unusual coverage of human rights themes the *Tribune's* coverage of other themes and its selection of sources (Table 1.2) is consistent with that of the national press.

It is significant that the two vernacular dailies not only stuck to their selective usage for or against the security forces but they virtually ignored the opposite point of view.

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<sup>48</sup> See Tables 1.8 and 1.9 in Chapter five.

The *Tribune*, has attempted to strike a balance which can be seen in the types of headlines shown in the above list. In the national dailies, however, the usage of the key word 'police' and 'security forces' has dropped considerably. The *Hindustan times* has used it 12 times whereas all other papers have used it less than 10 times. (See Table 2.3. The national papers have used the key word 'police' mainly for security and law enforcement stories and all of them have used at least a couple of stories with allegations of police 'excesses' or 'harassment'.

## PROCESSES :

The process key words have not been used as frequently as the action or actor key words. For instance key word 'terrorism' has been used 8 and 6 times by *Ajit* and *Punjab Kesari* respectively and 5 or less times by the national papers. Most of the usage are in direct quotes attributed to politicians and senior police officers. Similarly, 'militancy' has been used even lesser number of times by the papers.

As seen in Table 2.5, the most often used process key word in Punjabi paper *Ajit* is 'encounter' (10 times) followed by terrorism (8 times). Except one usage of 'terrorism' which is about 'states' violence' rest are about insurgent violence and are directly attributed to the government or the security forces. Three references to encounters' suggest serious armed conflicts between the police and insurgents. All the rest are called 'fake' or 'suspicious' encounters. The strategy used by *Ajit* seems to be to qualify the usage in order to make it easier for the readers to differentiate between a 'genuine' and a 'fake' encounter :

1. Thanedar [police official] and mahant [religious leader] shot, **suspect** killed in **police encounter**
2. People **suspicious** about Loharmajra **police encounter** as well
3. Police officer killed in **stern encounter** in Bombay
4. Sikhs do not get defeated in **real encounters** : Brahma
5. Killed in **fake security forces encounter**
6. Killed in **fake encounter** after taking out from jail
7. **Fake encounters**
8. People killed in **violence and encounters** in Gurdaspur district.

The above examples from *Ajit* headlines show that the encounters are mostly associated with a qualifier and there is a negative or positive word somewhere in the headline to suggest whether it is suspect or not. A 'police encounter' or a 'fake

encounter' is certainly different from a 'stern' or a 'real' encounter. A 'real' encounter in the above headline suggests that the state is trying to defeat the Sikhs through 'unreal' or stage-managed encounters. Words like 'suspect', 'suspicious' or 'violence' also make a difference to the overall usage of the sentence.

The Hindi paper *Punjab Kesari* has used 'terrorism' 6 times and each time it is part of a direct or indirect quote. The process key word 'encounter' has been used 13 times and in a sharp contrast with the *Ajit*, each time it is without a qualifier. In fact every time it has used 'encounter' in a headline it is one straight sentence such as : 'terrorist / militant (or a proper name with rank) killed in encounter'. There is only one place where the victim of a police encounter is a 'suspected terrorist' in the *Punjab Kesari* headline. The paper's headlines have also described the victims either as an underground organisation's 'chief' or as a 'dreaded' terrorist or militant. The *Tribune* headlines have once again shown a middle path by using both types of headlines described above. The national and British papers have more or less ignored the key word 'encounter'. The national papers have emphasised who killed or who was killed rather than how and where in Punjab.

#### PATTERN OF KEY WORD USAGE IN THE BRITISH PRESS :

Five of six most frequently used key words in the two British papers' headlines are the same. Table 2.3 shows that these words are: Punjab, Sikh, kill, Gandhi and police which appear exactly in the same order. Three of these words are the same in the rest of the Indian papers, both regional and national. They are Punjab, kill and police. They denote the location, action and one of the prominent actors. The other prominent actor in the national and regional papers is the 'terrorist' or the 'militant' while for the British press it is 'Sikh'.

Several interviewees, particularly the police and state officers and journalists, had criticised the international press for identifying the whole Sikh community with the acts of a handful of 'violent people'. Several Indian politicians and journalists were of the opinion that the international press is insensitive to the anxieties of the Indian nation and its secular constitution.<sup>49</sup> The Indian state has also been unhappy with the British Broadcasting Corporation and some other Western media organisations for not calling the insurgents in Punjab and Kashmir 'terrorists'. Some of the interviewees have found it appalling that the BBC World Service uses expressions analogous with 'militants' or 'extremists' for the armed insurgents in Punjab and Kashmir even though

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<sup>49</sup> See security forces', journalists' and politicians' perception in Chapter seven.

they used the term 'terrorist' for the armed insurgents of Northern Ireland. The overwhelming feeling is that the largely autonomous British media uses the label 'terrorist' for those perpetrators of political violence who challenge its own democratic system while it falls short of it when it comes to describing those challenging other liberal democratic systems, particularly in the Third World.<sup>50</sup>

A concordance of the key word 'Sikh' shows that it has been used by the two British papers in the same way as the national and regional press has used 'militant' or 'terrorist'. The following headlines in the two British papers show that they hardly differentiate between supporters of the violent Khalistan movement and the entire Sikh community:

1. Army put on stand by after gun men kill 70; India stunned by new **Sikh** bus massacre
2. Anti-terror enquiry into **Sikh** killing
3. *Heretic Guru* fanned **Sikh** emotions; Shyam Pereira reports on divisions and fears highlighted by the South Hall killing
4. Killings continue despite **Sikh** terror breakthrough
5. 30 hurt as *armed Sikhs* clash at temple
6. **Sikhs** held in raid on shrine
7. Judges confirm death sentence on **Sikh** killers of Mrs Gandhi
8. **Sikh** gunmen murder Punjab prison chief
9. Police siege at **Sikh** temple
10. **Sikh** terror trial: cut price killer guilty...
11. **Sikh** terror plot: *Hired assassin* is jailed
12. **Sikh** revenge

The headlines show that the main actors in the incidents of political violence are 'Sikhs'. The papers have used the label 'Sikh' -- which denotes any follower of 'Sikhism' -- for the perpetrators of political violence. For a large number of security forces members, the Chief Minister and almost all ministers of Punjab -- who form the front line of political challenge to terrorism and separatism on behalf of the federal Indian state -- belong to the Sikh community. Besides a large number of Sikh politicians affiliated to various national or regional political parties do not support the armed separatist movement. On the contrary, many of these people have fought the

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<sup>50</sup> While it may be true that the BBC avoids the use of the term 'terrorism', some of the interviewees have felt that the BBC's view is closely aligned with the Western point of view on insurgency in the third world countries and the organisation's approach to insurgency in the United Kingdom is not entirely the same.

separatists politically and have also paid a price for it. The Indian state and its opinion leaders feel that the British press tars all Sikhs with one feather which they find unfair in view of India's interests. It creates the impression that the entire Sikh community is fighting against the Indian state, a position the Indian government contests.

Usage like 'Sikh bus massacre' and 'Sikh revenge' or headlines like 'Sikh terror breakthrough' or 'Sikh terror plot' associate the whole community with 'terror' or 'massacre' etc. Apart from harming the interests of the Indian state, this kind of usage also favours the separatists who want to be identified with the whole community. Another set of headlines in the above example seems to confound the bare facts of an incident. 'Armed Sikhs clash at temple' or 'Sikhs held in raid on shrine' are two examples where the incidents are reported from a Sikh place of worship (gurdwara). The first headline is about armed rival groups clashing at a Sikh temple and the second one about the police arresting some suspects from a Sikh shrine.<sup>51</sup> The word 'Sikh' has been used both for the armed groups as well as for the suspects whereas no distinction has been made between a Sikh temple or just a temple.

The most frequently used action key word in the two British papers is 'kill' which has been used 10 and 11 times respectively in the Times and the *Guardian*. The usage is mostly nominal in the two papers. Both the papers have used various negative labels for the perpetrators but have avoided using the label 'terrorist'. Out of nearly a hundred odd headlines in the two papers, there is only one single reference where protagonists of violence have been called 'terrorists.' (Terrorists threat rob Punjab of elections: *Guardian*) In the rest of the places, the two papers have used the following words : gunmen, hit men, killers, assassin, extremists and separatists. These labels have also been used as negative labels in the content analysis. The content analysis chapter also showed that the two British papers' use of negative characterisations and labels is more or less in line with that of the national press.<sup>52</sup> The concordance list shows that the British papers have used 'nominal' terms for describing the perpetrators of violence and have avoided the use of 'emotive' words.

Out of the two British papers, the *Guardian* seems to be more generous with negative words for the insurgents and in that sense it is marginally closer to the Indian papers except *Ajit*. The *Guardian* has described four incidents of insurgent violence as '

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<sup>51</sup> In the raid on the Sikh shrine, it may be safely assumed that most of those present at the time of the police action would be Sikhs.

<sup>52</sup> Chart 1.4 and Table 1.9 of the content analysis chapter show that the two British papers have used negative labels and characterisations in the same way as the national press and the trend is similar in both the time periods.

massacre' and has used the word 'terrorism' twice in its headlines. It has also used the word 'terror' in four headlines and the reference is to insurgents' actions in Punjab. Compared to the *Guardian*, the other British paper, the *Times*, has avoided using terms like 'terrorist', 'terrorism' or 'massacre' altogether. The farthest it has gone in its use of a negative term is to employ 'terror' in headlines. Of four headlines which use 'terror' in the *Times*, two are about an assassination in Britain and one about an attack on a family in Delhi.

#### VARIATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO TIME PERIODS :

As seen in the content analysis chapter, the usage of key words has differed in the two time periods studied.<sup>53</sup> Table 2.0 of the content analysis chapter presents a general idea of 'who-did-what-and-how-often'. Tables 1.6 and 1.7 present a newspaper-wise break-up of primary themes in the two time periods. Chart 1.2 compares the 'violence' themes with 'law enforcement' themes in the two time periods. It shows a clear trend of a paradoxical decline in the violence themes in the second time period while there is a simultaneous rise in the law enforcement themes in the Indian papers.

The concordance lists of the main action, actor and process key words in the two time periods confirm the above trends. The results shown in the content analysis chapter have been drawn on the basis of the story texts while the concordance list takes into account only headline texts. The table below shows how dramatically the usage of some of these key words dropped or went up in the two time periods.

Table 2.6 Time-wise use of some key words in headlines :

KEY WORDS	I PERIOD	II PERIOD
Terrorists (s)	125	7
Terrorism	26	8
Militant (s).	15	132

In the first time period 31 usage of terrorist (s) are in the vicinity of a negative action or associated word which precedes or follows the key word. In most other usage, the '

<sup>53</sup> The two time periods are between December 1986 and November 1987 and between December 1991 and November 1992. In the second time period, Punjab's underground organisations issued a press note in which they 'prohibited' the use of 'terrorist' label for them and 'terrorism' for their activities failing which the journalists would be severely 'punished'. This prompted a change in the newspapers' usage of labels. For further details see Chapter two on Punjab and Chapter four on methodology.



terrorists' or their sympathisers have been criticised for some perceived or threatened action, or a call has been issued by some individual or organisation to fight them. The most common use of the process key word 'terrorism' in the first time period is made in such a way that either concern has been shown on its spread or efforts or opinions against it are being mobilised. The 15 usage of militant (s) in the first time period are without any negative word which denotes killing or other crimes such as robberies etc. The basic difference between 'terrorist' and 'militant' in the headline of the first time period is that the terrorists commit 'killings' and other 'crimes' and are 'shot' in encounters with the police while militants issue warnings to various organisations and people and are seen as a lobby with which the government can initiate a dialogue.

In the second time period however, the situation is completely reversed. There are 27 usage of militants in the vicinity of a negative action word. In most other usage, the militants are either killed in encounters with the security forces or they have been criticised or challenged. Of 132 places where 'militant' is used almost alternatively for 'terrorist' there are only 5 headlines concerning their political activities and references to a political dialogue. The difference between the two terms is almost non-existent in the second time period.<sup>54</sup>

## CONCLUSION :

The above analysis shows that the individual newspapers have used much the same set of words in their headlines to suggest contrary meanings. The pattern suggests that despite frequent use of similar key words, the connotations could be completely different because of the use of associated words. The patterns of linguistic combinations in routine headline sentences describing some routine incidents of violence indicates that the language use certainly depends on the paper's ideology and the profile of its readership.

The linguistic variations show that the papers whose readers are more involved in the local issues have more extensive and 'emotive' coverage. The Punjabi paper *Ajit* and the Hindi paper *Punjab Kesari* fall in this category and they have their positions sharply defined. Such papers tend to have a broader range of vocabulary as well. The images created by a specific language use have a strong connection with the 'social bond' which exists within a "collectivity" or group of people, which, in a newspaper's case, is its general readership. It is only natural that a "social bond" draws on some

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<sup>54</sup> See Table 2.0 in Chapter five shows that the word 'militant' has been used as an alternative for 'terrorists' in the second time period.

kind of empathy which encourages a shared understanding and demands almost compulsively to know more about goings on in the area. The more a newspaper tries to describe and explain in its coverage, the broader its vocabulary is likely to be. The best example of this is furnished by the differences between the regional papers' coverage. The two vernacular papers, the Punjabi *Ajit* and the Hindi *Punjab Kesari* have the most uniform groups of readers who have a more common background of religion, language and location. ( i.e. Sikhs and Hindus respectively based in rural areas and small towns of Punjab<sup>55</sup> ) The two papers' methods and strategies of news coverage are very similar even though their political perceptions have been poles apart. The third regional paper, the *Tribune*, is an English language paper with a readership drawn from the English speaking elite of both Sikhs and Hindus. Its readers are based in the capital, Chandigarh, and in the major cities of Punjab and adjoining states. Its readership is more similar to that of the national papers than the regional ones. The paper's linguistic choices too have more in common with the English language national dailies rather than with other regional papers. The elite English papers have a tendency to round up several violence related events under one umbrella headline and to use more 'nominal' rather than 'emotive' expressions for the perpetrators of violence.

All papers except the *Ajit* have denied legitimacy to the insurgents and their organisations. The *Ajit* has used proper names and aliases of insurgents in violence related utterances and given them a place in Punjab's political spectrum. The paper has not done this at the cost of denying 'legitimacy' to the government or the police. This reinforces the results of the content analysis which clearly showed that *Ajit's* coverage followed similar patterns of source selections and attributions as the other Indian papers.<sup>56</sup> The only major difference was that it has accommodated insurgent sources along with official sources. It has also covered themes concerning human rights violations and security forces' excesses almost parallel to covering violence and law enforcement themes. In other words, the *Ajit* has not denied the security forces, government and the bureaucracy their place in the construction of everyday news about violence. Just like any other paper it has followed the same professional practices including inter-organisational production and distribution of news.<sup>57</sup> It is

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<sup>55</sup> See the criterion of selection of newspapers Chapter four.

<sup>56</sup> See Table 1.2 in the Chapter five. The Punjabi paper *Ajit* has used official, non-official and other sources proportionately with other papers. It has however, shown a marked difference from others in terms of quoting insurgent sources.

<sup>57</sup> See inter-organisational perspective of news production in Chapter three. It has been argued that the news as a product is originated and exchanged through a network of inter-organisational communication. ( Gitlin 1980; Tuchman 1978 and Schudson 1989) Molotch and Lester (1974) define news as it comes to the awareness of a news organisation.

however, an ideological decision for the paper to give equal importance to 'struggle' and 'human rights' themes and less importance to 'critical' themes in its coverage of violence. Also ideological is the other papers' decision to ignore these themes and to widely cover the 'critical' themes.<sup>58</sup>

The other paper to use names and aliases of insurgents in headlines is the *Punjab Kesari*. Its usage of names and ranks is mostly confined to these people being 'gunned down' by the security forces in encounters. The Punjabi and Hindi papers of Punjab have predictably used minimum and maximum number of 'emotive' words respectively for describing insurgents. The elite English papers have gone for more 'nominal' words in their headlines and have used a very limited number of 'emotive' words. The Punjabi paper *Ajit* has preferred positive words over 'nominal' ones for describing insurgents and their actions. Along with the names of insurgents, the paper has frequently used the names of their organisations in the headlines which may be seen as a good way of rendering them legitimacy.

The Police and the security forces come across as an insensitive and repressive force in *Ajit's* headlines while they are shown as a much maligned but firm and decisive force in *Punjab Kesari* headlines. This difference was also visible in the content analysis chapter in the characterisations and labels used for the actions and actors of the individual and state violence. However, in the concordance of headlines it becomes amply clear that the two types of papers have used similar key words in association with myriad other words to connote desired meanings. For instance the simple use of a qualifier with every usage of process key word 'encounter' in *Ajit* headlines has created doubts about its veracity. The third regional paper, the *Tribune*, has tried to strike a balance between the two approaches. It is noteworthy that the Hindi and Punjabi papers have stuck to only one type of meaning and ignored the rival's point of view. The *Tribune* has shown a moderate middle approach by using the key word 'police' in association with both positive and negative connotation words.

The national papers have made much more limited use of the 'police' key word though in a way their approach is closer to that of the *Tribune*. The lesser use of the agents of violence in the national press is significant in the same way as the limited use of 'emotive' descriptions in their headlines. As a result, the elite English papers' headlines are much less 'screaming' when compared to the two vernacular papers. It may be argued that their impact is likely to be more than the two vernacular papers because they have used 'emotive' descriptions more sparingly.

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<sup>58</sup> See Table 1.5 Distribution of Primary themes in Chapter five.

The range of the linguistic variations and word contexts shows that any consistent language use in any newspaper is essentially ideological.<sup>59</sup> It is often observed that the headlines of different newspapers, particularly about violence-related 'hard' news items, come across as similar. It is also assumed that the headlines are written in a hurry and the main attempt of a sub-editor is to fit the central idea of a story in a limited space and size and under extreme time pressures. However, the results of the above analysis show that the headlines are steeped in ideological meanings even though they look similar at the first glance.

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<sup>59</sup> The linguistic tools used in the chapter have been applied to a very limited set of headline text. Considering the scope of this research, a deeper and wider application of critical linguistics, perhaps, would have been a deviation. Nevertheless, the use of concordances and word contexts have proved to be very useful for reinforcing some basic arguments about media coverage of violence discussed in the Chapter three. The analysis shows that the process of construction of headlines may appear to be casual but it is strictly in accordance with a newspaper's ideology.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### INTERVIEW WITH PARTICIPANTS OF THE CONFLICT

The focus of enquiry in this chapter is the relationship between the media and the perpetrators of state and non-state violence.<sup>1</sup> As discussed earlier, various political processes in a liberal democratic system are so finely intermeshed that any relationship without the perspective of the social, political and economic environment could be misleading. News as a cultural package is mostly shaped by society's common sense knowledge and wisdom which also serves as its workable ideology.<sup>2</sup> It also has a lot to do with society's power equations and the understanding (and interests) of its dominant sections. As discussed in conceptual framework chapter, news is an ideological construct and it depends a great deal on the people who produce it and reasons which push it into agenda rather than on happenings it claims to represent. Political processes are vital because terrorism cannot be seen in isolation from the wider issues of language and religion; nationalities and sub-nationalities; market and media; and the problems of democratic governance, especially in Third World societies.

In this chapter the concentration is on the participants of the conflict who happen to be among media's most frequently quoted sources of news.<sup>3</sup> Different participants represent different interest and power groups and much of media's coverage of terrorism is defined by (or through) them. They are quoted, interviewed, referred to, or just talked about in various contexts. As seen in the content analysis chapter, a newspaper's choice of terrorism and law enforcement news and its descriptions depend a great deal on the kind of sources it chooses to quote.<sup>4</sup> It was found that most stories about 'terrorism' and 'law enforcement' were source originated and that institutionalised sources, placed high on society's power hierarchy, have access to the 'free' media's news production.

Media's manifest content alone cannot account for the entire news production process and, therefore, an analysis of media content may be supplemented with interviews in

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<sup>1</sup> Perpetrators could be actual or as perceived by the press or its sources.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter three.

<sup>3</sup> See sources of news in Chapter five.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

order to examine the cultural contexts of news making.<sup>5</sup> The content analysis chapter showed that one set of participants are virtually 'out of bounds' for the media and their acts are often defined by their adversaries.<sup>6</sup> Interviews with the participants of the conflict are seen as a good way of breaking out of this confinement as it makes analysis of media coverage outside the media text possible. A more complete perspective of the media coverage of political violence could be developed on the basis of a combined analysis of media content, its linguistic variations and interviews with some of participants of the conflict who are often in the news as sources or participants of the conflict.

As mentioned in the conceptual framework chapter, the omissions of the press about violence related issues are identified by comparing the newspapers' portrayal of violence with the participants' understanding of them. There is a complete absence of public opinion polls about public's / newspaper readers' attitudes towards either news media or terrorism in India. It is almost impossible, therefore, to compare the results of analyses of media's content against public perceptions of issues.<sup>7</sup> Some academics have contended that the public perception of terrorism corresponds closely to media portrayals.<sup>8</sup> The attempt in this research is to compare the media portrayals of various violence-related issues with the perceptions of the conflict's participants.<sup>9</sup>

During an extensive field work, 31 interviews were conducted mainly in Punjab and Delhi with former insurgents and their supporters, senior police officers, ruling party and opposition politicians and journalists. Six former insurgents and their active sympathisers, who have, in some capacity or the other, handled underground or front

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<sup>5</sup> Schlesinger (1987) argues that "...the techniques of content, textual or discourse analysis, have much to tell us, such approaches do face the crucial limitation of only being able to make inferences about the actual processes of production inside cultural institutions and organisations, and thus face a lacuna in any explanation offered." (Introductory chapter in Schlesinger 1978, page No xxxii)

<sup>6</sup> It was found in chapter five that 'terrorism news' which is about the violent actions of insurgents is almost always defined by their chief adversaries, the security forces. (chart 1.1) The only exception is *Ajit* and even in that paper, the official actors are quoted over three times more often than the insurgent sources.

