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Role of Media in Narrative Building: A Case of Pakistan-India Relations

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Abstract: Media shapes the mind of the people but also creates the perception that they wanted people to build. In other words, we can say that media controls the minds of the people and work it accordingly as it wants to. Besides getting people informed about what is going on around the world, the media also show things that are in their favor and can also give them ratings and circulation. There is no better illustration than the India-Pakistan relationship is something that is a crucial matter, and the media acts according to how the situation is and is not act restricted in any term. The role of the media has been progressive in both India and Pakistan, distinguishing the quality of the media. The qualitative research focuses on the critical part of media that has been playing in the Indo-Pak relations since their inception. During the study, different past published researches have been analyzed, and it is found that the important role of media cannot be underestimated.

Key Words: Media, Narrative Building, Pakistan India Relations

Introduction

A wide range of characteristics, including geographic proximity, historical involvement, cultural similarities, ideological perspectives, and other relevant perception, may be more important than any of these elements in determining numerous interactions between states. The last one is perception is the most important one, and Media is the one that shapes the mind of the people throughout the time. Media has such an important role, whether conveying undiluted information or conveying a message on a serious matter; the media has always been a single most decisive factor in shaping the minds of the people (Hafeez, 2015). People's minds were moulded by the media in two ways: as general stewards of the public interest and as spokespersons.

People's perceptions are shaped by the media, which plays a crucial role in shaping their brains (Jabbar, 1994).

The media today has emerged as an important factor in international relations. It has proved to be the key Actor who not only influences the ties between two nations but also steers them in the direction that is given. Media is so powerful that whenever and whatever the information that needs to be given to the people through media, it provides it and shapes the minds of the people and controls that to what information the people need to be exposed to and to what they are not. It is the most crucial state that also affects other countries over the globe (Siraj, 2008). In today's world, mass media has gained some popularity that it is also considered the fourth element of the current political system, it has

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a significant impact on public opinion. ([Adnan, 2019](#))

In Pakistan, the ownership pattern of the media has been quite different from others, the main thing we need to know before implementing that is to what extent the media has been involved in the crucial issue of the India-Pakistan relationship. We are living in an age where media shapes realities and build public opinion. Media analyzes and crops information before opening it to the public so that what they intended to create a perception about straightly goes as planned. And in India-Pakistan matters, the media is always on forward to provide information about every event that happened. Media can play a role that creates betterment between India and Pakistan and creates a developing role between them if politics wills ([Mustafa, 2004](#)).

Pakistan-India has been on a crucial page for many years now, and one of the main highlighting issues is Kashmir which has now been like forever issue between India-Pakistan. Both the countries have fought bloody wars for this city to be theirs, and also, some grudges were taken out based on this issue. For many years Pakistan has been fighting to take their state back, and some of these wars have become cold and sometimes a ramp of fire, but the media has forever been a conveyer in this crucial matter and sometimes played an of adding spice to the matter between the two states. ([Ahmed, 2022](#)).

And now people are more than frustrated and tired of being waiting to get a conclusion on this matter, but this is being prolonged and procrastinated every time fire between two states takes place. The media has never let people forget about this issue and always made it the talk of the town so that the information can never be forgotten from the mind of the people. Both the states had gone through many inflicted adventures against each other but never the less as always, both states settled on cooperation and sometimes coexistence, but eventually, the matter was never resolved or come to a settlement or conclusion ([Kamboh, MK, 2021](#)).

Pakistan India Relations

Pakistan is a country in South Asia that has a long border with India. Both nations have a lot in common, including geography, political and economic systems, culture and society, apart from the fact that they share a lengthy border. Both nations' diplomatic relations are affected by their armed engagements. Even after appearing on the world map as a whole, both the countries have been seen spying, violating, and disrespecting each other's boundaries many times. (Khan, 2021) Even though, throughout history, it can be seen a series of conflicts have been between India-Pakistan and the time media was playing the key Actor in all these situations and was shaping the minds of the people of both states. ([Ijaz, 2016](#))