<sup>7</sup> The only material available pertains to circulation figures and that too in the metropolitan cities. There is little statistical data available on the readerships of newspapers in the villages. The availability of readership surveys on Punjab is particularly scanty because of operational difficulties. For instance the Fourth National Readership Survey conducted by IMRB and Media Search have left out Punjab and Kashmir because of "uncertain law and order situation." What can be of help is preferably a community-wise break up of English and Vernacular papers in urban as well as rural areas over a sustained period of time.

<sup>8</sup> Hewitt (1992) p. 201

<sup>9</sup> It is assumed that the limited scope of this part of analysis could be widened if media's ranking of the news agenda could be compared with the public's understanding and ranking of those issues.

organisations' press relations, were approached for interviews.<sup>10</sup> About same number of senior police and security forces officials were also interviewed in the third category. While holding operational law enforcement positions, all officers interviewed have been regularly interacting with journalists. The politicians interviewed include two each of the former ruling party and now opposition (Akali Dal -L), the present ruling party (Congress-I) and the third opposition party (Akali Dal- B). Each one of them figures in his party's top hierarchy. Besides, all of them are / have been former or present spokesmen for their parties. In the last category journalists of the regional and national papers -- one each of the field reporters covering terrorism and one each of the chief /senior editors responsible for the papers' editorial policies -- were interviewed. The interviewees' names in all the four categories were selected from a much longer list which was prepared before setting out for the field work.

It was anticipated that the insurgents would be difficult to contact. Hence a very long list was drawn on the basis of likely availability. The Punjab police in Amritsar and Majitha police districts provided a list of over fifty former 'terrorists' who had surrendered to them more or less within a year of the field work period (September-October 1993). After a long wait and some legwork about half of those on the police list were contacted. They were all former insurgents who had surrendered to the police in Amritsar, the most disturbed district in Punjab located on the Pakistan border. Interviews with most of them for varying lengths of time, however, proved to be of little use because none of them were senior leaders. Some said they had been earlier 'misunderstood' as militants as a result of which they went underground but surrendered later when the opportunity arose. It was found that the people in this group were reluctant to say anything against the police because they were all on some kind of 'probation' after their much publicised collective surrenders.<sup>11</sup> That many of

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<sup>10</sup> It is difficult to differentiate between the insurgents' front organisation and those which are just sympathetic to them. The bone of contention is that no 'front' organisation would publicly want to admit that it is being run by the protagonists of violence. Some of the leaders have clarified their positions in the interviews.

<sup>11</sup> The police in Punjab declared in the early nineties that they would take a lenient view of anyone surrendering to them. Such surrenders were great media events. Ministers and police top brass were usually present in many such functions. However, there was no general amnesty for those who surrendered. They were told that the normal law would apply to them but those who are not wanted for 'heinous' crimes would be free to go home while others would stay in jails pending court judgements in their cases. The arrangement was perhaps meant to be an assurance that no 'extra-judicial' method would be used against those who surrender. It would be certainly very interesting and useful to interview such people. However, most of them did not fit into the scope of the present study which focuses on media's construction of 'terrorism' and 'counter-terrorism.'

them did not want to talk about their views on 'Khalistan' or their goal of independence only compounded the interviewer's frustration.<sup>12</sup>

This approach had to be abandoned because of various reasons including paucity of time and resources. An attempt was made in the second phase to contact only those who have either been important functionaries of underground organisations or their active and avowed sympathisers and have dealt with the press on behalf of the insurgents. Out of about a dozen odd people contacted (with the help of contacts who were explained the purpose of interviews), six finally agreed to recorded interviews. Two of them had been important functionaries in armed underground organisations and had surrendered in 1993 only months before the interviews. Unlike others who had surrendered, these two were prepared to talk frankly on condition of anonymity. They also made it clear that they would not say anything about individual actions attributed to them in the police charge-sheet. The other two are former prominent student leaders who have been arrested a number of times for charges broadly ranging from 'breach of peace' to 'sedition.' They have been President and general secretary of the once banned All India Sikh Students' Federation (AISSF) and who say they have now given up underground activity and formed a new political party.<sup>13</sup> The remaining two interviewees are active supporters of Punjab's armed insurgent organisations and are members of a 'hawkish' opposition party (Akali Dal-Mann). Their pro-insurgent views have always been public. All six interviewees in this category admit that they support the armed struggle initiated by Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. Each one of them has supported the movement for Khalistan, though they have differed with one another over strategies to achieve it. Most of them have clearly said that personally they are against violence but they support the armed movement. Most have also offered reasons for this dichotomy. All the insurgents and their sympathisers have had direct experience of handling the Press for their organisations.

Initially, it was thought the police officers would be easy to approach and interview. However, they proved difficult because they did not want their views to go on record. Of about ten officers who were selected on the basis of availability and their importance in operational matters, six finally agreed for recorded interviews on condition of anonymity. Each of the officers interviewed are at least of the rank of

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<sup>12</sup> It must be conceded here that the very approach of a city-bred, car-borne and press reporter-type Hindu, looking for a present or former insurgent to talk frankly was unable to inspire confidence among people in this category. It also appeared to be impossible for these people -- most of them barely educated -- to differentiate between a journalist or a researcher as also to make out his purpose of interview despite explanations. Most of them seemed apprehensive about talking to outsiders.

<sup>13</sup> See Chapter two on Punjab.



senior superintendents of police(SSPs).<sup>14</sup> All of them have conducted 'counter-terrorist' operations and formulated and executed policies concerning both 'terrorism' and its media coverage. At the time of conducting interviews, one was a SSP, one Assistant Inspector General (AIG), three Deputy Inspector Generals (DIGs) and one Inspector General (IG) of Operations. All of them hold crucial decision-making positions in the hierarchy of Punjab police and handle sensitive 'anti-terrorism operations' including intelligence, VIP security, and interrogations. All these officers have been chief spokesmen for the forces at district or higher levels, have received medals and honours, and have worked under considerable media glare.

Interviewees in the third category are seven senior politicians of the state who have held governmental or organisational posts. Two of them are members of the former ruling party (and now in opposition) Akali Dal -Longowal faction. (One is a former Home Minister of SS Barnala Ministry and the other a senior party office bearer.) The two ruling party members are a present Cabinet minister and the acting chief of the state Congress party. One of the former members of the Akali Dal (Badal faction) is a former Deputy Chief Minister who is now Leader of the Opposition in the Punjab Legislative Assembly. He is also a former Maharaja of the Patiala royal family of Punjab and now heads a break-away faction of the Opposition. The other Opposition leaders are the senior Vice President and the general secretary of the Akali Dal (Badal). The latter also happens to be the general secretary of the powerful Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, the supreme religious institution of the Sikhs responsible for managing the affairs of several religious places including the Golden Temple in Amritsar.

Among the journalists interviewed are four present and former chief editors and one each of executive and resident editors of the six papers content analysed. One each of these newspapers' present or former field reporters in Punjab have also been interviewed.

All the interviews are semi-structured. Questions were asked in conversation style and respondents were given enough time and space to explain their point of view and to deviate from the issue. On an average, each interview lasted for about an hour. The questions were divided into 'exploratory' and 'confirmatory' categories. After an open and 'exploratory' conversation, interviewee's were given a questionnaire to tick mark.

<sup>15</sup> Some questions are yes or no type while others contain a set of anticipated answer

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<sup>14</sup> Roughly equivalent to the rank of a County police chief in the UK.

<sup>15</sup> See Appendix 2, Questionnaire

options. The last option in each set was left open for the respondents to add their own answer should the suggested options fail to satisfy them.<sup>16</sup> Some of the interviews were conducted in English and others in Hindi and Punjabi languages but very often answers were given in two of three languages as is the common practice in India. Those in Hindi and Punjabi were later translated into English. At places, the usage of English by respondents are queer or weak but the meaning is clear. Such replies are retained in their original form.

Every attempt is made to view the participants of the conflict in the perspective of their overall political milieu. The earlier observation that most stories are originated by institutional sources who figure fairly high on society's knowledge and power hierarchy highlights the importance of sources in media's portrayals of violence. However, it would be wrong to undermine the importance of 'mediation' by journalists of events portrayed in news. The transaction between a journalist and his sources takes place through a constant process of both inter-personal and inter-organisational negotiations.<sup>17</sup> Journalists who report incidents of violence as well as their editors who decide editorial policies have been interviewed to study the journalists' own perceptions of violence related issues and their opinions about the credibility of various types of sources. Many of these sources, who have stakes in the conflict are also interviewed to give their impressions about the way the conflict is mediated by the press.

#### DESIGN OF THE CHAPTER:

The chapter discusses the perceptions of the four categories of participants, i.e., the insurgents and their sympathisers, security forces, politicians and journalists. The perceptions are further sub-divided into two categories each : (a) Perceptions about the media coverage, and (b) perception about the conflict. At the bottom of every quote from the interviews is a short identification of the interviewee which is a serial number and his rank / organisation etc. As discussed earlier in Chapter four, names of the interviewees are not being given here. Square brackets are used for explaining preceding words or expressions. The whole discussion is geared to address the following specific questions :

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid. Also see Chapters four.

<sup>17</sup> See Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1987). Also see the summary of Chapter three.

(a) How do the participants look at media's 'mediation' of the conflict ? What are their impressions, disappointments and expectations from the press including the individual papers studied ?

(b) How do the participants define and understand the conflict and what are their own descriptions for state and non-state violence in Punjab.

(c) What are media's most noticeable omissions about the portrayal and explanation of 'terrorism' and 'counter-terrorism' in Punjab.

## **1. PERCEPTIONS OF INSURGENTS AND THEIR SYMPATHISERS :**

### **(A) PERCEPTION ABOUT THE MEDIA**

The insurgents and their sympathisers share a basic understanding about emergence of violence in Punjab. They feel that the Indian state is discriminating against the Sikhs and the security forces are persecuting them. The overwhelming feeling is that the Indian media has been siding with state and the security forces and that in a liberal democratic set up they expect a bit of 'balance and 'fairness' from them. The insurgents and their sympathisers are clear about the importance of news media for communicating with their audience. Some feel they will be able to defeat the government at its own game provided journalists mediated the conflict impartially:

" We do not want to fight to die. We want the government to dismantle its repressive machinery and withdraw para military forces. Draconian measures such as TADA etc. should also be withdrawn. I am in favour of negotiations. If we convince you that our fight is genuine then you act accordingly. If you do it we would go satisfied. It should be done with the mediation of journalists and it should be telecast live on Television. We are not fond of getting killed."  
[Insurgent sympathiser, former AISSF leader (2)]

The former insurgents and their sympathisers view the issue of violence in a 'means and end' framework. They expect journalists to differentiate between 'sensible' and 'senseless' violence. " If the violence is senseless, the media should expose it," says a former bureaucrat and sympathiser. Tacit in the statement is the suggestion that a more 'sensible' violence ought to be viewed differently. The interviewee regrets that the media surrenders impartiality on the pretext of 'national interest':

" The basic thing is that the press should be with the side [where] justice is. For instance if I am able to show that the state is violating the written constitution in everything it is doing in relation to Punjab, then that perception should dominate the media. They should not compromise on that because [of the plea] that is in the interest of the country and in the interest of the world."  
[Insurgent sympathiser, former bureaucrat (5)]

Insurgents and their sympathisers lament that by siding with the state, the media has played a negative role in Punjab. Another former bureaucrat and now a sympathiser (6) of the armed movement has himself watched and handled media as a state civil servant. In his opinion the media have been "bought over by the government". One of the reasons he cites for this is that the senior officers are themselves corrupt and, therefore, tame journalists by giving them government houses and other facilities. There is a near consensus among interviewees in this category that journalists are in the government camp. Another former bureaucrat and insurgent sympathiser has emphasised how the state punishes those journalists who dare to fall out of the line.<sup>18</sup>:

" The state wants media to project its own point of view all the time. As a result media loses credibility. If they do not tow the line of the state and the police then they become the victims of the state. Since the state is more powerful, and there is a remedy for those who indulge in individual violence, the media succumbs to violence of the state. In Punjab particularly, and in India in general the media has been won over by the state by giving them certain perks which normally they would not get from the state... for instance houses and free telephones."  
[Insurgent sympathiser, former bureaucrat (5)]

A former insurgent (3) maintains more simply that the newspapers cannot run without being on the government side. Another former member of the underground organisation believes that some insurgent organisations were bribing journalists for publishing their statements. His opinion is based upon a personal experience when a journalist working for the pro-militant Punjabi paper asked him for money (He disclosed the name and location of a town-based stringer). He wondered if it was for monetary considerations that the statements of rival underground organisations were published more promptly in the papers:

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<sup>18</sup> It is argued in the conceptual framework that the state manages the media both by 'co-opting' journalists or through 'flak'. (Also see fifth filter of propaganda model in Herman and Chomsky, 1988.)

"May be many other Jathebandis [organisations] were paying the money. Some people were getting them [journalists] scooters and cars without number plates and then later journalists would get them regularised. All this for getting their statements printed. Their statements used to come out promptly. Ours used to be late and at times would not come out at all."

[Former underground insurgent (4)]

The admission only strengthens the common knowledge that the media in Punjab is not untouched by society's all pervading corruption. Even the allegation that a journalist can get a presumably snatched vehicle 'regularised' is not all that shocking. Such things may be uncommon but are not impossible. However, two other observations in the above admission contradict common knowledge about insurgents' influence over the Punjabi press. First, that the insurgents whose 'writ' was said to be running in parts of Punjab also had to 'please' journalists and secondly that even 'pro-militant' Punjabi papers often rejected or delayed insurgents statements and publication had to be 'negotiated' with local stringers.

Other interviewees have confirmed this phenomenon more indirectly. Instead of blaming a section of press for corruption, they have blamed it on the system. It is argued that the journalists can be 'purchased' (mostly by the government and security forces) because they get very little salaries:

"National and international papers give good salaries to their reporters. Regional papers' correspondents can hardly run their household with their salaries. The police department has big funds to lure them. They are taken around in official cars and planes. This changes their mentality and they give unilateral, one sided reports."

[Insurgent sympathiser, former AISSF leader (2) ]

The interviewee suggests that facilities for journalists and the press should be more statutory rather than arbitrary so that they are not easily tempted by government perks. He suggests insurgents should have a separate 'wing' to deal with the press. As a student leader, the respondent has been regularly meeting press reporters and admits that he knows many of them personally. He is also a supporter of better wages for

journalists. Another former student leader suggests that newspaper organisations, too, should not have to look for the state's discretion for allotment of newsprint etc.<sup>19</sup> :

"I want the journalists of Punjab to get good salaries. They should give the police version but it is their duty to give the versions of the people who are fighting against the state...(...) I think that the militants should make a separate wing to deal with the press. And the press people should reflect their viewpoints very carefully and truthfully "

[ Insurgent sympathiser, former AISSF leader (2) ]

"The press should be impartial. They should listen to every section with a positive angle. The press should remain free and fair and they should get their rights such as newsprint or other facilities automatically so that they do not come under pressure."

[ Insurgent sympathiser, former AISSF leader (1) ]

Their complaint has two sides. They feel that media not only serves the government but it also consistently ignores their point of view. One of their main complaints is that the media is so prejudiced against them that it never looks at the situation from their angle. An insurgent sympathiser and a former senior bureaucrat (5) who left the service in protest against the government's Punjab policy feels that he has not seen a single "Proper article in the media regarding the issues of Punjab's river water or language." The interviewees recognise that the newspapers are business organisations which cannot survive without making a profit. Some believe that more violence may mean more circulation for some papers. They do differentiate between the helpful Punjabi press and the hostile Hindi and English papers, and yet, concede that even the Punjabi press benefits by publishing their news :

" Newspapers also have some role in the situation.....They sometimes side with the Kharkus and sometimes with the police(...) Nobody releases statements of Kharkus, nobody publishes them..(...) *Ajit* publishes their statements. No other paper publishes their news. They pick up these things to sell more. People also read the *Ajit* because of this [kind of news]. Earlier many people in the villages would not take newspapers...but once all this work [political violence] started they started subscribing to papers. That is why

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<sup>19</sup> Although there are statutes in India covering the small, medium and large newspapers' rights to newsprint quota, a lot is left to the government's discretion. Several journalists and editors have argued that allotment should be completely decontrolled.

people read newspapers...whose [insurgents'] name has appeared today and whose had appeared yesterday. (...) I do not want to tell you things which are not true...Newspapers also have their role in it...In the middle of statements they...put photographs"

[Former underground insurgent leader (4)]

The former insurgent leader feels that by affixing "photographs in the middle of statements", journalists increase a news item's appeal. He looks back at some of his own colleagues' attitude to the news items appearing in the Punjabi paper *Ajit* about their own activities: "Everybody wants his name, his photograph and the name of his village to appear in the papers..." He explains quite simply the importance of violence related news from two angles: The Punjabi papers do not ignore it because they sell more by publishing news and photographs (In his view the readers, particularly in villages, started buying papers after the political violence started); They are important for the insurgents as they want to see their own or their organisation's name in print. Besides he also differentiates between the papers which publish and which do not publish the insurgents' statements.

Insurgents and their sympathisers feel that the international press has given them better coverage when compared to the Indian papers. It appears that their idea of friendly and unfriendly press is based more on their general world view rather than on their experience of reading different types of newspapers. Almost all the interviewees in this category found the international media more supportive of their cause. It is noteworthy here that out of the six respondents in the category of insurgents and their sympathisers, five do not read any foreign papers. The only exception is a former IAS officer who tick marked *The Times* as one of the papers he reads.<sup>20</sup> Most others listen to the BBC World Service radio and two of them watch WS TV. The general understanding is that the international papers are more sensitive to their cause :

"They ( the foreign press) have fairness, they do justice. They do not favour anybody. But like the Amnesty International they are not free to come here."<sup>21</sup>

[ Insurgent sympathiser, former bureaucrat (6) ]

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<sup>20</sup> See Questionnaire Appendix 2. The first two questions in the questionnaire are about the respondents' media consumption habits.

<sup>21</sup> Except for a brief period around the Army's Operation Bluestar in the Golden Temple, and barring very short periods, the foreign press was mostly permitted to cover Punjab. There have been more restrictions on the international human rights organisations such as the Amnesty International.

The impression of the insurgents and their sympathisers about the international press is contrary to the results of the content analysis. The British papers' coverage of human rights issues has been similar to the national press. It was seen in the content analysis that the two British papers have neither quoted more NGO sources nor have they used more human rights themes in their stories.<sup>22</sup> There is not a single instance of the two British papers quoting members of the human rights organisations or other NGOs as primary sources of news. Compared to this, all Indian papers have quoted them up to 7% times. The two British papers have not even quoted more non official sources as compared to other Indian papers. (Table 1.2). The same picture emerges while examining the distribution of Primary themes in the British papers. The percentage of Human Rights themes quoted by the British papers is very much in line with the Indian papers. The two British papers' coverage of 'struggle' themes which pertains mainly to the insurgents' struggle for independence and other positive themes is also minimal. It is just like any other Indian paper and is also drastically less than that of *Ajit*. (Table 1.5)

## (B) PERCEPTION ABOUT THE CONFLICT

Insurgents and their sympathisers have defined Punjab's conflict as a legitimate struggle. Discrimination of the Sikhs and the state's violence is cited as a bigger reason for the armed struggle than the quest for independence. All respondents have agreed that the armed rebellion is an honourable way to fight injustice. As already seen, some respondents have differentiated between 'justifiable' and 'senseless' violence. Personally each one has maintained that he is opposed to violence. At the same time each one has defended the need for an armed struggle, sometimes in the same breath while condemning 'senseless' violence, particularly of the security forces. Their support for the 'justified' violence of the insurgents is often convoluted and sometimes conditional:

"I do not support violence. My aim is that the goals should be achieved by non-violent means. Media should support the good things. Many good things have been done by the terrorists. They have eliminated certain corrupt persons."

[Insurgent sympathiser, former bureaucrat (6) ]

The respondent also makes it clear that his label (terrorist) is not for everyone. He has conceded that certain "bad elements" had entered the movement, who could be,

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<sup>22</sup> See Tables 1.2 and 1.5 of content analysis chapter.



perhaps, called by that name. Elsewhere in the interview he has called them "true fighters" and "martyrs" He has also called them "misguided" and "boys" but made it clear that they were all fighting for "achieving their homeland." His defence ("I do not support violence") collapses by his own praise for insurgents who, according to the interviewee, have "eliminated" certain "corrupt" people.

A former pro-insurgent student leader has clarified several times in his interview that he, himself stands for a political solution to the problem but has also maintained that "you have every right to take to arms if you do not get justice." [ Insurgent sympathiser former AISSF leader (1) ] A former insurgent who maintains that the "bullet is no solution for anything" said Moguls would not have left India if they could have ruled the country by coercion. However, having condemned violence *per se*, he justifies insurgents' violent actions in clear and unqualified terms. His only regret is that some "groups" deviated from attacking the "targets" and indulged in corruption. Nothing has been said about the killings of innocent people whereas attempts at "getting" the "risky targets" have been emphasised.

Q :Why was Tyagi<sup>23</sup> killed ?

A : "Because he decides the prices of farmers' produce. It [the killing] could have been based on a wrong information"

Q : Is it true that some highly protected people (such as a particular union cabinet minister in Delhi) whose names were on the [much publicised] 'hit list'<sup>24</sup> were never attacked because of the risk factor whereas ungarded, innocent civilians were always killed ?

A : "Attempts were certainly made (on the life of the union minister). Sajjan Kumar<sup>25</sup> was also attacked. But some groups made the mistake of wiping out

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<sup>23</sup> A senior bureaucrat and Chairman of the Agricultural Price Commission, responsibility for whose killing was taken by the respondent's organisation. His assassination was widely criticised in media reports because, among many other reasons, Mr Tyagi was considered to be a 'soft target'. His killing was part of a series of murders of those politicians and bureaucrats whose decisions had affected Punjab's Sikh farmers. The Chairman of the Bhakra Beas Management Board (the management of world's highest Bhakra dam situated in Punjab) was killed because his decision of not filling the dam's reservoir beyond a certain stage, and releasing huge quantity of water in the canals, was said to have brought floods in Punjab.

<sup>24</sup> 'Hit list' was a list of potential targets and was originally attributed to the supreme leader Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale but was later brought out by different organisations as well.

<sup>25</sup> A politician of the ruling Congress party who was allegedly involved in leading mob violence against the Sikh civilians after Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's assassination in 1984. Ten years after the riots, Mr Kumar is now being chargesheeted for offences related with rioting.

whole families. They also made their own houses [earned money through insurgency] (...) ...It was not our plan to kill the station director of Jalandhar TV station. It was never a policy of Babbar Khalsa. He was kidnapped only to put some pressure. He was only an employee. The aim was to put pressure to make him use more Punjabi on the radio in place of Hindi. But the high command did not know of the details of his killing. He was executed by the lower level people... Even the decision of killing family members of police officers was not taken at the high command level. Our control over these people had become loose..."

[ former underground insurgent (3) ]

Another student leader and insurgent sympathiser also reiterates that he was not in favour of violence but justifies selective killings. His reason is more emotional : " If the police men would take somebody's sister to the police station and subject her to humiliation then this [violent reaction] will be natural." While attempting to define terrorism, he emphasises that the killings should be "selective" rather than indiscriminate. Another sympathiser has underlined the importance of "actions" as a form of communication :

"I am not in favour of terrorism. It is a way of terrorising people. I am in favour of militancy. I think the targets [those to be killed] should be selected and the innocent people should not be allowed to be murdered. Terrorism is to kill [newspaper] hawkers and innocent people in the villages."

[Insurgent sympathiser, former AISSF leader (2) ]

"Best way to catch media's attention is to do actions.....Violence has been used by the state to suppress Punjab. The only answer to that is violence. And I also do not think that violence is not desirable in political activities. Violence has been used for political purposes ever since the world began and it would not be proper for me to say that no violence is desirable. (...) As a person I am against violence and would not like to be violent myself. At the same time I have to see the point of view of others. I think it is very violent of the state to drive people to violence. If they are driven to violence and they respond in a violent manner, I think it is justified and the state must look within and remove their grievances..."

[ Insurgent sympathiser, former bureaucrat (5) ]

It is clear from the above discussion that the insurgents and their sympathisers are not apologetic about using violence for political ends. They find it an honourable and justified way to counter the state's violence and injustice. Another point of complete agreement among respondents in this category is that the government should conduct negotiations with the leaders of the underground organisations. The second most important issues for the insurgents and their sympathisers after state's violence and human rights violations is the question of a political dialogue. Mostly, violence has been justified on the basis of discrimination but all the responses underline the solvability of the crisis :

"I do not consider anybody a terrorist. If you have been discriminated against. If your brother and father have been killed by the police or if you have been arrested without reason and if the police and the judiciary refused to listen to you... and if you pick up weapons to get your rights...It is not your fault. It is the government's responsibility to ensure that the people are not discriminated against...But if you do not get justice and take to arms, it is not terrorism."  
[Insurgent sympathiser, former AISSF leader (1) ]

Another sympathiser relates a personal experience when he was invited to Delhi as a student leader to participate in an all-party meeting on Punjab where he made his point forthrightly<sup>26</sup> :

"I took this meeting as a good opportunity to place our viewpoint. We were opposed at that time by the illiterate militants who thought we were traitors because we were going to talk to the government. We thought we were in the struggle for 10-12 years and it was for the first time that we got a chance to express our viewpoint. So we, 4-5 members of the AISSF, ignored all criticism and went there.... I spoke for about an hour. I said things about independence, and Khalistan. I said you deceived us and we are victims of your deceit. We saved your women but (you) did not spare ours. So I told them there that we had no option but to fight for Khalistan. Then all those who spoke after me spoke in the tone set by us. I said what have you shown us (the Sikhs) which could make us give up our demand for Khalistan ?"  
[ Insurgent sympathiser, former AISSF leader (2) ]

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<sup>26</sup> According to the interviewee, the all-party meeting took place on December 12, 1991 at the Parliament Annexe in New Delhi.

A former leader of an armed underground organisation feels that the armed struggle was only logical because of the state repression. He considers terrorism just a means for achieving political demands. But he also explains the reason for his 'anger' and admits that there would be no need to fight if the rights were met :

"Terrorism is similar to a family situation. If I ask for something but nobody listens to me; I demand again and again, but still nobody listens. I say if you do not listen to me then what am I doing in the family ? I would want to separate. Anger is naturally there. Terrorism is just a word. People want their rights. If their rights are met then there is no need to fight. So there would be no need for employing terrorism. We have called it terrorism. It is just a name we have given. It is only a fight for rights."

[Former underground insurgent (3) ]

Another former insurgent (4) who had 'deserted' the state police in which he worked as a constable prior to going underground believes : " Most important thing is the restoration of peace. Those unemployed should get some jobs and people like me should be reinstated in the police." A former bureaucrat (5) first criticises the state for discriminating against the Sikhs and violating its own statutes and then adds: " A real measure of autonomy must be given to Punjab...." and "...The constitution violations must stop..." Another former bureaucrat and insurgent sympathiser believes:

"I won't call what happened in Punjab in the past ten years 'terrorism'. It was a movement against high-handedness, injustice. [shows and reads out parts of a letters he has sent to the governor of Punjab]...What we [the Sikhs] do is Puja Akal ki, [worship only one god...] What we think is 'sarbat ka bhala'.. [wish everyone well] what we fight [against] is tyranny or tyrant... what we hate most is the traitor to the Sikh quom [community]...we do not forget the traitors...(...) How can we be won ? With love, respect and proper courtesy."

[ Insurgent sympathiser, former bureaucrat (6) ]

The insurgents and their sympathisers' own idea about the goal of their movement is considerably vague. They seem to be absolutely sure of who they are fighting against and why, but are not so sure about what they want to create. None of the respondents chose to talk about the form of government they are fighting for even though all of them have talked about independence or Khalistan. What emerges from vague statements is that they are in favour of a Sikh state. As argued earlier, it is certainly

not necessary for the modern 'terrorist' organisations to propose an alternative form of government and stick to it.<sup>27</sup>

All the interviewees have vehemently criticised the Indian government for violating its own norms of democracy, but they have not favoured democracy as a future form of government for Khalistan. They seem to believe that some kind of benevolent Sikh state can offer a more just and equitable society than democracy. A former insurgent (3) said that "hope for justice is always stronger in a religious society..." An insurgent sympathiser (5) has criticised the secular<sup>28</sup> foundation of the Indian constitution and emphasised on the need for adopting a communal (community-based) representation system. Religion comes across as the single most important factor in the struggle.

As discussed in the conceptual framework, religion offers a moral cover for non-state violence.<sup>29</sup> Besides, violence is also justified as a reaction against 'injustice' and 'repression.' Insurgents blame their violence on the security forces' 'illegal' and 'unjust' actions but the forces justify their excesses and 'unconventional' methods as a 'painful necessity' to counter the 'terror' of guerrilla warfare. The end result of this violence and counter violence comes across as an unresolvable vicious circle in which no side is willing to give up its excesses because of the other.

It emerges from the interviews of the insurgents that they have used both religion and a certain exaggeration of state-violence to justify their violent actions. This is not to deny that much of violence used in counter-terrorism was illegal and excessive. Exaggeration is reflected in gross generalisations by some of the respondents such as "we saved your women but you did not spare ours..." [insurgent sympathiser, AISSF leader (2)] Another interviewee [Insurgent sympathiser, former bureaucrat (5)] compares the questionable methods of counter-terrorism with the "crimes of Hitler and Stalin..." Yet another respondent [Insurgent sympathiser, former bureaucrat (6)] insists that anyone who is an Amritdhari or anyone who is young and a devout Sikh is tortured and killed in fake encounters or is made impotent.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> See Chapter three. Also See Juergensmeyer (1988)

<sup>28</sup> The norms of Peoples' Representation under the Indian constitution are independent of caste, class or communal considerations. However, political parties keep caste and community equations in mind while fielding candidates for elections.

<sup>29</sup> Juergensmeyer (1988) has argued that religion has historically used violent icons to counter society's violence and therefore it offers a perfect moral foil for non-state violence.

<sup>30</sup> 'Amritdhari' is used for those Sikhs who have been blessed with the Amrit (holy nectar). In other words an Amritdhari is a committed follower of the Sikh Gurus. He always sports long hair and never trims his beard or moustache.

The insurgents and their sympathisers argue that the police and security forces' are indulging in illegal activities and forming unlawful vigilante groups to wipe out underground insurgents. Some are convinced that the police are doing this to give bad name to insurgents. Another student leader and sympathiser believes that the police are now being forced to 'dismantle' such forces because "people have come to know." He alleges that the police used organised tactics like the "night dominance programme" in order to 'terrorise' people.<sup>31</sup> :

"Several policemen have been caught. It is very clear that these people belong to the governmental agencies. They want to create fear. Today they are totally exposed."

[Insurgent sympathiser, former student leader (1)]

" These cats, Bajarang Dal and kala kachchhawalas<sup>32</sup> are government sponsored bodies. They started a night dominance programme in order to terrorise the people. After that this phenomenon of 'kala kachchhawalas' started undeclared so that the people are so much terrorised that they ...stop raising their voices. It is a well known thing that all those picked up from villages are identified and taken by the 'cats'. They operate in civil dress and the police listen to them. (...) Even the government is being forced to dismantle this now."

[Insurgent sympathiser, former student leader (2)]

Another insurgent sympathiser and former bureaucrat says he personally knows some police officers who have been conducting illegal vigilante operations. His opinion is that it will take a long time before the state papers are revealed to the public and it is only then that the people would come to know the full extent of the security forces' illegal activities. He maintains :

"Basically these groups were the police groups....I know certain SSPs who have 20 to 30 to 50 people of this sort with them and they use them freely to do the killings. Those people and criminals... may be not professional

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<sup>31</sup> Night dominance programme was a anti-terrorism tactics which included movement of heavily armed night patrolling parties and erecting barriers etc. on major road junctions. Occasional ambushes were also laid at places declared 'terrorist infested' and overnight searches were conducted in selected villages.

<sup>32</sup> 'Cat' is a Punjab Police slang for a member of vigilante groups, Bajarang Dal is a militant Hindu organisation which sometimes challenges Sikh underground groups and 'kala kachhawalas' were unorganised gangs attributed to criminals who used to operate in the darkness and used to don black shorts.

criminals... but certainly those trained by the police and those provided immunity are involved... In several villages these people have been arrested and it has been found that they were policemen. Invariably it has come out in the press...It has been noticed that police vehicles come, leave these people in the villages, collect them back in the evening... Their modus operandi has also been very revealing. A person who comes to rob will rob just one or two houses. But these people have robbed entire villages. All houses one after the other. This shows that they were fearless...And police, army and state vehicles have been reported to be used by them."

[Insurgent sympathiser, former bureaucrat (5)]

"This violence is also sponsored by the police. There are police people, some of them Hindus, during the middle of night they would wear beards and don turbans and commit robberies and even rapes and come back to the police stations. This was the statement of a person detained illegally by the police at Ludhiana. He was brought to the High Court where he was released. The police have been indulging in cruelty, rapes and violence and torture. Even if they have employed (common) people they are doing it at the stance of, and in the leadership of the police."

[Insurgent sympathiser, former bureaucrat (6)]

## **2. PERCEPTIONS OF THE SECURITY FORCES :**

### **(A) PERCEPTIONS ABOUT MEDIA :**

Unlike insurgents and their sympathisers, the officers interviewed are much better trained at handling media. Most of them have admitted that the use of the media in security operations is often discussed at high-level meetings. The interviewees in this category are much more articulate. They have used their words more carefully and avoided generalisations. Unlike insurgents and their sympathisers whose most important expectation from the media is of 'fairness' and 'balance', the security forces expect them to be 'constructive' and to watch the 'public interest.'

The police officers have blamed the media for contributing to violence. They seek a more active contribution from them. Most officers recognise that the media has a great potential to help in their "war" against "anti-nationals" and "secessionists." They also feel that if a particular newspaper or a journalist is not helping the nation he or his

organisation is actually helping the 'enemy.' All of them have expressed the opinion that rather than newspapers, it is individual journalists who are 'good' or 'bad' and it is them who are to be 'handled' well by the security forces through a timely supply of 'perspective' and information. In the questionnaire, all police officers have maintained that stopping media publicity would not root out terrorism but they have also said that a 'responsible' media can help in reducing violence. Most officers favour a controlled system of information and seem to have ready prescriptions for the media. One of the respondents expected journalists in Amritsar to be more responsible than others because a large number of them have made their names out of the 'Amritsar dateline.' He is convinced that a controlled information is good not just for the police but also for society as a whole :

"I remember an incident took place around Kalisari<sup>33</sup> in which 30 people belonging to one community (Hindus) were killed and 28 injured. We ensured that none of the photographs of those killed came out in the papers and as a result of that, next day we did not have any problems. There was not even a curfew in the city. My perception is that if the photographs had appeared all over in the papers...that people have been slaughtered etc. I am sure hell would have broken loose."

[Senior IPS Officer, Punjab Police (7) ]

The admission suggests that it is possible for a police officer to 'ensure' that an event is not covered and photographs not published at least for a day or so. Many others have gone even further. Some have felt that less media coverage would partly solve the problem. Another respondent [Senior IPS Officer, Punjab Police (10)] blames the media for generating "romantic appeal" which lured young boys to commit 'terrorism.' He feels that Bhindranwale had been "built up" by the media and in the later phase of violence in Punjab, the media became completely dependent on terrorists for news. The police officers' perceptions suggest that they have indirectly favoured some kind of censorship :

"What we have experienced in the field is that certain people who do not deserve any cognisance are given coverage by the press, especially the semi-literate people...they feel encouraged to do whatever has led to their name being reported in the papers. I do not say that the media itself is creating terrorism...I think they play a side role...not a conscious role... in violence..."

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<sup>33</sup> A small town in Hoshiarpur district of Punjab where interviewee was posted as the SSP (district police chief).



[ Senior IPS Officer, Punjab Police (8) ]

"...terrorism definitely needs media and to a lesser extent media also needs terrorism or terrorists. But not in equal measures. If there is no media coverage...it would help in checking the spread of terrorism to some extent. So media is responsible for violence but to a limited extent..."

[Senior IPS Officer, CID, Punjab Police (9) ]

"...terrorism thrives on publicity. You stop publicity and you could suddenly find that ...terrorism gets a setback. Most of what the terrorists do is to hog the headlines. If that effort does not succeed and they do not get publicity the whole action is wasted...."

[Senior IPS officer, CRPF (11) ]

Most officers regret that the insurgents use media for communicating with their audience. The officers' own use of the mass media may be highly organised and functional, but they are unwilling to grant the same forum to their 'enemies'. Many officers have given reasons for this. Some believe that the insurgents should not be allowed to project "anti-national things" in newspaper columns. [Senior IPS Officer, Punjab Police (10)] Some others have felt that publishing their views would "ruin the society." [Senior IPS Officer, Punjab Police (8)]. An overwhelming feeling among the security forces is that it is a part of a responsible officer's duty to ensure that the media's role is constructive :

"...when I ...talk to journalist friends I ... tell them that I am sharing with you just to clear your perception. So that when you write you have these factors in your mind and you do not go by the perception of others... may be these things which I am sharing with you are not to be told or made public. But I am telling you only to correct your perception. That used to help a lot. The perception would change only if they come to know the other side of the picture. It has been seen that the security forces do not like to share [information] in confidence. Once that confidence is established between the two then the reporting also comes on correct lines...."

[ Senior IPS Officer, Punjab Police (7) ]

The officers place a great deal of premium on a good 'understanding' between a journalist and a police officer. All the interviewees have cautioned against compromising the "public good" for the sake of a good story. Some have

differentiated between "what is good for commercial purpose" and "what is good for the society" [Senior IPS Officer, Punjab Police (8)] while others have warned "what interests the public" is not necessarily in "public interest." [Senior IPS officer, Punjab Police (7) ] This dichotomy is necessary because of the security forces' belief that they cannot fight an "unconventional war" if they were to follow each and every point in the statutes. So a 'constructive' role would demand a journalist to keep quiet, more than occasionally, in public interest :

"Press has to be very clear about what is correct... in a larger society like India the press people also have some duty towards the nation and society...They should be meticulous about what would harm society in general. (...) Suppose there is an informer and we are trying to protect him and this is publicised. He may be shot dead...That could be an area of administrative discretion or convenience which should not be touched by the press in the interest of the general society. Similarly there are many other practical aspects..."  
[Senior IPS officer, Punjab Police (8) ]

"As an investigating police officer I would like the media to report certain facts so that the public knows this is what is happening and this is what the police is doing to curtail it. If I want to curtail some of the details of the investigations they should be co-operative for a healthy relationship if the police department, as a system, says that this particular item should not be published because it would hinder our investigation then the media should cooperate."  
[Senior IPS officer, CID, Punjab Police (9) ]

The areas of discretion mostly pertain to human rights violations and use of "unconventional" policing methods. For that a tacit understanding is considered to be a precondition. Some officers prescribe a regular and 'friendly' contact between an officer and a journalist:

"It is a sensitive thing and it basically depends on the two people [the officer and journalist] and how they understand each other and ... trust each other ...if they understand each other mutually then I do not think any aberration should crop up. I think that is the ideal relationship. For that the first thing is they should meet and interact frequently. Secondly they should understand each other's points and their limitations and avoid violation of the mutual trust."  
[ Senior IPS officer, Punjab police (8) ]

The above opinion comes from an officer who believes that the journalists should also talk to the insurgent organisations "think tanks." He feels that a good journalist must know the viewpoint of the "terrorist" organisation but at the same time he should exercise extreme restraint in publishing it because it might be "detrimental" for society. Another officer takes this viewpoint further by suggesting that an ideal journalist would go to the extent of sharing this information with the security forces, of course in wider "public interest" :

"If I want to penetrate a gang it won't be easy for me but for a media man it will be much easier because the terrorists want publicity; they want their weaponry to be seen; they would like their organisation to be known and they would like their firepower to be known to everybody. So it would be easier. Similarly for us also it would be helpful. If somebody [a journalist] goes and sees it then my feeling is that a co-operative behaviour can be helpful in fighting and combating terrorism."

[Senior IPS Officer, CRPF (11) ]

A high point for Punjab's police officers was Operation Blackthunder-II, a siege of the Golden Temple in Amritsar conducted in May 1988. Unlike the earlier Operation Bluestar in 1984, the Blackthunder operation was conducted under complete media glare.<sup>34</sup> In the end, about 40 armed insurgents who had been holed up inside the temple's sanctum sanctorum, surrendered after a ten-day siege. Most officers think that the operation was such a grand success because of information management:

"If you remember there was an operation, Black Thunder II, where media and the police were combined together. In that we were able to project live coverage of what was happening... Live coverage was given nationally. People who had the faith that these people [the insurgents] were something of semi-gods, came to know that they were just criminals... We could show from the beginning to the end [the whole operation on the TV]. I would say a healthy relationship between the media and police can solve half of the problem ...It is healthy. Of late the media and the police are working together and I think [in] most of the operations we have carried out in the last one year, the media has been with us. We have seen [to it] that a correct image of the police is projected to the media... People wanted to see things [operations] like 'night

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<sup>34</sup> See chapter two for details of operation Bluestar.

dominance' and other operations etc. We have taken care that the mediamen, even the TV and newspaper men were with us."

[Senior IPS Officer, Punjab Police (10)]

#### (B) PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE CONFLICT :

The security forces tend to believe that if a section of society is not with the security force, it must be with the enemy.<sup>35</sup> They look at the fight against terrorism as a 'war'. Terms like "big war", "war" and "battle" and martial labels for the insurgents are a part of the security forces' vocabulary.<sup>36</sup> Some police officers feel they are unfairly made to face the bullet on one side and media onslaught on the other. An interviewee contrasted an officer's "sense of duty" and responsibility with a journalists' lack of accountability :

"...when you wear a uniform people think it is your duty to give away your life whereas in media [for journalists] that duty is not there. They make a compromise. As an officer I have to take precautions. I too have parents and children. But I won't make a compromise because that is beyond my duty. But the media concede."