Pakistan and India are two South Asia's largest independent nations, linked in many ways. However, diplomatic ties between the two countries date back to before either country was even born. As a strong and prevalent source of information, the media is considered a social actor. People's thoughts are shaped by it, but it also demonstrates what is true and presents facts and answers. The media not only disseminates information but also has an impact on the public and government officials who use it. Even if the media isn't very good at telling us what to think, it is extremely good at telling us what to think about. ([Singh, 2022](#))

Since independence and British colonization, there has been animosity between the two countries. The military has complete authority over the border checkpoints that separate the two countries. Based on these two concerns, both nations may sit down for peace negotiations and find a solution to the Kashmir dispute. Throughout this time, the media served as both a representative and a conduit for disseminating information about the situation to the citizens of both states. More pressing concerns, such as the water conflict, Siachen, and Samjhota Express, have risen to the fore whenever Pakistan-India ties are mentioned on the news. ([Irum, Wardah, 2019](#))

The newspaper or press is still considered the most important media even after electronic media came because its

significance cannot deny and still, many people are towards press media, and it is the base of media. (Nasir, 2021) According to Media, it is said that the Pakistan-India relationship cannot go to betterment until the Kashmir issue resolves because Kashmir is the bridge of relations that brings peace and harmony in the regions. Moreover, if the Kashmir issue resolves, it will not only be the betterment of that particular state, but it will also release tensions around the nations carrying weapons around the borders of both the countries. (Haider, 2021)

According to reports in the media, Modi's government has exacerbated tensions between India and Pakistan. There is no hope for reconciliation between Pakistan and India despite the efforts of Pakistani Prime Minister Narendra Modi's cruel actions in Kashmir. The media is also believed to have played a part in fostering good ties between two countries and establishing bilateral contacts; however, this cannot be stated on the Indian side because they appear unwilling to do so rather than producing propaganda about it. (Ashraf, 2021)

Cinematic Relations

Coming on to the cinematic relationship between the two states, despite what tensions are happening apart from the cinematic view both industries couldn't resist showing the beautiful relationships across the border, many films are also being produced, and somehow, they are showing India Pakistan relationships in a good manner, but there are also some of them conveying a bad image of Pakistan, so by now, you can understand that how media wants to show good and how bad and sometimes it clicks and fits in the mind of the viewer so deeply that he starts thinking like the way it was shown that is how powerful the media is. (Chohan, 2022)

Cinematic is also an important mainstream private media that cannot be ignored as it is a great source of entertainment for people of both countries. It is also a great tool for promoting foreign policy aims. (Khan et al., 2021) The movies in Pakistan and India are also a source of showing the nature of the relationship. The study concluded that movies on both

sideshow foreign policies of their side as better than the other. They are not neutral. Ali et al. (2012) studied the Muslim portrayal in Bollywood movies. The finding of the research concludes that mostly Indian movies portrayed Muslims and Pakistanis as a terrorist and extremist-minded people. Such types of images are showing them negatively in Indian citizen mind and worldwide, which encourage the conflicted mindset of Indian toward Pakistanis, and it damages the relationship indirectly between both the countries. They suggest that neutral movies can enhance the mindset toward positivity and peaceful gesture between both rivals to neighbor friends. So importantly, the media character cannot be ignored in maintaining good relationship ties between both countries. The mass media of both countries should focus more on open-door policies for supporting peace dove rather than on pro-nationalist and extremism (Javaid, 2020).

Pakistan-India relations have now come to a very crucial stage where the borders of both countries are closed for each other, and to some extent, the trade is also been closed; everything is hostile and a cold war-like situation. On the other hand, India is taking out grudges on the people of Kashmir and spreading out violence in the city, and conveying a bad message for the people around the globe. Pakistan has chosen to stay silent on this issue and work smartly and effectively while India is choosing violence over it. (Naveed, 2021)

Role of Media

Mass Media - print, digital or electronic is a great source of public opinion building. It has strengthened its roots due to its public communication in changing mindsets (Adnan et al., 2019). According to Cohen (1963) "Press may not be successful in telling us what to think but it is stunningly successful in telling us what to think about". Pakistan and India's relationship have been confused even after the 1947 independence. Both the countries need a comprehensive approach for the confidence-building motion in for the evolution of the relationships of both Countries in Numerous sectors such as Environmental, Military, politically, and

economically.