[ Senior IPS Officer, Punjab Police (7) ]

"Terrorist is only hungry for his publicity. He knows if he kills a top police officer it goes across all over the world. He becomes a hero overnight. In the initial stages these boys who were baptised in terrorism were told to shoot the police only. And they were given the ranks of Lt. Generals the other day."

[Senior IPS Officer, Punjab Police (10)]

Police officers do not agree that a journalist has to necessarily look at both sides of a story. They work on the premise that the police are fighting the nation's war against external and internal enemies. Their moral high ground (it is a part of their duty to lay down their lives) and a certain sense of persecution (they are more vulnerable for attack than any other state apparatus or section of society) combined with the great responsibility on their shoulders (fighting the nation's battle) enables them to believe that their excesses are only aberrations. Most officers have maintained that whenever

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<sup>35</sup> It has been argued in Chapter three that a polarised society, in a situation of terrorism and counter terrorism, learns to look at their surroundings in a polarised way.

<sup>36</sup> Story judgements in Chapter five shows that the conflict often gets defined as a 'war' and the security forces' actions are justified because they are fighting a war.

they come across a 'rare' case of a 'mistake', suitable punishment is immediately given :

"... In fact the govt policy [was] if somebody has been killed by the security forces in the discharge of their legal duties, the bereaved family would get the same compensation as is given to the terrorists' victims. On that I had made a suggestion to the government that the two things are not comparable. I said the security forces, by the virtue of being disciplined forces, stand on a higher platform than the terrorists. So if we make a mistake the bereaved family should get double the compensation. Aberrations would remain there but it is not state terrorism..."

[Senior IPS Officer, Punjab Police (7)]

It is surprising that the police officers are equally nonchalant about the whole issue of vigilante violence. The insurgents and their sympathisers had insisted that the police officers' illegal activities such as forming vigilante groups were so routine that they were public knowledge. Most officers are completely unperturbed about admitting that they used certain "unconventional" methods :

"Terrorism itself is an unconventional crime. So some kind of slight 'unconventionalism' is necessary for getting information for planting of sources and the like. I am not aware of any such group which existed... but many a times terrorists fight amongst themselves. Suddenly you would [come to know] that a group of terrorists is split into two so information about one group is passed on by the other. So any force would like to make use of it "

[Senior IPS Officer, CRPF (11)]

"In fact there comes a stage when you have to adopt certain methods which help you in solving the problem... You have to employ 'cats' or conduct cat operations... that is done because of the crying need of the hour... keeping the general objective in view ...that is... maintenance of law and order"

[Senior IPS Officer, Punjab Police (12)]

It is common for the officers to justify 'unconventional' methods because of the 'extraordinary' situation. But many officers have justified such actions on a completely different ground. They believe that a police officer has to be 'innovative' to be able to collect crucial information. Some other officers have gone to the extent of describing

their extra-legal methods as an unwritten part of normal policing which can be justified by the results :

"Traditionally for the collection of intelligence, different methods have been used... We do put in some people in their [terrorists'] ranks to get information. We used it right from the beginning. If you remember a case in 1983 in which A P Pandey [a senior officer] was injured...that was one case in which the information was 100% correct and which we could get because we had someone very near to that man [the attacker]. It was very difficult at that time to infiltrate into them. This was a traditional method of collection of intelligence. We used it by infiltrating [our] people there. It is nowhere in the books. You have to device your new methods to do that. "

[Senior IPS Officer, Punjab Police (10)]

"As investigator you have to go for under-cover operations even for handling a big gang of drug mafia or I would say [to crack] a big gang of auto thieves. But the scale is different here; risks are more. So here the under-cover operations are a little better organised and you have deployed better trained and motivated people and intensity and extensiveness of the operations is much more than what you deploy to catch a gang of auto thieves. And again you are using some means which you morally can't justify unless you achieve results. So they would make propaganda out of it."

[Senior IPS Officer, Punjab Police (9)]

Another interviewee is vehement in his denial that "cat" organisations had been formed in an organised fashion. He says it was left to the officer concerned to use such operations. He relates a personal experience when he used a "small time terrorist" who had been arrested earlier to identify members of underground organisation present in a congregation which was taking place inside the Golden Temple complex in Amritsar. The officer admits that he was responsible for coining the term "cat" not by design but by default :

"...it was in 1985-86 when there was an Akali ministry who thought they would be able to handle these boys politically...They were not very decisive in taking action against them. In those days terrorists used to come in these congregations in great numbers and the security forces pressure was not there...In those days we came across some small time terrorist who we questioned and he knew about certain terrorists and whom he could recognise. What we did on a day of a congregation, we were around the Golden Temple,

we took him camouflaged in a van. We attached one of our security officers and asked him to spot the terrorists. (...) That day this fellow was there. One senior officer asked me what is happening. I told him in my spontaneous reply : We have got a cat and want to see whether it catches a mouse or not. From that point we started calling them cats."

[Senior IPS officer, Punjab Police (8)]

The officer regrets that such a good method of catching 'terrorists' had to get "adverse publicity." He said later he wanted to change the name "cat" with something like "engineer" or any other word but it did not work. In his opinion the bad publicity which followed such operations was not merely because of mishandling by some officers. He says it was also due to police officers' own "loose talk" and to an extent due to officers' "professional enmities." Most officers have maintained that the impression about these vigilante organisations going out of hand was absolutely baseless. One of the interviewees alleges that some 'terrorists' were using police type vehicles and uniforms for their operations in order to give a bad name to the security forces:

" It is not that you have formed vigilante groups which were moving around on their own and killing people. It was not like that.... This is a propaganda which will always suit the other group, the terrorists. When I was in Jalandhar [posted as SSP] in one case the KCF<sup>37</sup> chief, Kamaljit, consumed cyanide, we recovered a number of assaults [AK-47 rifles] along with police uniforms and red light [used on top of police officers' cars] from his possession. The problem is when a crime is committed in police uniform, it is directly attributed to the police."

[Senior IPS officer, Punjab Police (7)]

In the analysis of content it was observed that the security forces often like to describe the conflict as a war which suits the state in several ways.<sup>38</sup> Just as the insurgents try to justify their acts because of the security forces' excesses and on exaggerated stories of official violence, the forces try to justify their own violations of law on the basis of the "unconventional" warfare of the 'enemy' :

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<sup>37</sup> Khalistan Commando Force (KCF) is a well-known and organised underground organisation of Punjab.

<sup>38</sup> See explanation, justification of official violence in Chapter five.

"...what I have experienced is that ultimately it becomes a fight between security forces and the terrorists. Public becomes a spectator. Other authorities of the government are also reduced to the status of spectators. It becomes a battle in which one side or the other is having upper hand. Now the security forces have been given a role to control militancy.(...) Now how to keep them under check [when] sometimes it becomes a war of nerves....That becomes a war. In that kind of circumstances even slightly unjustifiable actions of the security forces have to be owned...you can't disown them. Because in such a war the good and bad actions of the security forces cannot be seen in isolation."

[Senior IPS Officer, Punjab Police (8)]

The police officers have a complaint against other democratic institutions, particularly the judiciary and legislature who fail to rise to the occasion. Against the allegations of "fake encounters" and "state terrorism", they have maintained that the worst violators of human rights are the insurgents because they violate an individual's (victim's) right to exist. They want society to realise that the human rights of innocent civilians are more important than those of the 'killers' and 'criminals'. Their plea is that anyone who might become a threat to others' lives is best eliminated :

" ....One has to think of the people who have killed 200 or 500 people. What are you going to do with them ? If those people are outside they would kill 5,000 more...The kind of killings we have had in Punjab have not happened anywhere in the world. In just 15 days they killed 350 policemen and their families which is not done anywhere in the world."

[Senior IPS Officer, Punjab Police (10)]

For the police officers, war metaphors not only furnish a handy justification for human rights violations, but are also a matter of belief. They believe that apart from their normal policing duties, the state is using them to fight a war against the invisible enemy who has all the advantages. Because of the unpredictability of guerrilla attacks and a relatively high number of security forces casualties (compared to any normal policing operation) counter-terrorism is understood to be best fought on 'war-footing.' It also makes it easier to justify the granting of extraordinary powers to the police.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Impositions of special measures such as the 'Disturbed Areas Act', Internal Emergency and dusk-to-dawn curfews with shoot-at-sight orders etc. are conventional war-time 'internal security' measures. They have all been imposed in Punjab after the emergence of insurgency at one time or the other.



One thing to be kept in mind is that the police officers do not describe their counter-terrorism as a war purely as a matter of design or conspiracy and without any conviction. It was evident during the interviews that the security forces are convinced that a war is on. The police conduct their anti-terrorism operations jointly with the army and other special armed constabularies. From the use of armoured vehicles to the gun-carriage funerals accorded to the uniformed victims, the situation is full of martial symbols. Even the occasional appeals and public resolves made by top politicians are similar to ones made during wars. What completes the war scenario for the security forces officials is the element of external aggression. The interviewees believe that their 'war' has become particularly tough because of Pakistan's involvement in supplying arms, training and shelter to the insurgents. Some officers have talked of Pakistan's support in direct terms while others have used such indirect terms as "our friend across the border" or "the remote control is outside the country" etc.

Barring one officer who talked about the deeply hurt feelings of the village youth, all others have denied any emotional justification whatsoever to insurgents and their sympathisers. The officers have described them as trigger happy criminals or as highly motivated subversives. They are convinced that the 'terrorists' do not have a legitimate viewpoint worthy of getting published in a newspaper. Most of them do not differentiate between different types of insurgents. "A terrorist is a terrorist" is the common refrain :

"...if a small group is ruining the entire society and their view point is published in ditto...that can be very detrimental for the existence of the society itself. (...) Terrorism is basically use of extreme measures of violence against the establishment to scare and to get things done by hook or by crook. It is all symptoms of terrorism that they kill people, they threaten people, they intimidate....These are all their modus operandi. "

[Senior IPS Officer, Punjab Police (8) ]

"...such groups are very mobile and they are very secretive about their movements and they adopt all kinds of new methods. We have seen them making human bombs, they have been ambushing security forces, they have been doing all sorts of deceptions.(...) They had a very scientific and meaningful system of operation."

[Senior IPS Officer, Punjab Police (8) ]

"They were all terrorists. A man who terrorises people by just shooting innocent people is a terrorist (...) You call them by any name. A terrorist is a terrorist whether you call him a 'kharku' or a Singh or even if you call him a nationalist or loyalist... You might give them any name but these people are from the same stock."

[Senior IPS Officer, Punjab Police(10)]

The only valid differentiation security forces seem to make is between 'terrorists' and their sympathisers. A sympathiser comes from a fairly large section of people "who were hurt and who felt that they had been wronged." And it is this feeling which was "exploited by the terrorists and their political supporters outside the country." The label "terrorist", in an officer's opinion, is a 'role model' in the village who gives the false impression of doing something for the country or the family. The officer [Senior IPS Officer, Punjab Police, CID (9)] expects media to expose such people and adds: "what they were doing were simply actions of dacoits, thugs and exploiters..."

The police officers have used terms like "misguided" or "exploitable material" or simply "unemployed youth" for those vulnerable to join the insurgents' ranks. Hence people like shelter providers (voluntary or forced ), unemployed youth, vulnerable sections, victims of police violence, and even religious people are grouped together as 'sympathisers.' There is another set of labels for a sympathiser who, according to the police, crosses the threshold of sympathy and becomes a more active supporter or member of an underground organisation. Individually, the officers often use words like "trigger-happy", "criminals", "murderers", "thugs" and "fundamentalists" etc. but collectively these names are referred to as "terrorists". One common label simplifies things for a message sender. It is like a symbol or an icon which is understood by all. It is easy to identify and its stock connotations justify big operations, especially when they go awry. The usage serves a particularly good 'tautological' purpose.<sup>40</sup>

Tony Trew has come across a similar process of over-lexicalisation in his study of tabloid coverage of London carnival violence. He argues that words like "hooliganism" "thugary" and "gang-fights" occurring in an article about black youths' role in the Nottingham Carnival violence denotes processes and not participants.<sup>41</sup> Words like "terrorist" and "sympathiser" may be seen in the same light. They conjure up a picture of how political violence takes place. On the contrary, words used by the

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<sup>40</sup> Halliday (1976) calls such use 'over-lexicalisation.' One of the examples cited by Trew from the English tabloid press is : "They were all terrorists. A man who terrorises people by just shooting innocent people is a terrorist (...) You call them by any name. A terrorist is a terrorist ..."

<sup>41</sup> Trew (1979) .

Punjabi paper *Ajit* and some opposition politicians (such as "misguided youths", "our own boys", "those disillusioned with the system," or simply an organisation of "young people") draw up another picture of a perpetrator.

### 3. PERCEPTIONS OF THE POLITICIANS

#### (A) PERCEPTIONS ABOUT MEDIA

Politicians attach more significance to Punjab's political dispute rather than the armed conflict. To them the conflict, violence or terrorism are all offshoots of the political dispute which happens to be central to their own, albeit divided, action plans. References to electoral politics, democracy and their own understanding of the dispute are integral to their interpretation of the conflict. A majority of politicians have treated media with a little suspicion. The general perception of politicians -- irrespective of their political affiliations -- is that the media sides with their opponents, though the Opposition politicians are more unhappy with the media than ruling party members:

"Press is never liked when it supports the government. It is natural. It is everywhere. Only those papers would increase their circulation and would be liked by the people who would criticise the government. There is nothing wrong in that. It should also be desirable in a democracy. "

[Cabinet Minister, ruling party, Congress-I (15) ]

" It is wrong to say that the media is tilted towards the ruling party. Independent reporters do not do that...Generally the government is criticised. Look at what is going on now. They write more about the opposition than us. Similarly in the centre, the opposition gets more prominence. There are only a few people who can be bought but not the entire media. Good journalists do not get sold out."

[Acting Chief of ruling party, Congress-I (16) ]

The ruling party chief's view that good journalists do not get sold out is not shared by non-ruling party politicians. Even the more moderate Akali Dal (Longowal faction) which was in power in 1986-87, disagrees with this view. In fact the opposition politicians use similar expressions as the ruling party members in the above quotes to say the contrary :

" I would say that the media's attitude towards the regional parties, especially the minorities, has been a little too unjust. If the same problem arises somewhere else it is portrayed differently... Ruling party, through its capacity to please individuals, gets news planted. It happens everywhere. They control the policies of a paper to a very large extent through the favours they can dole out. It is nothing new."

[Senior leader, Akali Dal - Longowal (17)]

"They [the government] give media newsprint, advertisements, electricity connections... There are labour laws which are in the government's hands. Media does not enjoy the respect they deserve. How can they work freely then? Ruling party takes more attention of the media by force or by giving them monetary gains. The whole system is corrupt... "

[Deputy chief, Akali Dal -Badal (13) ]

The overwhelming opinion of politicians of all affiliations is that the media has succumbed to the 'fear' factor in Punjab. The government politicians blame underground organisations for scaring journalists while the opposition feels that newsmen are more afraid of the police. The general impression is that the journalists are by and large biased because in Punjab's political atmosphere they cannot be free and fearless. The ruling party politicians feel that this fear is generated by the insurgent organisations while their opponents believe it is created not by the insurgents so much as by the security forces. The following two are the contrasting positions :

"Media has worked in a very trying situation. They have worked in very adverse conditions. Media has tried to present the true picture but there was so much fear on the reporters' minds that they have been writing whatever they [the terrorists] had wanted them to write... They suffered if they refused to listen to them. That is why the media has not been successful in giving out the correct picture"

[Acting Chief of ruling party, Congress-I (16) ]

"Basically objective reporting is what we all want. But I am afraid there have been cases in which...I won't name the journalists because they have been under pressure from the police... I know in Punjab how the police made people turn around by twisting tails. How many people would stand up against that ? When they have complete powers to do what they want. They can convict

anybody, they can make you into a sympathiser of any Mr A, B or C and catch you under the NSA<sup>42</sup> or something else that you would never ever know."  
[Leader of the Opposition, former minister (19)]

"I have come to know that the police people would bulldoze or snub people [journalists] in a press conference. They would publicly humiliate journalists and nobody would stand up. Once you humiliate, hoodwink or throttle a journalist, the next time he would ask a question, he would change the sense or the tone of his question."  
[Senior leader, Akali Dal-Badal, (14)]

Punjab legislative Assembly's leader of the Opposition, who believes that reporters buckle under pressure from the police, is furious with the editors as well. He authored a famous "Open Letter to the Panthic Committee" which criticised it at a time when the media was following the committee's code of conduct.<sup>43</sup> The letter had been written at great personal risk. Barring two dailies, all national papers refused to publish it on the plea of possible reprisals against their journalists in Punjab. He found it outrageous because some regional papers including the *Tribune*, with dozens of correspondents in Punjab, published the letter ( its reporters were later threatened by the insurgents) :

"When I wrote that open letter against the Panthic Committee, all the national papers refused to publish it. Only papers which took it up were the Telegraph and the Statesman.<sup>44</sup> The *Hindustan Times* and the *Times of India* refused to publish. They said our chaps in Punjab would be threatened. If the *Tribune* which was coming out from Punjab could do it, they had no business not to do it. But they didn't."  
[Leader of the Opposition, former minister (19)]

The politicians look at the media completely differently from the insurgents or security forces. Their major complaint is that the media has given their rivals more coverage than them. Those with the ruling party believe that the national media has done a splendid job while the opposition leaders are critical of them. Similarly, most opposition politicians have praised what they have called the international media's fair

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<sup>42</sup> National Security Act, which , along with TADA is used against insurgents and terrorists etc.

<sup>43</sup> See 'Insurgents' code of conduct' in chapter two on Punjab.

<sup>44</sup> Both Telegraph and the Statesman have headquarters in Calcutta. Both papers have only one Chandigarh based reporter each in Punjab unlike other national papers which have correspondents and stringers in Amritsar and other cities. Their circulation and noticeability is also limited in Punjab.

portrayal of human rights issues. The ruling party politicians, on the contrary, counter this position by saying the international media have only encouraged anti-nationals by presenting a 'wrong picture.' The dominant view among the politicians is that the media has sided with their adversaries -- whoever they are -- because of fear, greed or ignorance.

#### (B) PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE CONFLICT :

The politicians locate the reasons for Punjab's unrest in India's overall political system. Even the ruling party politicians concede that the Central government has made mistakes which need to be corrected for a long term solution. The opposition leaders squarely blame the Central Government (or the 'Centre' as New Delhi is popularly referred to) for most problems in Punjab. The argument is simple. The centre ignored peoples' justified demands which created the long lasting dispute giving rise to alienation which in turn led to violence.

It is noteworthy here that the insurgents and security forces do not consider Punjab's political dispute with the centre and neighbouring provinces as one of the most important reasons for political violence. The politicians, however, believe that the alienation which led to violence was a direct outcome of the centre consistently ignoring these demands. Some ruling party politicians have raised issues such as a threat to 'national unity' by 'external interference' etc., which were also the security forces' main concern. But there is a difference between the two perceptions. The politicians, unlike the security forces, have mentioned the external aggression factor essentially in conjunction with, and often secondary to, other reasons :

" They [the people of Punjab] had some demands which the centre did not concede. They got piled up over time and a stage came when it gave rise to problems. Terrorism escalated when Mrs Gandhi got shot and the riots followed in its wake. The riots incited some people and then Pakistan gave them encouragement. Later it became a big problem.

[Acting Chief of ruling party, Congress-I (16) ]

The head of the ruling party is forthright that 'terrorism is "Pakistan's gift to India." However, when he cites reasons for emergence of terrorism in Punjab, he talks about the unfulfilled demands and the vulnerability of riot victims first and Pakistan's encouragement later. Another ruling party leader and Cabinet minister feels that his

party's rivals, the Akalis, created the conflict by 'using' the educated youth. In his view, the Akalis are to be blamed more for the conflict than Pakistan is :

"First reason is that these Akalis did not get the rule [failed to win elections]. There is nothing else... Punjab has more water than it used to have... Crops are better... I would give you all the statistics. People are more prosperous than they were...(...)Unemployment is nothing. The Akalis somehow roped in the educated youth and used them. Pakistan also saw that the best way to fight India is to distribute weapons among those who are eager to wield them. We have fought three wars with them in the past. Now they are fighting with us."  
[Cabinet Minister, ruling party, Congress-I, (15) ]

The element of the 'foreign hand' is low on the ruling party politicians' agenda when compared to the security forces but the opposition leaders simply dismiss it. They concentrate more on the political blunders and motivated mistakes of the central government. Besides, they cite more social, political, economic and psychological reasons for violence than things like threat to national unity and external aggression. Violence has evolved out of the political atmosphere of Punjab, is the opposition politicians' answer to the external aggression theory. For them the main culprit for creating and spreading violence in Punjab is the central government. This is also the main difference between the insurgents and opposition politicians. The insurgents and their sympathisers have identified the security forces as their foremost enemy while the opposition politicians have treated security forces in a different perspective. They have lost no opportunity to criticise and condemn the security forces, not as their first enemy but mostly as an arm of their first enemy, the Central Government :

"The reasons of political violence are political. It did not start with violence. Nor did violence come from outside in Punjab. Violence has evolved from the political atmosphere of Punjab when all legitimate means failed. The [Central] Government entered into an agreement with Longowal, even if it was inadequate and unsatisfactory for a section of people, it was not implemented. If the govt can go back on its written word without translating one comma or full stop into action, what kind of credibility will it have ?"  
[Senior leader, Akali Dal-Badal, (14)]

"Punjab's people are peaceful. We fought several peaceful movements and held morchas.<sup>45</sup> The Indian government destroyed all peaceful values. They [the people] lost all hope and faith. That is how extremism is created as a natural course of life (...) They humiliated us, bombed our place of worship, dishonoured our women and burnt our holy scriptures. All this led people to take to violence..."