Unfortunately, Media in Pakistan and India have built a history of violence that has strengthened the present distrust. Hence people of both countries have been programmed as enemies of each other. They showed Muslims and Hindu Riots as a match of wrestling between both the communities ([Haider, 2021](#)).

[Adnan et al. \(2019\)](#) conducted a study on Media and Foreign Policy relationships. They did a comparison of both countries' print media, National from Pakistan and Hindu From opposite sides. This coverage included a time duration of six months. Ninety-six articles or editorial was published by Pakistani newspaper and seventy-nine editorials were published by Indian newspaper on several issues such as border tension, Kashmir issues, water issues, and terrorism. The water and Kashmir dispute was raised negatively treated toward India. On the opposite side, Hindu newspapers gave more injurious publishing toward Pakistan on the issue of terrorism and border tension. They finally, revealed that in both countries favorable coverage was less compared to unfavorable coverage.

Furthermore, unfortunately, mass media has been used by both sides of governments as a tool of propaganda. The media has also made an effort on their sides for peace journalism as "Aman ki Asha" was started after the Mumbai incident. This program was on the air by the Times of India and Jang group, Pakistan to maintain the wind of peace between both nations. Due to this programed the hatred against Pakistan decreased from 75% to 42% and similar in Pakistan the hatred decreased from 54% to 30% ([Khalid, 2014](#)). According to Mustufa (2004), mass media has become a key factor globally in international relations. Therefore, as media change and build the perceptions of people in the modern era. So, social media can play an important and serious role in establishing a peaceful environment and better relationship between both countries if both nations came forward to share peace-building content. Unlikely the print and electronic media encourage negativity for political and commercial gain ([Hafeez, 2015](#)).

Media as a Propaganda Tool

With time the war technique has changed in the modern world. Perception, narrative, and information are among the basic warfare weapons. This conflict can be distal to the inside culture and change the narrative or perception of people's beliefs, and values of any country. It can affect the economic growth of any country when people became against their government or country policies as a result it divided people into distinct groups and beliefs. Furthermore, media has played a role as a major actor in changing or narrative shaping of people ([Gillani, Nazir & Pirzada, 2021](#)).

The Major cause of dispute between Pakistan and India in the Kashmir dispute for the last few decades. War journalism is dominated by both as compared to the journalism of peace was not valued for decades. Print media has not fulfilled its duties or has not been used efficiently and effectively for the resolution of conflict and a peaceful environment, but mode media has played the role of increasing the strength of conflict. They suggest that the peaceful journalism award program should be announced by the media associations of both countries to enhance peaceful journalism to build a positive narrative in both nations' minds. They should open training institutions for this ([Zia & Syedah 2015](#)).

[Saffee \(2016\)](#) stated that the Indian media brainwashed the people with group strategies with the help of agenda-setting theory and the lens of Pakistan as a security threat to others. In return, they noticed that Pakistani media shared a more conciliatory approach which was unaccepted by the opposite media. As a result, they started to answer the Indian propaganda against the Pakistani regime. They further noticed that the main issue is occupied Kashmir by the Indian government. This also has a negative result on the foreign policies of both the countries as it shapes the people's opinion and diverts them toward a negative mindset toward each other. It is also noted that the foreign policy on both sides has been negatively affected due to causing public emotions which lead to a mindset of conspiratorial persuasive thinking. On Pakistan and Indian issues, the Pakistani

broadcasting is also very unnatural or non-objective. Media does not play a role in change, but they keep promoting what things are for decades according to the agenda-setting theories.

The corporate media, on the other hand, reflects and misrepresents the concerns. Social media reflects public opinion, which is an excellent example of citizen diplomacy. Officials are strongly affected to make choices based on public reaction. As a result of combat groups, all these sides keep blaming each other's press for destabilizing the region and telling lies against each other while. (Ali, 2014) The role of social media in the development of Indo-Pak ties cannot be overstated. In the situation of India-Pakistan diplomacy, battle reporting takes precedence beyond peace reporting. The Indian media played a very poor role in the Attacks in Mumbai.