[Deputy chief, Akali Dal -Badal (13) ]

The issue of elections is central to most politicians. They broached the issue of elections while criticising or blaming their adversaries for various things. Opposition politicians have charged that the centre divided them for electoral gains. One of them believes that New Delhi sabotaged a very successful mass movement of the moderate Akalis with the help of the more radical Sikh politicians :

"Two lakh fifty thousand people presented themselves for arrest, you can imagine the might of the movement [during one of the Akali morchas], and the government was doing nothing. It is proven fact that Sant Bhindranwale was used against the Akali morcha. They would [the govt] make him speak extreme language which the Akalis had to match. So the situation kept on deteriorating. The government's vested interest was that they had wanted to blow up the Sikh angle because the Sikhs were in a microscopic minority. They wanted to write off Punjab but at the cost of Punjab they wanted to win political elections in the rest of India and they won."

[Senior leader, Akali Dal-Badal, (14)]

"Violence during the riots of 1984 also led to violence because the [central] government committed violence in an organised fashion. They killed the Sikhs and their children. They dishonoured their wives and burnt down their shops... The government tried to escalate violence in order to suppress the real movement.... They did it to exploit the Hindus. They got a new slogan to rule the country : that the country is breaking apart, separatism is raising its head and only we can save it. They encouraged violence and this slogan in order to gather the Hindu votes."

[Deputy chief, Akali Dal -Badal (13) ]

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<sup>45</sup> 'Morcha' is used in Hindi and Punjabi for 'battlefront'. Politicians, however, use it for a particular type of mass mobilisation or picketing in which thousands of people participate and sometimes court arrest.



The opposition politicians are of the firm belief that the anti-Sikh riots in 1984 could not have been possible without the Central government's connivance. They believe that the violence in Punjab has politically suited New Delhi. Some have said that their first enemy, the centre, kept violence alive in Punjab in order to win elections elsewhere in the country. A moderate Akali politician alleges that New Delhi went to the extent of conniving with the terrorists and Pakistani intelligence agency to keep the moderates out of power. In his opinion the moderates' defeat and the Congress party's success was achieved by ensuring low turnout of voters :

"The terrorists put up a notice that anybody going to vote would be killed and many people were killed also. And this job was being done by the police also, to thwart the anti-militant Akalis from contesting the elections. So it was one fine occasion on which all agreed, The ISI of Pakistan, the terrorists, and the Indian state, that the non-extremist Akalis who were contesting the elections should not be allowed to contest and the people should not vote for them freely. They all agreed in that and it resulted in a great success of the Congress party in Punjab."

[Senior leader, Akali Dal -Longowal (17)]

The politicians have looked for more long-term rather than short term reasons for violence and have analysed India's overall political system for identifying the malady. References to elections elsewhere in India and identification with the demands of other ethnic minorities are also common. They have cited examples from other political conflicts in India as well as from international politics. The Indian government's diplomatic and trade manoeuvres have been cited as reasons for the international community's apathy towards the Sikhs' struggle. Some have blamed international business interests for affecting the Western governments' resolve against human rights :

"International press and fora raised their voices in conferences. But they did it in a very limited way. It was so because the government would break relations with such countries who would pick up such issues...Russia was their [the Indian state's] friend. China as such supports the line of state and party supremacy. ...Europe and America used to do something but they got involved in business deals.(...) Their role was also not up to the mark because they watched their business interests. They made a balance in their power struggle but did not fulfil their duty... to us."

[Deputy chief, Akali Dal -Badal (13) ]

The opposition politicians constantly talk about the struggle against their biggest enemy, i.e. the central government but they do not support violence. It is true that they have not gone out of their way to condemn insurgent violence but in their own way they have differentiated between terrorism and mass movement. Some politicians have condemned the acts of terrorism but not the perpetrators. A senior opposition leader believes that terrorism initially attracts a large number of 'idealists' but later it degenerates. He does not hesitate in calling some of the terrorist crimes cold blooded murders but calls the perpetrators "our own boys" who have got "misguided." His own impression is that terrorism cannot succeed :

"The mass movement can succeed even if it takes long time. The Irish (IRA) have not succeeded; the Tamils in Sri Lanka have also not succeeded; the PLO has not succeeded. Finally it had to make a compromise by recognising Israel. They finally had to come across the table. No terrorist outfit [in the world] can compare itself with the PLO because it had the recognition of the UNO and the Muslim states and the states like India and all. The Irish, the Tamils, the Sikhs, or the Kashmiris haven't that kind of recognition. I personally think that terrorism harms its own people most."

[Senior leader, Akali Dal-Badal, (14)]

In the questionnaire filled in by the interviewees, all but one have tick marked "terrorist" as one of the labels they would use for the insurgents. Some have chosen a second label which is either "militant", "freedom fighter" or "criminal". Most opposition politicians have termed "violent actions of the security forces" as "state terrorism." It emerges from the interviews that the opposition politicians speak a language which is very similar to that of insurgents but they stop short of condoning political violence. Even those who have said they understand why an individual picks up the gun, do not support their actions presumably because it disrupts the very democratic system under which they hope to come to power. Personally each one of them is or has been under threat and except one interviewee, all had 24-hour security outside their offices and homes.<sup>46</sup> Out of a large number of Sikh politicians killed in terrorist violence, many are those opposition leaders who have, ironically, been extremely critical of both central government and the security forces.

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<sup>46</sup> At the time of the interview heavily armed security forces men were guarding the houses or offices of all but one politicians interviewed.

The opposition politicians are particularly vulnerable to insurgent violence because they share their political constituency with insurgents, both as leaders of the Sikh community and as future candidates in elections. Personally few can deny that they are not under threat but they still speak in a language which is extremely critical of the state. Most significant thing here is that the opposition politicians adopt a drastically different strategy of countering terrorism. The most of them undertake campaigns against human rights violations in their areas, particularly when the police allegedly execute insurgents in any extra-judicial manner. Their approach is to counter the politics of 'terrorism' by talking of democratic and political settlement together with attacking the security forces for violations of civil rights. When asked a pointed question about political violence most politicians admitted what happened in the past ten years cannot be described in any other way than as terrorism and that it should be dealt with firmly :

"No law breaking can be tolerated and the people who have gone beyond the provisions of the law have to be dealt with strongly...there is no denying. But the larger chunk, that is the Sikh opinion, the Sikh thought, also needs to be won over for a satisfactory solution. That is where you require the political and economic action.(...) I think what essentially went wrong ...is that it was forgotten that the police and the security forces were there to enforce the law... They started dealing with the situation in the most arbitrary manner. It was basically terrorism on both sides with the poor people being crushed in the middle."

[Senior leader, Akali Dal -Longowal, former Minister (18)]

The politicians opinion about the vigilante violence is also a mixed one. The ruling party members have defended the police while the opposition politicians have condemned such activities as violations of human rights. It is significant here that the opposition politicians' stand on vigilante violence is not so strident as it is against other human rights issues. While talking about vigilante violence many of them have called it a method employed for a limited time to get results while some others have even extended it conditional support :

"Police is not at all responsible for all this. This is a wrong propaganda created by the opposition parties and all. A fraction of the police can be bad and such people would get punished for it. But all these 'kala kachchhawalas' and all are thugs. they have been caught several times and it has been proved that they are thugs....they give a bad name to the police..."

[Acting chief of the ruling party, Congress-I (16)]

"When the motive is only to infiltrate to get information, as a citizen of India who wants peace, I would be supporting it. But the moment they step beyond that, and for illegal gains they commit excesses on the citizen who is innocent or on the citizen disproportionate to his crime.(...) If the man honestly tells the police people, they have no reason to doubt the veracity of his statement. He is not an accomplice, but still [such] people are being shot in fake encounters. I can't support that."

[Senior leader, Akali Dal -Longowal (17)]

"... all is fair in love and war. This is something they had to do to break those groups. As far as I am concerned it is OK with me because I think that those groups deserve to be broken the way they have been..."

[Leader of the Opposition, former minister (19)]

However there are other opposition leaders who do not agree with the above perception. Some have opposed it on the ground that these groups had been given all the freedom to loot people at will:

"In SGPC one individual got his hair chopped. His name was Santokh Kala. When I became the secretary, our financial position was not very good. I inspected the salary register...and found that he and his wife had been taking their salaries in advance. The managers used to deliver their salaries to them at home. I telephoned the SSP and told him that I have stopped his salary because you have allotted him entire Amritsar for plunder...."

[Opposition leader, Akali Dal - Badal (14)]

What emerges from the politicians' interviews is that they want the police to be firm with those who are killing innocent people. They give the impression that they are willing to look the other way if the police are highly selective about using their extra-legal methods but they wouldn't give them a *carte blanche* for it. It is obvious that the politicians and security forces mean different things by dealing with the law breakers 'strongly'. The dividing line seems to be that the security forces would like to trespass the legal boundaries in their 'war' against terrorism whereas an opposition politician would want them to perform that daunting task within the legal system. It is noteworthy that most politicians have condemned both individual and state terrorism. The leader of the opposition who said it was 'OK' by him if the police created

vigilante groups, would want the police to be firm with terrorists but in an extremely 'discreet' way. Another politician is forthright about admitting that the police should chase the actual culprits (and perhaps take stringent measures against him) but not their family members :

"I do not support terrorism, but I do not support state terrorism either. And the state terrorism which they indulged in here is catching hold of women and parading them nude in police stations or catching hold of the whole families and making them to sit there till somebody comes there... Or taking over their homes... I have known cases where crops have been burnt, godowns have been looted. Even knives and forks have been pinched from peoples' homes... That only gives respectability to terrorism really. This is basically what those chaps [insurgents] are doing... these fellows are doing in uniforms. There is no excuse for that."

[Leader of the Opposition, former minister (19)]

"The government should neither capture and kill people [extra-judicially execute] nor should they target the family members of the 'Kharkus.' ...It is never against their family members...It happens all over the world that the culprits are chased but their family members are not bothered. But here things are different. They would harass his mother, sisters, wife etc. and torture children. Because of all this only they have taken to this wrong path. It is there from both sides. The situation is not good. It has gone so far only to spoil things. It has misrepresented our political struggle."

[Deputy chief, Akali Dal -Badal (13) ]

#### **4. PERCEPTIONS OF JOURNALISTS :**

##### **(a) PERCEPTION ABOUT THE MEDIA :**

Most journalists believe that there is a considerable difference between the national and regional papers' perceptions of the Punjab situation. Journalists working for the national papers and Punjab-based English papers criticise the vernacular press for partisanship while those working for the vernacular papers blame the local rivals ('Hindu' *Punjab Kesari* or 'Sikh' *Ajit*) for one sided reporting. All journalists have defended their own papers' editorial policies and those working for the vernacular papers have criticised their rivals for stoking political violence. Journalists have also

thrown some light on their professional practices and their relationships with their sources.

Editors and reporters of Punjabi paper *Ajit* and the Hindi paper *Punjab Kesari* have taken two extreme positions on almost all issues while those working for the regional English paper, *Tribune*, have followed a middle path. The *Tribune* journalists' perception comes closer to that of the national and not the regional press. It is discussed in the methodology that the readership profiles of the three regional papers are different.<sup>47</sup> The views of their journalists seem to be consistent with their broad readership profiles. Journalists of the regional papers are of the opinion that a section of the media has contributed to violence in Punjab. They have all agreed that their own papers have very little to do with encouraging violence. Newsmen of the two vernacular papers have blamed each other while those of the English papers have blamed both of them for inciting violence :

" The local press has been divided..... Many of the press people cannot swallow an Akali govt. A section of regional press would make a lot of hue and cry over small things [if an Akali govt comes to power]. But with a congress government, their attitudes certainly differ. National media has also given support to Beant Singh government. But unlike the regional press it is not because of communalism. It is because of the situation."

[Managing Editor, Punjabi paper *Ajit*, Jalandhar (20)]

" It is unfortunate that a sizeable section of non-Punjabi press has become the main supporter of the police. They said that the police are fighting a national battle and therefore they should be supported. They supported every action of the police. Ignored the issues of Human rights. Because of this, the other section of the press ( Punjabi Press) got against the police. As a result copies of many papers, both national and regional, were seized."

[Chief of Bureau, Punjabi paper *Ajit*, Chandigarh (21)]

The Hindi press charges that its Punjabi rivals have been giving undue publicity to ' anti-nationals'. The Chief Editor of the Hindi paper, *Punjab Kesari*, blames the entire press for encouraging terrorism but he believes that the regional Punjabi press went

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<sup>47</sup> See Chapter four. In the absence of authentic readership profiles, the newspaper editors' views are being taken as a rough guide to the composition of readership. Editors and journalists working for these papers believed that the Punjabi paper *Ajit* and the Hindi paper *Punjab Kesari* have predominantly Sikh and Hindu readers respectively while the readers of the *Tribune* include local elite from both communities.

out of its way to further the terrorists' demands. He is of the firm belief : "The media should not have any good relations with those who do not recognise the *Nishan, Bidhan te Pradhan* of the country."<sup>48</sup> He offers examples to prove that the Punjabi press was allowing itself to be used by insurgents :

"You would be surprised to know that a woman once said [in an advert] that 'it has been alleged that I am a prostitute. I am not doing prostitution but I still assure my militant brothers that in future they would not come across a complaint of this nature against me.' Some papers were carrying such clarification. I wouldn't like to name them but this one was a Punjab based Punjabi paper"

[Chief Editor, Hindi paper *Punjab Kesari*, Jalandhar (22)]

"Terrorist is somebody who would spread terror. There should be no dealings with them. Unfortunately our Sikh press has had relations with them. They always called them 'Kharku' and they made Bhindranwale a venerable figure."

[Amritsar Correspondent, Hindi paper *Punjab Kesari* (23)]

Journalists working for the Hindi paper do not mind the allegation that they have gone out of the way to support the security forces. They believe it is the 'right thing' to do. Their own charge is that a section of the Punjabi press blew up anti-police stories out of proportion and gave undue publicity to what they call the terrorists' dictates :

" Media should praise all good deeds of security forces. If the Army or the CRPF or the BSF does something good we should praise them. (...) . ...If we have good relations with those who want to dismember the country, we would naturally publish their point of view, which would give them publicity. This publicity would encourage terrorism which would lead to people's loss and the nation's loss. So in my own opinion it is not a good thing to have good relations with those who are not with the nation."

[Chief Editor, Hindi paper *Punjab Kesari*, Jalandhar (22)]

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<sup>48</sup> 'Nisan, Bidhan te Pradhan' literally means 'Emblem, Constitution and the head of state' which was presented as the main demand of the Sikh by some militant politicians and insurgent leaders. In the late eighties the phrase became very popular in media reports. Some interpreted it as a slogan for independence while others saw it as a plea in favour of more autonomy for Punjab. It was, however, left vague whether this arrangement was desired within the framework of the Indian constitution or outside it. So the Editor of the Hindi paper is using the insurgents' terminology to suggest that they are anti-nationals.

The Hindi paper's Editor charges that the Punjabi press exaggerated the police role in vigilante activities which gave them bad name. He is happy that the rest of the media more or less ignored such incidents which, according to him, was the "right thing to do." Both the Chief editor as well as the Amritsar correspondent of the Hindi paper are convinced that those who are against the nation should not be given publicity in the newspaper columns. The Punjabi papers, however, differ with this position and feel that the insurgents had a point of view which deserved attention :

"...I think that if the terrorist organisations, all terrorists, feel that they have to influence the society, they have to go to the people in any way, they have to deliver some message to them. They have to tell their objects to the people. They will naturally go to [that] media who sell and whose voice people believe. (...) ...here, the boys could reach the regional papers easily and they knew the language in which these papers are being published. So they could tell us about their hearts in their own way. [ they could pour out their hearts to us] They could tell us about their struggle. Our correspondents could meet them easily. As far as coverage was concerned, our paper, language papers and especially the Punjabi papers did a marvellous job."

[Managing Editor, Punjabi paper *Ajit*, Jalandhar (20)]

"Extremists all over the world have some political ideology. Press should--- if not take this ideology to the people --- inform the people what exactly the militants are saying and doing. So that the people can take the decision whether it is right or wrong. Their misdeeds should also be reported."

[Chief of Bureau, Punjabi paper *Ajit*, Chandigarh (21)]

The English paper *Tribune* does not agree with either side and criticises both for partisan reporting. The paper's chief editor says his first priority in Punjab was to "win the Sikhs back for India" which neither of the vernacular papers were doing. He spells out how he attempted to follow his top priority: " I did it by taking a pro-liberty, pro-democracy policy with concern for human rights." He criticises the national media for echoing the government's line on human rights issues but he finds the language press one sided. Similarly, his paper's Amritsar correspondent feels that the regional press was divided in everything it did and the reporting by the national and international papers has also been far from ideal :

"The regional press is peculiarly divided. I would not call the Hind Samachar press the nationalist press because they were party to it.... Their line was



whatever happens the government has to finish the militants. I would not attribute higher causes to them. The other paper *Ajit* began as a sensible paper earlier... *Ajit* had to lean on the other side because I think Jalandhar [the newspaper's headquarters] is an unsafe place for a moderate paper. There was also a commercial success attached to its leaning..."

[Chief Editor, *The Tribune* Chandigarh (24)]

"English press of Punjab has been responsible, they have reported the facts faithfully. But the Jalandhar press [both *Ajit* and *Punjab Kesari*] has not been so responsible. Pro-Hindu or anti-Sikh press gave violence prominent displays while the pro-Sikh press tried to suppress it. Nobody gave any background of why violence started. The regional papers have been giving backgrounders but in their own partisan ways. The international press were interested in making it a case of Hindu Sikh fight. UPI once made a simple bank robbery story into a Hindu Sikh relationship story."

[Amritsar Correspondent, *The Tribune*, Chandigarh (25)]

The Delhi-based national press is believed to be more secular than the regional press in any of the 22 provinces, including Punjab. Owing to a nation-wide readership it has to be relatively more detached from local issues which often have sectarian roots. Journalists working for the national papers have criticised the local press in Punjab for partisan reporting. Many editors have compared the press in Punjab with the regional press elsewhere in the country to plead that the regional press is highly 'involved' in the local issues and is, therefore, more 'partisan' everywhere in the country :

" The regional press, as I see it, is unfortunately divided on language and communal lines. You had a certain section of the press which felt that the militants were right. There was another section of the press which felt that the security forces were right and the militants were entirely wrong."

[Amritsar correspondent, *Indian Express* and *The Times of India*, Delhi (30)]

"The sympathy factor is there. For instance *Ajit* had more sympathy from the Sikh population...But simultaneously there was a lot of gain for *Punjab Kesari* also in terms of circulation and in terms of more money coming in; in terms of many other advantages.(...) Hind Samachar and *Punjab Kesari* group gave more biased coverage, in its editorial comments, leader articles and there was a deliberate effort on their part. *Ajit* initially was a part of this very game but

gradually it tried to come out of it. But it came out only to some extent and not completely."

[Chandigarh correspondent, *The Hindustan Times*, Delhi (28)]

"Having studied the subject a little bit I would say that things became a bit complicated in the regional newspapers partly because of the communal divide. There were newspapers which sought to favour a Sikh line, other newspapers sought to favour a Hindu line. This was not quite the case for newspapers in Delhi."

[Chief Editor, *The Times of India*, Delhi (29)]

The Punjabi paper *Ajit*'s editor says he has no complaints against the international papers though he thinks their coverage of security forces violence could have been better. Hindi paper, *Punjab Kesari*'s chief editor feels that the international media gave undue publicity to terrorism and covered issue of human rights violations in a one-sided manner. *Tribune*'s editor has supported this view and called the Western journalists attitude to human rights issues in Punjab 'lopsided' and 'myopic.' Journalists working for the national papers have even stronger views on the international press. Most of them feel that the journalists working for the top Western papers neither understand nor wish to understand the problems related to sectarian violence in India. Some have looked at the coverage of human rights issues by the international press from the angle of India's territorial integrity :

"International press romanticises. Their concern about human rights is absolutely justified. But it must stop where the advocacy of human rights begins to turn into an advocacy of redrawing state boundaries and national boundaries. Today the worst form of irresponsibility in the world is that those who advocate human rights think they are God's messengers on earth and, therefore, have a heaven sent right to tell everybody what to do."

[Former chief Editor, *The Hindustan Times*, Delhi (26)]

"International press is much more sensation seeking than the Indian press. Issues in India are complex. It is difficult for a foreign reporter who is not into the intricacies of the domestic situation and [who is] looking for simplistic shorthand answers and communicating to a reader in the west who is clueless to these bizarre things which even domestic journalists find difficult to understand...A lot of things are slurred over and a somewhat inaccurate picture of things in Punjab have been portrayed."

[Executive Editor, *The Hindustan Times*, Delhi (27)]

The impression of the Indian journalists, particularly the editors of the national papers, is that the international press does not go deep into issues of violence. Some have discussed the Western tabloids to run down the Western press. It is interesting that all the important national papers in India have been modelled on the lines of the Western press. They follow almost all systems of working and hierarchy of the Western papers. Besides, all these editors are regular consumers --and occasional contributors -- of the Western newspapers. It is significant that the editors of three different national papers have criticised the Western journalists for their lack of understanding as well as for their lack of sensitivity to the anxieties of a young democracy like India:

"International press has been ignorant and sensationalist. A number of foreign correspondents do not relate to India...do not empathise with India. [they] Treat them as exotica. Most of them have no understanding of what is happening in the country. They are not interested in seeing the history of a region. I am very disappointed with the foreign media's coverage of Punjab. There has been no attempt at all to go into the roots of alienation which produced violence. No attempt at all to understand the anxieties of the Indian state. Condescending, contemptuous. Typical of White attitude to the coloured people... They have contempt for the militants, contempt for the government and contempt for the people."

[Resident Editor, *Indian Express*, Delhi (31)]

"I would say that in the case of the newspapers abroad it is not just a question of detachment. It is very often a question of feel of a certain historical perspective and above all of certain perspectives about nationhood. A newspaper which is London based or New York based reporting in Punjab does not think it fit to bring in these considerations of Indian nationhood, of the challenges to the Indian nation; of the challenges to a certain secular ideology which sustains the nation..."

[Chief Editor, *The Times of India*, Delhi (29)]

## (B) PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE CONFLICT :

The vernacular papers look at the conflict from the 'Hindu' and 'Sikh' perspectives while the national press views it from the perspective of the Indian state. In the final

analysis, the national papers' perspective comes closer to the 'Hindu' rather than the 'Sikh' perspective because of a shared concern over unity and integrity of the country as well as the threat of external aggression. For the 'Sikh' press the issues of civil liberties and human rights come before national unity. But Punjab's Hindi press and India's national press are wary about extending their unqualified support for these issues. Because of more common ground between all other Indian papers, perceptions of journalists working for the Punjabi paper *Ajit* stand out. The same phenomenon was observed in the content analysis chapter in which *Ajit's* patterns of source, agenda and theme selection were drastically different from those of all other papers. This difference is also reflected in the perceptions of the journalists working for these papers. For instance for the *Punjab Kesari*, it is important to view terrorism from the angle of national unity. The paper's chief editor says "We exist only until the nation exists." It is equally important for the Hindu press to look at political violence as heinous rather than ideological acts so as to deny them moral high ground:

"Terrorists in Punjab [were those who] killed people of all sects, all parties, and even robbed their own shelter providers, raped their women. They talked about dismembering the country, robbed and killed innocent people.

According to me this is the definition of terrorism."

[Chief Editor, Hindi paper *Punjab Kesari*, Jalandhar (22)]

A terrorist, according to the Hindi paper's perception, is not only someone who indulges in criminal acts but is so inhuman and untrustworthy that he robs his shelter giver and rapes his women. There is no place for political perceptions or ideology in a terrorist's scheme of things as the Hindi papers would see it. The Punjabi paper *Ajit* obviously does not agree with this perception. To the chief editor of the paper the perpetrators of political violence were people who felt "their identity was in crisis..." Emphasis by this section of journalists is on 'injustice' and 'disillusionment' for which the onus is on the system rather than on the individual responsible for violence:

"Terrorism to my mind is the violent reaction of an organisation of young people who are disillusioned with society. Here most of the young people were disillusioned with the policies of the government and with the system and they wanted to change it. So every young man does not react in the same manner. Some people may react otherwise. It has been the history of Punjab that people take up arms if they feel injustice has been done to them."

[Managing Editor, Punjabi paper *Ajit*, Jalandhar (20)]

Earlier also the *Tribune* editor has been found to be in agreement with his counterparts in the national press about national interest being above everything else. But unlike journalists working for the national and regional Hindi press, those working for the *Tribune* recognise that the insurgents have a great deal of following among the common people and that they have been wronged :

"The militants represent a stream of thought accepted by a sizeable section of the society. I think in a democracy, the man who wants to kill democracy also has a voice."

[Chief Editor, The *Tribune*, Chandigarh (24)]

" I belong to Punjab, the militants could be our own children, or distant relatives. we would naturally have a soft corner for them. So much of discrimination has taken place with Punjab that it was quite possible that I could have taken up an AK-47."

[Amritsar Correspondent, The *Tribune*, Chandigarh (25)]

The national media's approach to Punjab's conflict is shaped by a shared understanding about India's unity and integrity and concern about dangers to democracy posed by terrorism and religious 'fundamentalism.' Almost all editors and reporters working for the national press have defended the Indian state and in turn the security forces for fighting with their backs to the wall. The journalists working for the national press are certainly more coherent in supporting or opposing an issue even though the *Hindustan Times* is seen as a pro and the *Indian Express* as anti-establishment papers. Perhaps the whole national media, barring odd aberrations, works and responds on a common basic premises which becomes clear in the following perceptions:

"As far as we in the *Times of India* go, we have made a series of assumptions... One is that the territorial integrity of India cannot be questioned. This goes against the constitutional order and, therefore, anyone using violence to secede from the union is somebody that we should be editorially opposed to. The second assumption is that there is no place either for secession or for violence of any kind in a democracy... Third assumption we made was against using religion to promote political aims. This is true not only of Punjab but we have been equally critical of all political formations which have sought to use [religious] politics to further their electoral gains. So our general approach to the Punjab problem is also conditioned by the misuse that the Khalistani

terrorists were making of religion...The fourth assumption we made was that in Punjab as in Kashmir, Pakistan was conducting in fact a low intensity war and we had to keep that international dimension in mind when we wrote our comments and also I suppose when we did our reporting."

[Chief Editor, *Times of India*, Delhi (29)]

"So once you resort to terrorism you put yourselves out of the normal laws of the country because you flout the normal laws. Then if you expect the normal laws of the country to apply to you then you can't eat your cake and have it too.(...) I believe that there is no justification for terrorism in a society where there is a scope for a constitutional change of government. (...) Sikh fundamentalists... provided a focus to the resentment and this led to the secessionist tendencies.(...) Pakistan's role is of course there. Earlier grievance was Kashmir, then it was Bangladesh.(...) This is directly anti-Indian. ...For a long time the army has been trying to create trouble...Pakistan has also become a major source of drug smuggling. That also played a major role.

[Resident Editor, *Indian Express*, Delhi (31)]

External threat and the involvement of Pakistan is something on which all Indian papers agree. The national press and Punjab's Hindi press have seen it as one of the most important elements in the emergence of insurgency while the regional English paper *Tribune* has seen it as one of the tertiary reasons. The Punjabi paper *Ajit's* Chief Editor stands out of the whole set by stressing that Pakistan's involvement may be there but it is not so important as domestic reasons :

"I do not think Pakistan has a major role here. Pakistan gave them shelter and arms but that was not the basic reason for that [insurgency]. The main thing the government could do is to restore the respect and pride of the Sikh community. It is not a very easy job..."

[Managing Editor, Punjabi paper *Ajit*, Jalandhar (20)]

Journalist's divisions over what should be media's attitude to insurgents and security forces are clear. As seen earlier, the journalists working for the regional papers *Ajit* and the *Tribune* have called the insurgents 'our own boys.' *Ajit's* reporters have favoured carrying their views in the paper despite some differences with them. In clear contrast, the regional Hindi press and national press have called them as 'anti-nationals' and have pleaded that making their views public could be against national interest. Journalists working for the *Tribune* have agreed that the national interest

should be the media's guiding principle but have differed with the national and Hindi papers over human rights issues:

"On several occasions, it has become necessary in the national interest to support them [the police] and we have done that...For instance: sometimes, when a big terrorist is caught and our correspondent comes to know of it, they [the security forces] ask us not to publish it today...Several times they said to us, when some Pakistanis had been caught, please do not publish their names in the national interest because we want to conduct inquiries. If these names are published we would naturally have to show them [show the arrests on paper]. So this is such a thin line...at times you have to use your discretion. So in case of some big blast or a terrorist incident you do it in national interest..." [Chief Editor, Hindi paper *Punjab Kesari*, Jalandhar (22)]

"The security forces want to snatch all the things in this scenario... the main thing is that the police have not become answerable to the government and the authorities. And if you let loose the police people, they can do wonders and they are doing it. If the government wants to do something to improve the situation the first thing they should do is to make the police answerable." [Managing Editor, Punjabi paper *Ajit*, Jalandhar (20)]

"It is state terrorism [official violence]. I think terrorist and state violence are two sides of the same coin. One particular community is being terrorised now [by the police]. The terrorists did the same with the whole society. It is also true that democratic means have never won against a determined terrorist. You need a terrorist to suppress a terrorist movement." [Chief Editor, The *Tribune*, Chandigarh (24)]

If the *Punjab Kesari* reporters feel that security forces are fighting the 'nation's battle', those working for *Ajit* think they are driving away minorities from the national mainstream. If *Ajit* staff members feel that the insurgents are ordinary youths wronged by the system, *Punjab Kesari* scribes feel they are misanthropists who cannot be trusted by their own sympathisers. The views of the *Tribune* journalists fall somewhere in between the two extremes. They consider the bulk of terrorists criminals but also warn against human rights violations by the security forces. Journalists working for the national press feel that terrorism cripples the democratic institutions, including the judiciary, which more or less forces the state to adopt

repressive methods of combat. This section of the press has also looked upon the central government as a vulnerable system with its strengths and weaknesses.

## CONCLUSION :

An overwhelming majority of participants in different categories believe that the media is to an extent responsible for violence in Punjab. All the four sections of interviewees have shown a basic understanding of media's political economy and have cautioned against commercialism. The insurgents, security forces' officers and politicians have agreed on the following points: (a) The press is divided in social, political and communal groups and different papers side with different political formations; (b) Media's functioning is far from ideal and a lot can be done to improve it; (c) Press reporters cannot withstand extreme pressure and often give in to coercion (which is defined differently by different participants.) The journalists have defended their own papers and criticised other sections of the press for negative and questionable journalism.

Insurgents and their sympathisers are convinced that the Sikhs in India have been systematically discriminated against. They are not very sure about what kind of state they are fighting for though they are sure who they are fighting against. All of them have closely associated the Indian media (except the Punjabi press to an extent) with the Indian state and its counter-terrorism efforts. Insurgents and their sympathisers, who have claimed that media often misquoted them and whose news is seldom published, do not take media coverage for granted. Instead, they expect 'balance' and 'fairness' from journalists. The two most important things they want from the media are to reflect their points of view and not to be misled by the state's propaganda. They have also blamed some 'bad elements' within their own ranks for certain ills of the movement. In effect, the respondents have conceded that the insurgents are badly divided and their organisations' functioning is far from ideal. Respondents in this category do not consider media publicity the most important goal of their struggle as their adversaries, mainly the security forces and officials, make it out to be. Most of them have considered media coverage necessary but not the most important goal of their actions. Most insurgents and their sympathisers have talked of continuing their struggle not because of the media but in spite of it.

It is certainly ironical that the security forces and politicians who are virtually handed over the task of defining the conflict, are comparatively more critical of, and have



more expectations from, the media.<sup>49</sup> The official discourse depends a great deal on the warfare paradigm which has national interest and the threat of external aggression central to its argument. The police officers expect journalists and media organisations to be 'responsible' and act in 'national interest' and 'public interest.' They expect a lot more from media than they are able to get with the help of their unique advantages discussed in detail in the conceptual framework and content analysis chapters.<sup>50</sup> In a 'war-like situation' they want individual journalists to be more 'discreet' and to appreciate the extreme pressures they are working under. The interviewees in this category are very perturbed about some journalists who judge everything from the 'narrow' and 'unbending' legal perspective (which, incidentally, includes much of civil liberties themes).

The politicians have concentrated on Punjab's political dispute. Their discourse revolves around a 'dispute paradigm' which has an inbuilt element of solvability to it. They have looked at the armed conflict and political violence from the angle of Punjab's long standing political problems with its neighbouring provinces such as distribution of river waters and redrawing of provincial territorial boundaries etc. Their own action plan is political and election oriented. For them the root of violence lies in Punjab's political dispute which neither insurgents nor the security forces are capable of solving. They feel that the problem of political violence could be solved once and for all by removing those political reasons which have created it and they expect the media to help them in this cause. However, they are disappointed to note that the media invariably sides with their political rivals.

Journalists themselves are divided on regional and national lines. The regional press is more divided than the national press. The Punjab based regional papers fall in the groups of vernacular and English press. The vernacular press is the least common denominator of the whole set as the Hindi and Punjabi language papers represent two extreme opinions on just about everything. The vernacular papers' dichotomy is, by and large, representative of the Hindu-Sikh divide in Punjab. The kind of differences seen in the opinions of journalists working for the Hindi, Punjabi and English regional papers in Punjab as well as for the national press in Delhi are indicative of a 'pluralist' system of press in India. The journalists' individual perspectives are different and often clashing. This is amply clear in the different journalists' perceptions of the

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<sup>49</sup> It has been observed in the analysis of the content that up to more than two third of all primary sources who define the conflict were either official sources or institutional non-official sources. The process of how they define the conflict is also clear from the media's characterisations and labels in the content analysis chapter.

<sup>50</sup> See Chapters three and five.

conflict and the permutations and combinations of their agreements with the participants. However, what seems to cut across the whole spectrum of this pluralistic opinion is the paramount status of the security forces as the most important and most frequently quoted sources of violence-related news.

#### MEDIA'S OMISSIONS :

The analysis of above interviews offers an opportunity to compare and contrast media's portrayal of violence in Punjab against the perceptions of the conflict's participants who represent different interest groups in the society. It also helps to identify the most concern-generating issues in Punjab, independent of the media text. What is described as an 'omission' is an issue or perception which is of great significance and concern for the participants of the conflict but which does not get reflected in the newspapers' coverage.<sup>51</sup> Two most stark omissions of the media about violence in Punjab are : (a) Solvability of the crisis; and (b) Vigilante violence and security forces' questionable methods.

It is clear from the statements of the insurgents and their sympathisers that all the respondents have negative reasons for justifying violence. If a "real measure of autonomy is given to Punjab" or if they are "treated with love, respect and courtesy" and if peoples' rights are given to them, there would be no need to employ terrorism, is a common refrain. Statements which stress on "injustice, high handedness or tyranny" or which assert that "we have been victims of your deceit" along with "what have you shown us... (so that we) give up our demand for Khalistan ?" indicate that violence as a strategy for achieving their goals is negotiable.

It is significant here that each one of the respondents have tick marked the "need for political solution including dialogue" option in the questionnaire as one of the most important issues in Punjab. Apart from each one of the insurgents and their sympathisers interviewed, several politicians and journalists have also supported the option. Many others who have considered other options more important in the questionnaire have mentioned negotiations a good possibility of solving the problem. Second most important issues are "Punjab's dispute over water and territory" and "corruption and misrule."<sup>52</sup> Punjab's political dispute concerns neighbouring provinces of Haryana and Himachal Pradesh as well as the Central government. Interviewees

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<sup>51</sup> The omissions are only those issues which have been either completely missed out by the papers or whose coverage has been hugely disproportionate to their importance. Marginal cases have not been included under omissions.

<sup>52</sup> See appendix 2. Questionnaire.

who have concentrated on the dispute want it to be settled by some kind of multilateral agreement among the contending parties.

As reasons for violence, Punjab's political dispute and corruption are qualitatively different problems rather than say a war of independence. What is common among the above three issues -- i.e. political dialogue, Punjab's dispute and corruption -- is that they highlight the solvability of the crisis. Politically, these issues have a different texture than issues like 'Khalistan' and 'independence.' Anyone stressing the importance of a war of independence and inevitability of Khalistan is also suggesting that Punjab's crisis is a long drawn out battle and it would continue to take a violent course. On the contrary, those who blame political reasons for the violence also underline the solvability aspect of the problem. In the analysis of the newspapers' content these three issues, along with some others, are covered under 'political themes'. A total of 23 individual themes are joined under this macro theme concerning Punjab's everyday politics. It is noteworthy that the political themes are given very high priority by the participants in their interviews and yet they have received very little coverage by the papers. A possible reason for the omission could be that the solvability paradigm clashes with the war paradigm that the security forces and the state so strongly support.

The analysis of content showed that the issues of human rights and vigilante violence are given very limited coverage by the papers studied. In the process of coding and the subsequent analysis it was realised that hardly any papers covered vigilante violence, though there was limited coverage of human rights issues. Except odd references in the Punjabi paper *Ajit*, all national and international papers have ignored vigilante violence.<sup>53</sup> The regional Punjabi paper *Ajit* and the English paper *Tribune* covered human rights themes better than other papers but their coverage of vigilante issues is negligible.<sup>54</sup> However, it was realised during the interviews that the respondents have placed vigilante violence among the most important issues of Punjab. The trend is further confirmed by the interviewees' responses in the questionnaire.

All the insurgents and Opposition politicians have talked of security forces' questionable methods, including the use of under-cover agents and vigilante-type

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<sup>53</sup> Cases of violence sponsored by the state but not perpetrated by the security forces is covered under this category. The perpetrators are mostly under-cover agents referred to by the informal and unofficial names of 'cats', 'vigilante' or sometimes 'kala kachchawalas'. This phenomenon has been discussed in Chapter 2 on Punjab.

<sup>54</sup> See Table 1.5 in the Content Analysis chapter for a break-up of themes contained in news stories. Themes related with vigilante violence have not been listed separately in the table since their coverage was almost negligible.

groups. The ruling party politicians and the security forces officials have tried to justify such tactics but have not denied that such questionable methods are being used. The police officers have given reasons which, according to them, compel them to use such tactics. It is clear from their interviews that the officials have treated this form of violence as a part of policing in Punjab. The same impression emerges from the admissions of the journalists working in Punjab. However, the whole issue of vigilante violence does not get reflected in the newspaper's coverage. It may be argued on the basis of interviews with the participants of the conflict that vigilante violence and the questionable methods used by the security forces and the solvability of the crisis are among the most glaring omissions of the press coverage of political violence in Punjab.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### CONCLUSION

It is attempted in this research to answer some of the most basic questions surrounding media coverage of terrorism in a liberal democratic state like India. The study has sought to determine how issues of political violence have been defined by the press at regional, national and international levels. It explores the permutations and combinations of inter-relationships among media, state and 'terrorism'-- of both state and insurgent variety. The coverage of 'terrorism' and 'counter-terrorism' is examined over two time periods in the regional, national and British press to determine ideological differences among newspapers representing different interests and catering to different types of audiences.

As discussed in the conceptual framework chapter, an eclectic approach combines Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model with constructionist and organisational perspectives of news production. What unifies these seemingly diverse perspectives is the assumption that news is to be seen through the forces that produce it rather than through events it appears to be representing. Another assumption which brings them together is that the media is a part of liberal democratic society's overall dynamics but not a prime mover. The present research has analysed news stories about violence in three different types of newspapers using their basic attributes to determine that the coverage of similar events by different types of newspapers is ideologically different. A closer look at the language use of these papers confirms that the use of language is highly ideological. The analysis of interviews with the participants of the conflict explains at least partly the various perspectives present in society about violence and hence brings out media's omissions of what can be seen as the wider public agenda. Three separate conclusions are presented in the end of the chapters on content analysis, linguistic variations and interviews. However, in the following pages the broad findings of these chapters would be recapitulated and drawn together in order to present an overall understanding of the press coverage of 'terrorism' and 'counter-terrorism.'

The content analysis chapter revealed that all the regional, national and British papers have constructed most of their violence related stories on the basis of either official sources or institutional non-official sources.<sup>1</sup> For all the papers except the Punjabi

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<sup>1</sup> The institutional, non-official sources include mainline political parties, members of democratic institutions like Parliament, state assemblies and judiciary etc. For details see Chapter five.

paper *Ajit*, more than half the sources are official ones and a large part of the remaining ones are non-official but institutional sources. Another frequently used category of sources is the one in which the author himself is the source or no source is mentioned. It may be argued that in this situation, too, there is a good possibility of official sources having some role in the story as a journalist comes to know of incidents of violence more often from official sources rather than in any other way.<sup>2</sup> The insurgent sources are more or less ignored by all papers except *Ajit* which has quoted them quite extensively.

The Punjabi paper, *Ajit*, has shown its ideological difference with other papers not by ignoring official and institutional non-official sources but by merely quoting more insurgent sources. It is significant that the Punjabi paper clearly comes in confrontation with the official policy by accommodating the 'enemies' of the state but it does not alter the very criterion of news gathering common to all papers studied. As discussed in the conceptual framework, much of source to journalist flow of information takes place in an inter-organisational way, in which the powerful institutions of the state and society actually subsidise media's news gathering by supplying half or fully 'finished' news packages in various ways. Many of these organisations are powerful enough to use systematic 'flak' against journalists and organisations who step out of the line, which is a part of the propaganda model.