In any country, the media is regarded as a key player in safeguarding national security (Shad, M.R. et al., 2021). Nonetheless, in Pakistan, media independence is inconsistent; in fact, different governments have tried different methods to regulate it. The world's most powerful country also uses the media as a tool to improve its economic situation and strategic objectives. According to critical analysis, during the 1971 Kashmir dispute, Pakistani media used a variety of discursive methods to frame the issue. West Pakistan's press used Islam as an ideological weapon to counter India's aggressive strategy. They depicted the clashes between Muslims and Hindus as a sparring session between the two societies.

We know how the media of Pakistan and India carried out the Mumbai attack. The news media played its full role in making the people's perceptions; If they start giving false information, the consequences will be bad for both sides. As soon as the attack took place, without any investigation, the Indian media started claiming that the attack was carried out by Pakistan and that it was planned, and it was not just the people of these two countries who get the perceptions. The peoples in other countries also see this thing and make their perceptions according

to it. And most of the narrative buildings are from social and political bases. (Raina, P. 2015)

After the 9/11 attack, not only India but also the whole world media start building negative perceptions about Pakistan (Minhas, 2019). After that, an atmosphere was created in which every orientation and every meeting or interactions a dirty image start to be made about Pakistan. And India took full advantage of that to start using new techniques to create negative agendas to let Pakistan be separated from the rest of the world by any means. And in this cycle, the new media brainwashed the people very well. The media in Pakistan and India have not acknowledged one other as partners in promoting stability.

Positive use of Media

In addition, the media playing a role in promoting peace is hard to find. Both the country's media has not accepted each other for promoting stability and peace. Meanwhile, the media is playing the role of a coin that has two faces. On the one side, they are making injurious reporting spreading hatred in public of both neighboring countries, and on the other side, they are collecting funds for talk of peace and making alliances. According to the scholars, there are four points to promoting peace the political atmosphere defining, the nature of the debate, change of behavior and strategies from the antagonist's view, and a decrease in the antagonist's legitimacy of public standing.

For instance "Aman ki Asha" is a great example of how media can decrease the evil or antagonist point of view of the public of both countries. Mainstream media should come with more peace talks on this show which will prosper more peace to Pakistan and the Indian public. Aman or peace is not possible without the right use of power by three groups of media named electronic media, print media, and digital or social media (Batool, 2013). Covering the Abhinandhan case happened on 27 February 2020. Pakistani media cover it as a heroic act by the Pakistani air force and capturing the pilot alive with a cup of tea serving and better medical treatment. The release of the Pilot was a great handshake toward peace, but Indian media provoke it as international

pressure on the Pakistani government and promote more hatred although it was appreciated by twitter sources. The Indian media show its released pilot as a Hero in Public point of view and were given a high award ([Sriram, 2019](#)).

The whole South Asian region's security is affected by Pakistan and Indian conflict. Among many other reasons media is also a major source of provoking or spreading the destabilization of peace or weakening the relation due to misleading reporting on critical issues. It has not only damaged the relationship of the neighboring countries Pakistan and India but the relationship of the South Asian region has been affected so far.

The media of both countries can be a responsible factor in conflict resolution and give fruitful proposals for solving the basic issues problems between these two countries ([Yaseen et al., 2016](#)). The Indian government is using the media as warfare for narrative development against Pakistan, blaming Pakistan to support terrorist organizations Haqqani and Al Qaeda and others only to put the failure of their allies (USA) on Pakistan with the help of Afghanistan and promote coercive diplomacy weakening the ties of a good relationship between these three countries ([Khaver, 2019](#)).

Summing up, the media is focusing more on discourse or more on communication in showbiz, games, terrorism, etc. they revealed that the large heterogeneous audience believes that both the dialogues and media are important soft power factors for fostering peace and good relations between Pakistan and India if they do positive reporting. Which can help in positive correlational development of both the countries ([Karim & Hussain, 2019](#)). In the modern period, the media is playing the role of the fourth estate of the government. As it plays a crucial role in the political and social atmosphere of the country, when it comes to foreign policy, media play a sensitive role and hence it has also an impact on the foreign policy of the country fostering or rostering the relation ([Toshi, 2015](#)).