The *Ajit's* Editor disclosed in his interview that several times warrants were issued for his arrest and one Governor of Punjab personally threatened him.<sup>3</sup> Apart from this, the paper was pressurised in various ways and several times its copies were confiscated.<sup>4</sup> All these could be seen as direct examples of 'flak' which, according to Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model, is one of the state's methods of enforcing discipline on the media. It is significant in the light of the above trends that the biggest single category of *Ajit's* news sources are still the official sources and the unofficial institutional sources are also as high as other papers. It shows that the Punjabi paper is not flouting the rules of the game but merely exercising its 'right' to quote other sources in the spirit of a pluralistic liberal democratic society. The paper

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<sup>2</sup> It has been argued in Chapter seven that journalists have a very special relationship with official sources. Almost all journalists have admitted in their interviews that the official sources are vital for violence-related stories, a large number of which are written after a journalist visits the 'spot'. It has been discussed in Chapter three that the official sources virtually control the flow of information when it comes to violence related hard news.

<sup>3</sup> Chapter seven.

<sup>4</sup> Annexure 23 of The Press Council of India report (1991) p. 185. Also see Chapter two on Punjab for a sample of what kind of news was deemed objectionable.

has quoted an unusually high number of insurgent sources which, perhaps, goes well with the expectations of its largely rural Sikh readership.

The two British papers have more or less ignored insurgent sources, just like the majority of Indian papers. The only difference is that they have a high percentage of stories in which either no source is mentioned or the author himself is the source. However, just like the Punjabi paper *Ajit*, the two British papers have done nothing to challenge the paramountcy of the official sources. It is clear from the patterns emerging from the content analysis that the official and institutional sources enjoy both more access to the press and more credibility among journalists -- local, national or foreign -- than any other type of sources, including their rivals or 'enemies'. This 'dichotomy' has been discussed in the conceptual framework chapter under the propaganda model.

The state (official) or institutional non-state (unofficial) sources interact with media either at a well recognised public forum such as a public meeting, parliament or a press conference. An overwhelming proportion of stories in all the papers are source originated ones. This means that the events which cross the 'tough' threshold of news worthiness are mostly those that someone somewhere wants to promote. In the study of sources it was found that this 'someone' is mostly an official or institutional non-official source and 'somewhere' is a well recognised public forum. In other words the content analysis results show that the sources, perched high on the society's information-power hierarchy, play a major role in defining what is news and setting the agenda for newspapers through negotiations and inter-organisational communication.<sup>5</sup> Hence, the dominant sections of society who run the affairs of the state and its administration have a head start over other sections or lobbies in the debate over terrorism and counter-terrorism because they have a hand in defining the conflict in the first place.

The media's active selection in favour of these sources also has an indirect bearing on its exclusions or omissions. It may be argued here that journalists of the 'free' press choose official and mainline unofficial sources at the cost of non-state and non-institutional sources which may well represent unorganised or unrecognised political dissent in a liberal democratic society. Similarly the media recognises certain political fora over others. Results of the content analysis and interview chapters brought out some of media's most glaring omissions. The participants of the conflict listed themes

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<sup>5</sup> A framework for inter-organisational communication for daily news construction has been discussed in Chapter three.

concerning solvability of the crisis and the questionable methods used by the security forces among most important issues in Punjab which was not reflected even partially in media's choice of themes in the news stories studied. It may be argued on the basis of these omissions that the newspapers' consistent choice of sources not only keeps the dominant agenda in news but it also helps to marginalise the alternative agenda.

About a quarter of all violence related stories in all the regional, national and British papers are 'terrorists' action based stories.<sup>6</sup> Most of these stories have got prominent displays. For the members of the armed underground organisations, incidents of violence are comparable to a public forum. The process of a sender-sending-a-message-to-an-audience-through-a-victim takes place in an amorphous public arena which makes incidents of 'terrorism' almost a public spectacle. The terror factor intrinsic to their communication ensures effectiveness and reach of their message irrespective of the protagonists' own strength in terms of popular support. The state's law and order agencies often find this method of communication more effective than their own propaganda despite all its advantages. They may also seek to address the same audience through 'counter-terror' activities which are often not in line with their role as custodians of the rule of law.

The results of the content analysis also contradict the popular understanding about the terrorist organisations' power to set the agenda. It is often argued that by their sheer actions, the terrorists use media in liberal democratic societies much to everybody's helplessness. The fact that the 'violence' themes are the single most frequently quoted themes seems to confirm that the perpetrators of these acts have a lot to do with putting those events in the news.<sup>7</sup> However, there is a fundamental difference between news stories originated by the state and those by the 'delegitimised' perpetrators of violence. The finding that the security forces are the main primary sources of news in most such 'terrorist' originated stories shows the limitation of terrorists' agenda setting.<sup>8</sup> They merely cause an event to become news by committing an act of violence which is, in turn, defined and described by the media in negotiation with the security forces.

The press construction of terrorism in Punjab is sought to be understood in the present research in terms of ideological differences among individual newspapers studied. Despite elements of similarity between the papers in the regional, national and

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<sup>6</sup> See Table 1.4 in chapter five.

<sup>7</sup> See Table 1.5, chapter five.

<sup>8</sup> See chart 1.1, chapter five.



Western categories, their coverage could be best understood in terms of their readership profiles and their own ideologies and world views.<sup>9</sup> The only two papers to give special attention to human rights themes are the Punjab based *Ajit* and *Tribune*. The most striking similarity between the two papers is that a substantial section of their readers are Punjab-based Sikhs. The third regional paper, *Punjab Kesari*, which identifies itself with the Punjabi Hindus, has not considered human rights so important. The national and international press have carried human rights themes regularly but sparsely. *Ajit's* readers are mostly rural Sikhs unlike the *Tribune's* readers who are mostly English educated and urban elite of Punjab. The fact that the Khalistan movement has its roots in rural Punjab can be seen as a main reason for the *Ajit* to quote unusually high 'struggle' themes. The two British papers have covered incidents of political violence more or less in the same way as the national papers but they have ignored the 'national unity' and 'foreign hand' themes which are of great importance for the entire Indian press except *Ajit*.

Interviews with *Ajit's* chief editor and its Chandigarh-based bureau chief confirm that the paper's journalists look upon perpetrators of violence completely differently than the rest of the journalists interviewed. *Ajit's* journalists have referred to them at times affectionately and as people with a strong political viewpoint. The rest of the interviewees have used stock labels, 'terrorist' or 'militant' for them. However, in describing violence by negative characterisations, such as 'terrorism', 'carnage', 'murder' etc., there is only a difference of degrees between *Ajit* and all the national and British papers. Compared to this, positive characterisations, such as 'self defence', 'revenge' or simply 'action', are minimal in all papers except *Ajit*.

The same trend is shown in the individual papers' use of negative labels although the use of positive labels by all these papers is comparatively higher than the use of positive characterisations. The reason is the insurgents' 'code of conduct' which made it 'punishable' to call them by the label 'terrorist'. The epithet suggested by the insurgents themselves was 'militant' which was used more often in the second time period.<sup>10</sup> The papers did not discontinue the use of other negative labels, such as 'criminal', 'murderer' or 'robber' etc., in the second time period even though they replaced 'terrorist' with 'militant'.<sup>11</sup> This has also been corroborated by the concordance analysis in Chapter six and in this chapter.

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<sup>9</sup> Gamson and Modigliani (1989). It has also been discussed earlier that the reader's expectations are reflected in the newspapers' coverage of news.

<sup>10</sup> See insurgents' 'code of conduct' in Chapter two

<sup>11</sup> Chart 1.4 shows that the use of positive labels shot up but the use of negative labels did not fall simultaneously in the second time period in all papers except *Ajit*.

Charts 1.6 and 1.7 show that none of the papers have ignored the security forces violence altogether and they have all used some negative labels for their 'counter-terroristic' actions. However, the charts make it clear that the 'positive' and 'other' characterisations too are very high in all papers except *Ajit*. More significant than the high number of positive characterisations, perhaps, is the frequent usage of 'other' characterisations which cover 'interrogation', 'operation' or 'investigation' etc.<sup>12</sup> It is argued in the content analysis chapter that the security forces cover a variety of overt and covert actions under the name of an 'operation' and an 'interrogation' is often a euphemism for torture. A very high number of 'other' characterisations as seen in chart 1.6 indicate that by a nominal word use, media often fail to raise the right issues and avoid throwing up inevitable and uncomfortable questions.

The value of the newspapers' routine language as a vehicle of ideology in daily news coverage is very well demonstrated in Chapter six. It was seen that the 'positive' words used in the second time period appeared in conjunction with other associated words which warped the meaning of the 'positive' words dictated by the 'enemies' of the state. Table 2.0 of the content analysis chapter shows that the actor 'militant' was seen as doing more abominable actions than the actor 'terrorist'. The net outcome of this analysis, given in details in Chapters five and six, is that the media's language cannot be seen as a linear and simplistic composition of routine sentence structures and familiar headlines. The use of the language is highly ideological and similar words and sentence structures often change meanings by a quirk of linguistic context or by an axiomatic exhortation.

As discussed earlier, an axiomatic usage requires an audience which shares a broad understanding with the paper. Linguistic variations and word contexts of news headlines in Chapter six suggest that the meanings constructed by a specific language use may have an intrinsic appeal for a specific 'collectivity of people' or a more cogent set of readers. It was also found that the papers with more involvement in the local issues have more 'emotive' and extensive coverage of violence-related news and a broader vocabulary than those with less involvement. That is why the two foreign papers have the most limited vocabularies and the national papers figure somewhere in between the regional and British papers. The 'elite' English dailies have shown a tendency to look at violence related news in terms of 'nuts and bolts' of an event.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> See appendix 1 for coding schedule under 'characterisations' of security forces violence.

<sup>13</sup> This supports the view that the papers with limited stakes in local issues or which have their audiences outside the 'location' of violence are more interested in the bare 'facts' of incidents than issues involving the cause of violence. The coverage of such papers may at best be descriptive but not

They are also not interested in backgrounds or historical aspects of violence in Punjab. Just like the national papers, the two Western (British) papers also exhibit a very limited interest in daily violence and their coverage depends a great deal on the number of people killed. It may be argued that the coverage of violence in papers other than the regional ones is rather 'ahistorical'.

The study of word contexts shows that the Punjabi paper *Ajit* has found ways to offer 'legitimacy' to insurgents without violating the rules of the game in a big way. It has not denied the official and state sources their paramountcy but has treated some insurgents like respectable leaders who have a point of view or an opinion on a subject.<sup>14</sup> Similarly it has treated some underground organisations like mainline political parties. It was observed in the interviews chapter that the senior police officers and the government ministers have found *Ajit's* treatment of insurgents highly objectionable. The Hindi paper *Punjab Kesari* has often given importance to insurgents by using ranks such as Lt. General or 'chief' with their names. It was found in the concordance test in Chapter six that this was used mostly on occasions when the security forces gunned down an insurgent leader which indirectly enhances their success rather than conferring any honour on the insurgent leaders.

The same trend is seen in *Ajit's* coverage of sources and themes. It has used substantially high (though less than other papers) number of negative characterisations and labels but differentiated itself by using more positive ones. The analysis of content shows that the most often repeated primary themes in all the papers are about insurgent violence, law enforcement, and condemnation of insurgents which indicates that the news agenda favours the state, its institutions and society's organised (or 'legitimised') spheres of life and at the cost of the 'fringe voices' and the state's adversaries.<sup>15</sup> Trends in *Ajit's* coverage are consistent with the other papers. However, it shows a distinction in the choice of 'struggle' themes which are accorded high priority by the paper but which are ignored by all others. Once again it proves that *Ajit* has carried the alternative agenda but without challenging the 'basic' criterion of news production.<sup>16</sup>

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very often explanatory. Elliot (1977) has argued in his study of the coverage of Northern Ireland by British and Irish papers that "For most of the media, reporting Northern Ireland was mainly a process of recording the violence, building on this basic minimum of who, what and where." p. 362

<sup>14</sup> See chapter six on linguistic variations and word contexts.

<sup>15</sup> Compared to other macro themes such as political themes, human rights themes, or official violence themes, the above mentioned themes are a part of state's most favoured agenda.

<sup>16</sup> The *Ajit* has given 'due' importance to the above mentioned three most important themes which favour the state's point of view, and yet, differentiated itself with the other papers by stressing on human rights and struggle themes.

It is observed in the chapters on content analysis and word contexts that the Hindi and Punjabi papers of Punjab define the two extremes of coverage. Compared to the English language national press and the British press, these two vernacular papers have used a broader vocabulary and their coverage has been more detailed, emotive and historical. It is another matter that the vernacular papers' definitions of historicity and in-depth analyses are vastly different from each other. The police and the security forces come across in the two papers as differently as the insurgents. The two papers have used similar key words but the contexts of their usage are poles apart. Similarly, the use of associated words with some key words also serve an ideological purpose. A good example for this is seen in the use of the key word 'encounter' in *Ajit*. By qualifying 'encounter' almost each time it is used, the paper has succeeded in grafting doubts about the veracity of security forces' operations.<sup>17</sup> The other example is furnished by the use of key word 'police' by the two papers.<sup>18</sup> The national papers have differentiated themselves from the regional press in their treatment of the police. Rather than associating the key word with negative or positive word contexts, they have avoided the use of 'police' as agents of violence. Therefore, the very nature of national papers' less screaming and more nominal headlines has a strong ideological dimension to them.

The content analysis shows the explanations, justifications or reasons for security forces actions, which are analysed under 'story judgement' in the chapter reinforce the 'war scenario'.<sup>19</sup> Up to two third of all story judgements have supported this view in all the papers except the Punjabi paper *Ajit*. The Punjabi paper is alone in explaining violence related issues from the perspective of human rights violations and repression. It was also observed that the papers which described Punjab's conflict as a 'war' had used a very large number of themes concerning either threat to the nation's 'unity' or about external aggression.<sup>20</sup> The security forces' officials and ruling party politicians have confirmed in their interviews that for them the situation is nothing short of an unconventional war and they would want the media to look at it that way. Newsmen working for the national papers have defended the national press while attacking the regional press whereas those working for the vernacular regional papers have attacked one another apart from targeting the national press. In a way this is to be expected in a pluralistic liberal democratic set up where the press is a part of society's power structure and different papers represent different interest segments.

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<sup>17</sup> See Chapter Six.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> See Chart 1.8

<sup>20</sup> See Chapter five.

It is ironical that most participants of the conflict, including those who get quoted most frequently by the media as primary sources, are convinced that the media side with their adversaries. The police and the security forces, who have a definite role in setting the terms of the debate on terrorism, have attacked journalists for acting 'irresponsibly'. The insurgents and their sympathisers have maintained in their interviews that the two most important things for the media is to reflect their point of view in news coverage and perhaps more importantly, not to be misled by the security forces' propaganda. Senior police officers, however, want the entire media to collaborate with them in the 'national' and 'public' interest. The third category of participants - politicians - have concentrated on Punjab's political dispute and have felt that a 'constructive' role on media's part may help solve the problem.

By comparing the results of the content analysis with the analysis of interviews one comes to the conclusion that some of the most concern generating issues of Punjab do not get reflected in media's coverage. The most noticeable of these are the issues of solvability of the crisis and the vigilante violence sponsored by the security forces. These are considered top priority issues by the opposition politicians and insurgents and their sympathisers. The security forces and the ruling party officials have conceded and sometimes, justified, this point. And yet, it is not reflected in the newspapers' themes. One of the reasons for this could be that the issues of terrorism and violence are treated as 'sensitive' by the state and society alike and the journalists covering insurgency and counter-insurgency work under more than usual pressures. The omissions could be explained partly by the state's elaborate media management and partly in terms of 'self-censorship' which is mostly a result of the pressures working on journalists.<sup>21</sup> Many insurgents and their sympathisers have also emphasised this point.<sup>22</sup> However, more research, particularly in the area of public opinion and participant observation, is needed to establish the reasons for media's omissions more firmly.

Another significant finding of the interviews is that the insurgents' actions are not designed solely for media publicity. It runs counter to the popular assumption that every act of terrorism is an act of communication. Several of their acts of violence

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<sup>21</sup> It has been argued in Chapter three that those who arrange news for the press on a regular basis actually prevent independent access to the news events. Also see Lippmann (1949) and Linne and Hansen (1990), p. 159.

<sup>22</sup> See 'Insurgents Perceptions' in Chapter seven. Almost all insurgents and their sympathisers have raised the issues of journalists' salaries and the pressures and temptations working on them. Some have talked about the state using pressures on the newspaper owners as well.

have a symbolic value and they may not have been enacted for publicity alone. They do certain actions not only for getting into the next day's newspapers but also for furthering their political or ideological aims. For instance one of the former insurgents has conceded that the reason behind kidnapping the chief of the Jalandhar TV station was to force the administration to use more Punjabi in place of Hindi on the regional television, an aim they eventually succeeding in achieving.<sup>23</sup> Similarly the insurgents threatened and killed some journalists before the second time period to enforce their 'code of conduct' and to a limited extent they were successful in achieving this as well.<sup>24</sup>

As discussed in the conceptual framework chapter, there is a difference between every insurgent act being designed for publicity and most acts possessing a publicity value. The very fact that violence, like sex and scandals, is a part of 'free' media's "staple diet" makes it impossible for the papers to ignore insurgents' actions. The result of this analysis suggest that blaming or indicting the media for political violence may lead to misleading conclusions. Gerbner's position that stories of violence are a part of "mythology, literature and other areas of our cultures" is an indirect caution against supporting linear and simplistic positions about media's coverage of violence.<sup>25</sup> This is particularly relevant in the light of our earlier position that the media is a part of a liberal democratic state's power structure but is not one of its prime movers. Linear relationships among media, state and political violence can be as misleading as they are inadequate. It may be mentioned here that any sort of simple solutions, including any type of censorship, would only be counter-productive.<sup>26</sup>

It is argued that journalists construct their picture of reality in an atmosphere of relative functional autonomy and space.<sup>27</sup> Concern has also been expressed in the conceptual framework chapter that this autonomy and space is being subjected to increasing pressure and restrictions.<sup>28</sup> However, it is next to impossible for the state to black out all the issues it considers unimportant or objectionable. The coverage of the

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<sup>23</sup> See insurgents' perspective in Chapter seven. The former insurgent leader has maintained that the original plan was only to kidnap him and not to kill him which was later done by some lower level functionaries without the high command's knowledge.

<sup>24</sup> See insurgents' code of conduct in chapter two. Also see Table 2.0 and chart 1.4 in content analysis chapter.

<sup>25</sup> Gerbner (1988) p. 21

<sup>26</sup> Schlesinger (1991) p 58., has cautioned against two sides of such censorship while talking about BBC's restrictions on Northern Irish political groups. First, according to him, it has had a very negative effect on the BBC's international standing and secondly it has not in any way contributed to conflict resolution in Northern Ireland.

<sup>27</sup> See news production at micro-level in Chapter three.

<sup>28</sup> Herbert I. Schiller (1989) has described this as a slow corporate take-over of public expression.

issues concerning human rights and Punjab's political dispute look disproportionate when compared to the ones which suit the official perspective. Nevertheless they are there and a debate on them is alive in the media and society even though the state and its dominant sections would wish it had died down.

It is surprising that despite all the advantage, the attempt of the state is to gag the media by imposing official censorship or to tighten laws pertaining to insurgent violence. A sure consequences of both these things is curtailment of the average citizen's civil liberties. This applies to even more 'advanced' democratic states of the West as much as it applies to Third World democracies like India.<sup>29</sup> A liberal democratic state's most powerful argument in support of such laws or some form of censorship is that the situation of political violence is comparable to a war. Another set of arguments which was put forward by the police officers during the interviews was that the media should follow their own code of conduct in order to obviate the need for censorship. This is nothing but an appeal in favour of 'self censorship' which can be potentially more dangerous than the official censorship.

In a pluralistic liberal democratic society, various media groups are closely aligned to different interest segments of society. For instance the vernacular regional press is aligned to the interests of Punjab's Sikh and Hindu people or at least to their sizeable sections. Both groups have their own political parties and their own unique cultural spaces. It can hardly be coincidental that the readerships of the Punjabi paper *Ajit* and the Hindi paper *Punjab Kesari* are concentrated among the members of these two 'collectivities' who, incidentally, have their own shared understandings about political processes in India and ongoing violence in Punjab. The *Tribune* which is read by the English speaking elite of both communities takes a more mixed if not 'balanced' line when compared to the two vernacular papers. The national papers are very closely aligned with the interests of the Indian federal state and they exhibit neither very much interest nor inclination to cover ethnic problems any differently. In spite of conflicting viewpoints, all these papers co-exist somewhere in the domain of pluralism and utilise their cultural spaces, however little or perhaps ever shrinking

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<sup>29</sup> Curtis (1984) has discussed the case of a Panorama programme broadcast in the UK on Nov. 9, 1976 in which the journalists making a programme on Northern Ireland "failed to pass on to the authorities information" which might have led to the arrest of the 'terrorists'. Subsequently the Scotland Yard officials came to the studio to seize the film and the BBC 'co-operated' by handing it over to them. p. 169. The fact that PTA has been in force for such a long time in a more 'matured' democracy like the UK only strengthens the state's tendency to curb the media coverage of terrorism.

they may be. This may not be the ideal situation but it could be made worse by censorship.<sup>30</sup>

The results of this study have also raised some issues which may be difficult to answer without further research. For instance one of the most curious things about the British papers' coverage is that those participants of the conflict who oppose the government and those who are in favour of the insurgents' struggle speak very highly of the foreign media's coverage of Punjab.<sup>31</sup> However, the content analysis shows that the two British papers have not differed very much with India's New Delhi-based national press in their coverage of violence.<sup>32</sup> One of the possible explanations could be that even if these papers have used as many human rights stories as the national media, their impact on the international democratic community and its institutions and fora could be much more than India's national papers.<sup>33</sup> Obviously, one needs to go into the issues of newspapers' impact and conduct further research, of both media's content and audiences' response, to verify this.

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<sup>30</sup> It is consistent with the view of Ericson et al (1987) that media is also a part of democracy's proliferation apart from being a part of its control mechanism.

<sup>31</sup> All insurgents and most opposition politicians interviewed have praised the foreign media's coverage of Punjab. They have used the word 'foreign' as a synonym for the 'Western' media. For further details see insurgents' perceptions and politicians' perceptions in interview chapter.

<sup>32</sup> The two Western papers' coverage of human rights themes is more or less as frequent as that of the national media. The attributes of their stories, such as their selection of sources and themes etc. are also not very different.

<sup>33</sup> Issues may be raised in the Western Parliaments, UN platforms and institutions like the Amnesty International. Besides, expatriate and immigrant Sikhs have large populations and political lobbies in the Western countries whose actual or potential help can be crucial for those fighting in Punjab.



APPENDIX ONE  
CODING SCHEDULE

(1). Item No.

[ ]1  
[ ]2  
[ ]3  
[ ]4

(2). Newspaper.

(a) Regional

[ ]5  
[ ]6

1. Ajit

2. Punjab Kesari

3. The Tribune

(b) National

4. The Hindustan Times

5. The Times of India

6. Indian Express

(c) Foreign

7. The Guardian

8. The Times

(3). Year (code one)

[ ]7  
[ ]8

1. 1986

2. 1987

3. 1992

4. 1993

(4). Month (code one)

1. January to

[ ]9

2. December

[ ]10

(5). Date.

01 to 31

[ ]11  
[ ]12

(6). Day

1. Monday to 7. Sunday

[ ]13

(7). Position of the item

[ ]14

1. Front Page

2. Edit Page	
3. Inside Page	
4. International Page	
5. Magazine section	
(8). <u>News Classification</u>	[ ]15
01. Banner headline story	[ ]16
02. First lead / second lead story	
03. Prominent news story	
04. Other news stories	
05. News analysis / newsletter	
06. Home /domestic News abroad	
07. Editorial	
08. Leader article / comment / opinion	
09. Letters to the editor	
10. Regular column	
11. Government advertisement	
12. Private / Institutional adverts	
13. Death Notice adverts ( Bhog, Path, Ardas etc.) or focused news item	
14. Book reviews	
15. Media / Radio / TV programme reviews	
16. Interviews and profiles	
17. Obituaries	
18. Satires / middles	
19. Feature article / culture	
20. Denials and rejoinders	
21. Others	
( 9.) <u>Accompanying Visuals</u>	
1. Photograph	[ ]17
	[ ]18
2. Cartoon	[ ]19
3. Others	[ ]20
(10.) <u>Author</u>	
01. Special / staff Correspondent / paper's news service	[ ]21
02. Special / staff correspondent ( with by-line)	[ ]22
03. Foreign Correspondent	

- 04. Defence Correspondent
- 05. Columnist / commentator / outside contributor
- 06. Editor / deputy or other editors
- 07. Domestic News Agencies
- 08. Western News Agencies
- 09. Other News Agencies
- 10. News compilations ( Agencies + correspondents)
- 11. Others
- 12. Not given
- 13. Letter writer
- 14. Militant / member of militant organisation
- (11). Dateline [ ]23
  - 01. Joint Dateline (Several places in Punjab and elsewhere) [ ]24
  - 02. New Delhi
  - 03. Chandigarh
  - 04. Amritsar
  - 05. Other cities in Punjab
  - 06. Other metropolitan cities and state capitals
  - 07. Elsewhere in India
  - 08. Pakistan
  - 09. London / elsewhere in the UK
  - 10. Elsewhere in Europe
  - 11. USA
  - 12. Other foreign countries
  - 13. Former Soviet Republics / socialist countries
  - 14. Not given
  - 15. The United Nations
- (12.) Likely origin of the story
  - (a). Media originated
    - 01. Editorial / comment / judgement [ ]25
    - 02. News analysis / backgrounders [ ]26
    - 03. Investigative story
    - 04. Travelogue based story / first person account / anniversary
    - 05. Situation-based series of stories
  - (b). Source originated story
    - 07. Press Conference based story
    - 08. Political speech based story
    - 09. Conducted / tour based story

10. Insurgent action-based story
11. Police action based story
12. Political parties action based story
13. Statement / Hand-out based story / spokesman / interview
14. Cannot be determined
15. Central Govt. action / Diplomatic action based story
16. Letter
17. Court action based story
18. Announcement / formulation of govt. decision / policy etc.
19. Release of a report

( 13.) News forum :

01. Bhog ceremony / Memorial services etc. of insurgency victims [ ]27
02. Political rally / function / party meeting [ ]28
03. Coverage of social / cultural event / function
04. Coverage of purely religious event / temple / Gurdwara function
05. Supreme Court
06. High Court
07. Other courts
08. Courts abroad
09. Parliament
10. State Assembly
11. Parliaments / legislatures abroad
12. Other forums
13. Can't be determined
14. Official function / press conference
15. Militants' Bhog ceremony, memorial service etc. / last rites
16. Jail
17. Secret meeting

(14.) News Sources / actors

(a) Official sources

Primary Sources      29      30  
☐      ☐

01. Central government / ruling party
02. State government / ruling party
03. Civil bureaucracy / Governor

Other Sources      31      32  
☐      ☐

04. Police / Security Forces
05. Intelligence agencies
06. Army / Armed forces

33      34  
☐      ☐

07. Anonymous official sources

08. Foreign Govts./ foreign offices / spokespersons / missions
09. Official experts ( of bomb disposal / weapons / warfare etc.) 35 36
10. Policy documents / records / police and security papers, statistics. ☐
- ☐
11. Other official sources
- (b) Non-official sources
12. Akali Dal (L)
13. Akali Dal (B)
14. Militant Akali Dals (Mann, Manjit and Joginder Singh)
15. Congress-I
16. Other Akali Dals / leaders
17. Bharatiya Janata Party / Hindu organisations
18. Left parties / organisations / fronts
19. Other Opposition parties in the Centre or elsewhere in India
20. Other regional parties
21. Human Rights' organisations / activists /
22. Trade Unions / farmers unions / NGOs / traders' associations
23. Panchayat and local bodies leaders
24. Non-govt. foreign sources / lobbyists
25. SGPC leaders / officials
26. High Priests / Priests of main Takhts
27. Other Religious organisations
28. Religious scriptures / documents
29. Other non-official sources
- (c) Insurgent Sources
30. Major insurgent organisations  
(KCF, KLF, Babbar Khalsa, BTFK, Panthic committee.)
31. Other underground organisations
32. Insurgents' sympathisers / supporters
33. Anonymous underground organisations / literature / Pub. material
34. Militants / organisations based abroad
35. AISSF
36. Other insurgent sources
- (e) Individual Sources
37. Eye-Witnesses / Common man / Housewife
38. Intellectuals / academics / non-official (individual) experts
39. Insurgency victims / relatives etc.
40. Police victims (public men) / relatives etc.

41. Relatives of insurgents killed
42. Research papers / studies / opinion polls / reports
43. Local journalists
44. No source mentioned
45. Author himself
46. Letter writer

(15.) Themes of the Item

(A) VIOLENCE / INSURGENCY RELATED THEMES :

Themes

Primary

37 38

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------

01. Massacres / blasts / explosions
02. Violence in general ( without specific incidents)
03. Stray killings by insurgents
04. Political Assassinations / attempts
05. Aircraft hijackings / aircraft bombings / attempts
06. Kidnapping
07. Armed robberies / money extortion
08. Threats
09. Insurgent involvement in smuggling / drugs / rape / anti-social activities / corruption etc.

Other themes

39 40

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------

10. Misuse of religious places for violence
11. Attacks on security forces / killings of Govt. security officials
12. Struggle for Khalistan / independence
13. Police informer / vigilante killed / attacked
14. Insurgents own responsibility for actions
15. Mob violence

16. Other insurgency related themes

(B) LAW ENFORCEMENT THEMES

41 42

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------

17. Insurgent (s) killed in encounters with security forces
18. Raids / arrests and arms seizures
19. Surrender by insurgents / suicide by militants
20. Killings / actions by vigilante groups

43 44

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------

21. Police criticised for inaction / inability to enforce law etc.
22. Security forces' success in fighting terrorism / steps against insurgency
23. Public cooperation in fighting terrorism
24. Other law enforcement themes

(C) HUMAN RIGHTS, LAW, JUDICIARY AND CONSTITUTION:

45 46

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------

25. Fake encounter allegations / shooting of civilians by the police

26. Human rights / violation of civil rights  
( Police / security forces' harassment / repression / excesses etc.)
27. TADA Act / NSA / 'black laws' / criticised / condemned
28. Police / security forces' corruption / malpractice etc.
29. Action against police harassment / corruption
30. Judiciary's inability to convict insurgents
31. Prosecution / judiciary criticised
32. International HR bodies quoted / requested to probe
33. Human rights organisation criticised
- (D) POLITICAL THEMES
34. Democratic / political / constitutional / solution or initiative /
35. Dialogue with insurgents
36. National Unity / Integration / survival of Indian democracy
37. Centre-state relations
38. Punjab's political / territorial dispute (river water / electricity / territory / Army quota, Jodhpur detainees, army deserters etc.).
39. Sikhs' religious demands
40. Anandpursahab resolution
41. Mixing of religion and politics
42. Migration of Hindus outside Punjab
43. Sympathy / support for militancy / Khalistan
44. Rehabilitation of Sikh riot victims / Delhi Riots / Nov. 84 riots
45. Hindu-Sikh relations / friendship / bonds etc.
46. Alienation of Sikhs / impact of blue star etc.
47. Sikh fundamentalism
48. Hindu fundamentalism
49. Election boycott
50. Removal of centre's rule / holding of state elections
51. Dismissal of elected govt. / imposition of Centre's rule / Centre's rule praised
52. Elections / electoral politics etc.
53. Censorship / ban orders on media etc. / media freedom upheld
54. Media criticised
55. Akalis praised / defended
56. Akalis criticised
57. Centre / Central Govt praised / demands made
58. Centre / Central Govt criticised
59. State govt praised / supported
60. State govt criticised / demands made

61. Militants criticised / upheld / tributes paid to militants
62. Militants praised
63. Foreign aid for insurgency
64. Pakistan's support for Khalistan / insurgency
65. Protest against violence
66. History of Sikh religion and their struggles
67. Khalistan
68. Other Political themes
69. Rajiv-Longowal accord
70. Security against terrorism demanded
71. Police criticised for complicity with militants etc.
72. Religious / temple politics
73. Militants' organisations' internal politics, bickering etc.
74. Bhindranwale recalled / praised / eulogised etc.
75. Challenge to militants / threat of counter-violence
76. Social reform movement & other reforms by sponsored by insurgents
77. Extradition / diplomatic activity against terrorism
78. Police, Govt challenged by militants / supporters
79. Terrorists absconding /search for them
80. Hindu militancy

(16) PERCEPTION OF VIOLENCE :

(16-a). Characterisations of acts of insurgent actions / violence

(negative)

47    48

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01. Massacre / carnage
02. Blast / explosion / bombing
03. Abduction / kidnapping / hostage taking
04. Sabotage
05. Hijacking / bombing aircraft
06. Murder / assassination / killings etc.
07. Bloodshed

49    50

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51    52

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08. Robbery / money extortion
  09. Terrorism / terror / reign of terror / terror tactics
  10. Violence / threat of violence
  11. Brutal / senseless / inhuman / macabre etc.
  12. Other characterisations unfavourable to insurgents
- (positive)



13. Self defence
14. Heroic / daring / brave
15. Revenge / retaliation /threat of revenge
16. Struggle / fight
17. Action / raid / attack
18. Other characterisations favourable to insurgents  
(others)

19. Firing
20. Encounter / ambush
21. Detonation / diffusion
22. Operation
23. Other neutral characterisations
24. Militancy
25. Wars / battles

(16-b). Labels for insurgents

(negative)

01. Terrorist / suspected terrorist
02. Killer / assassin / murderer / attacker / assailant / rapist  
and other criminal labels
03. Anti-national / Separatist / secessionist
04. Extremist / radical / ultra
05. Zealot / Fundamentalist / fanatic
06. Khalistani etc.
07. Dangerous / hard core / dreaded / notorious / "wanted" etc.
08. Coward / non-heroic / unscrupulous etc.
09. Pakistan-trained
10. 'A' grade / 'B' grade terrorist / Carrying a reward
11. Blood thirsty / savage / brutal / senseless etc.
12. Uneducated / illiterate / backward
13. Straying / directionless / misguided
14. Other negative labels

(positive)

15. Militant / Kharku
16. Heroic / daring / daredevil / plucky / gutsy etc.
17. Martyr / Shaheed / Marjeevade etc.
18. Guerrilla / rebel / Jujharu / tiger
19. Innocent / victim

53	54
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
55	56
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
57	58
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

20. Saint / Baba / Singh / Singh Sahab / Singha
21. Lt General / Area Commander and other martial designations
22. Other positive labels  
(others)
23. Youth (s) / boy (s) / men
24. People / villagers / passers by etc.
25. Leader / activist
26. Gunman / armed man
27. Suspect
28. Pilgrim / devotee
29. Other neutral labels
30. Sikh

(16-c). Explanations / justifications or reasons for insurgent actions / violence :

- |  |                          |                          |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 01. Injustice to Punjab  | 59                       | 60                       |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 02. Struggle for independence / Khalistan / Sikh homeland                      |                          |                          |
| 03. End of Hindu domination  | 61                       | 62                       |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 04. End of Indian domination   |                          |                          |
| 05. Discrimination against the Sikhs / persecution                             |                          |                          |
| 06. Retaliation for Delhi and November 1984 riots                              | 63                       | 64                       |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 07. Operation Bluestar and its revenge   |                          |                          |
| 08. Unemployment and poverty   |                          |                          |
| 09. Lack of development in Punjab  |                          |                          |
| 10. Lack of faith in security forces   |                          |                          |
| 11. Lack of faith in the Central Government                                    |                          |                          |
| 12. Lack of faith in State government  |                          |                          |
| 13. Continuation of struggle / following Bhindranwale's path                   |                          |                          |
| 14. Annihilation / decimation of Sikhs   |                          |                          |
| 15. Pakistan's instigation / Pak-aided sabotage / Foreign aid                  |                          |                          |
| 16. Disruption of peace and normal life  |                          |                          |
| 17. Threatening Unity and integrity of India                                   |                          |                          |
| 18. Insanity or madness  |                          |                          |
| 19. Religious propaganda / fundamentalism / religious fanaticism / communalism |                          |                          |
| 20. Non-implementation of Longowal Accord                                      |                          |                          |
| 21. Sheltering / abatement to terrorism / violence                             |                          |                          |
| 21. Other reasons  |                          |                          |
| 32. Earning money / amassing wealth through militancy                          |                          |                          |
| 33. 'Social reform' movement   |                          |                          |

34. Alienation / dissatisfaction / disillusionment etc.

35. State terrorism

36. Killing one section of people / Hindus

37. Vigilante violence

38. Revenge for police action

(16-d) Characterisations for police action / violence :

(negative)

01. Massacre / carnage

02. Fake encounter

03. Murder / assassination

04. State terrorism / Security forces' terrorism

05. Complicity with insurgents

65 66

06. Abduction / kidnapping

--	--

07. Bloodshed

08. Revenge / retaliation

67 68

09. Unlawful / illegal acts ( Robbery / bribery / money extortion and  
criminal acts)

--	--

10. Torture / Third-degree methods / excess / harassment etc.

11. Other unfavourable characterisations / descriptions

(positive)

69 70

12. Self defence

--	--

13. Seizure / recovery

14. Preventive Arrest / capture

15. Counter terrorism

16. Action / raid / attack

17. Other favourable characterisations / descriptions

(others)

18. Encounter / ambush / naka / killing in encounter

19. Investigation / follow up

20. Firing / shooting

21. Operation

22. Interrogation

23. Detonation / diffusion

24. Curfew / ban orders / alert

25. Tear gas / Lathi charge etc.

26. Other neutral labels

(16-e) Labels for police force :

(negative)

01. Terrorist
02. Killer / assassin / murderer / attacker / assailant
03. Gunman / armed man
04. Criminal / outlaw
05. Non-heroic / Coward
06. Anti-Sikh
07. Blood thirsty / savage / brutal / senseless etc.
08. Cats, vigilante etc.
09. Other unfavourable labels

71	72
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

73	74
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

75	76
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

(positive)

10. Heroic / daring / daredevil / plucky / gutsy
11. Martyr / Shaheed / etc.
12. Dutiful / disciplined / peaceful
13. Death squad
14. Commandos / crack force
15. Other martial / police force labels ( chief, senior, top brass etc.)
16. Other favourable labels

(others)

17. Hostage
18. Leader
19. Reinforcements / control room
20. Troops / Jawans / men / Armed forces / Force
21. Other neutral labels

(16-f) Explanations / justifications / reasons for forces' violence / actions :

01. War like situation
02. Restoration of peace / Maintenance of rule of law
03. Fighting terrorism / militancy / violence
04. Security forces' inability to lawfully deal with the situation
05. Guerrilla tactics of insurgents
06. Judiciary's inability to convict
07. Compulsion to show results
08. Win over hearts of people
09. Disruption of peace and normal life
10. Unity and integrity of India
11. Discrimination against the Sikhs / persecution

77	78
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

79	80
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

1	2
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

12. Pakistan's instigation / Pak-aided sabotage
13. Lack of imagination / planning / direction
14. Annihilation / decimation of Sikhs
15. No explanation or reason given

(17). HEADLINE :

## APPENDIX TWO

### QUESTIONNAIRE TO BE FILLED IN AFTER THE INTERVIEW (Please tick mark)

Name :

Profession :

Age :

Which of the following newspapers you subscribe to or regularly read

- (a) Ajit
- (b) Tribune (English, Hindi or Punjabi)
- (c) Punjab Kesari / Jagbani Hind Samachar
- (d) Indian Express / Jansatta
- (e) Times Of India / Navbharat Times
- (f) Hindustan Times / Dainik Hindustan
- (g) Guardian
- (h) The Times
- (i) New York Times
- (j) Washington Post
- (k) International Herald Tribune
- (l) Any other foreign paper

Which of the following news networks you follow or watch regularly :

- (a) BBC Radio
- (b) BBC TV
- (c) CNN
- (d) Radio or TV Pakistan
- (e) All India Radio
- (f) Doordarshan
- (g) Any other Radio
- (h) Any other TV channel

Do you think media sensationalise incidents of violence or thrive on them ?

- (a) Yes
- (b) No

Which of the following are the most important issues in Punjab ? (Please mark a, b, c in front of three most important issues in order of preference)

1. Insurgent violence
2. Police and security forces' violence
- 3 Violence from both sides
4. Fake encounters and violations of human rights
5. Corruption and misrule
6. Mixing of religion and politics

7. Rise of Sikh fundamentalism
8. Rise of Hindu fundamentalism
9. Political solution including dialogue with militants
10. Holding of free and fair elections
11. Persecution and alienation of Sikhs
12. Punjab's dispute over water and territory
13. Khalistan. / independent Sikh state
14. Any other issues

Do you think stopping media publicity would end terrorism ?

- (a) Yes            (b) No            (c) Can't say

Do you think media should ignore threats, challenges and other conflict oriented statements of the insurgents ?

- (a) Yes            (b) No            (c) Can't say

Do you think that violence and crime in Punjab is overplayed by the media when compared to violence and crime elsewhere in the country ?

- (a) Yes            (b) No            (c) Can't say

What is the most appropriate label for those committing political violence in Punjab

- (a) Terrorist  
(b) Militant  
(c) Freedom fighter  
(d) Criminal  
(e) Any other label (please specify)

How would you describe violent actions of the security forces' in Punjab ?

- (a) State terrorism  
(b) Anti-terrorism action  
(c) Maintenance of law and order  
(d) Anything else (please specify)

In your opinion which of the following statements regarding vigilante groups is true (please tick mark the true statements)

- (a) They are run by people fed up with terrorism or by victims of insurgent violence  
(b) They are run by the security forces for faster results  
(c) They are manned by ordinary people  
(d) They are manned by under cover security forces men  
(e) They are run by criminals and under cover agents

Are the Sikhs being systematically persecuted or discriminated against ?

- (a) Yes            (b) No            (c) Can't say

Do you think a journalist should contribute to the government's peace efforts ?

- (a) Yes            (b) No            (c) Cannot say

Do you have close personal friends among the following ( please tick mark the relevant categories except the one you yourself belong to)

- (a) Politicians,
- (b) Security forces officials and bureaucrats
- (c) Journalists
- (d) Insurgents

How often are you misquoted by the media :

- (a) Very rarely
- (b) Very often
- (c) Never
- (d) Always

Do you think there should be statutes covering dos and do'nts of media coverage of terrorism ?

- (a) Yes
- (b) No
- (c) Can't say



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