Importantly, social media in recent times cannot be ignored as it involves personal emotion and opinion. It can also have

negative consequences not only on public relations of both countries but also on the diplomatic level as social media is strictly monitored by the high authorities which influence them in making policies according to the public opinion as confirmed by high authorities that media pressure has a great influence on the decision making on a higher level. In short, social media is playing a negative role in fostering the relations ([Ali & Ajaz, 2014](#))

In Pakistan and India, however, media houses and journalists frequently operate on patriotic lines, the media is significant because it can represent a certain relationship as "good" or "bad" and so encourage public opinion about a country through its coverage. Portraying even routine diplomatic meetings and sporting events as questions of nationwide pride. Depending on the extent of coercion, personal associations of media workers, and larger policies of media outlets, the media's participation in conflict swings in many directions. ([Saeed, 2021](#))

Findings

Today's media has become a significant player in international affairs. It has shown to be a significant factor that not only impacts but drives relations between states in the desired direction. Media is so strong that it offers and changes people's brains whenever and whatever knowledge is needed to be supplied to them through media. For many years, Pakistan and India have been on a critical path, and one of the most prominent issues in Kashmir has become a perennial conflict between the two countries. Both countries have fought brutal wars for control of this metropolis, and certain grudges have been borne as a result of this.

If politicians will, the media can play a role in improving relations between India and Pakistan and fostering development. In today's globe, the media has grown in popularity to the point that it is regarded as the fourth pillar of the contemporary political system, with a substantial effect on public opinion. The media is seen as a social actor since it is a powerful and widespread source of information. It shapes people's views, but it also reveals what is true and gives facts and

solutions. Relations between Pakistan and India have been fraught since independence and British domination. Pakistan-India relations have been tumultuous since their independence in 1947. Both nations require a thorough strategy for trust-building for the ties to evolve.

Conclusion

Pakistan-India relations have now reached a critical juncture at which both countries' borders and, to a lesser degree, trade are closed to each other, and everything is hostile and reminiscent of a cold war. The media is seen to have played a role in strengthening bilateral ties between the two countries, however, this cannot be stated on the Indian side because they appear unwilling to do so rather than produce propaganda about it.

Unfavorable coverage outnumbered negative and positive coverage. Peace journalism is controlled by both, but peace journalism was not valued for decades. Print media has not fulfilled its duty or has not been used efficiently and effectively for conflict resolution and a peaceful environment, but mass media has played a part in the escalating conflict. It is also proposed that a peaceful journalism award program be launched by the media associations of both nations to promote peaceful journalism. The role of the media in sustaining good relations between the two countries cannot be overstated.

Both nations should prioritize open-door policies to assist peace doves above pro-nationalist and extremist measures. As the Indian media brainwashes the people using agenda-setting theory and portrays Pakistan as a security concern to others. It is the need for neutral films that can influence people's

attitudes toward optimism and pleasant gestures between rivals and neighbors.

Both nations' media have rejected one other's efforts to promote stability and peace. The media is employing the two-faced coin rule. On the one hand, they are creating hostility in the public of both adjacent nations, while on the other, they are collecting cash for peace talks. The mainstream media should promote more peace talks to foster more peace between Pakistan and India.

The media is focused more on discourse or communication about show business, gaming, and terrorism, among other things. It can also have negative consequences not only on the public relation of both countries but also on the diplomatic level.

Citizen diplomacy is a good example since it reflects public opinion and allows politicians to make decisions based on popular reactions. The importance of social media in the growth of Indo-Pak relations cannot be emphasized. Battle reporting takes precedence over peace reporting in the context of India-Pakistan relations. The news media plays a significant part in shaping people's perspectives. If they start spreading false information, the implications would be disastrous for both sides.

In the end, media has been an important part of our lives from whether is newspapers, radios to the latest electronic media, it has played a vital role in our lives and it also keeps us updated on those important events or tragedies that occur each time and also sometimes it has given a good perception and sometimes failed to convey a good message due to political issues. We are inclined to see media updating and advancing in the future to give us and build our perception the way best possible.

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