



Role of Identities in the Indo-Pak Relations: A Study in Constructivism

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Abstract

The history of Pakistan-India relations is full of conflicts ever since the partition of the sub-continent in 1947 and is much evident with respect to major and minor wars together with border skirmishes as a routine job. The rivalry between the two nation-states is generally studied in the context of realism. However, this research aimed to study the role of social institutions in the formation of identities resulting in hostile relations between the two nation-states. The research has undergone a thorough analysis of social institutions considered influential in any society with respect to identity formation. The study found that social institutions of education, media, religion, and politics have played a significant role in the construction of interstate hostile identities. It is found that utilization of ideas, and norms practiced in social institutions, has constructed the identities that resulted in hostile behavioral patterns in the masses of two South Asian nation-states.

Key Words: Identity, Construction, Social Institution, Ideas.

Introduction

The identity plays a significant role in shaping the behaviors of humans by the notion of attachment or detachment. Booth (2007) proposed that humans across the globe are enslaved to their constructed identities which made them act in certain patterns that are considered against human worth and dignity. Nationalistic identity in different eras and regions, made one nation to act violently against the other. The emergence of nationalism with respect to identity formation in the modern global political system can be traced back to the Treaty of Westphalia in the 16th century (Erdag, 2013). It is assumed that identity formation is a socio-psychological phenomenon that is developed and organized by means of interaction process between the members of “In-group” and “out-group” in

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respective social settings (Inac and Unal, 2013). This interaction process, prevailing in the respective societies through the process of internalization and socialization, gives rise to ethnocentric behaviors in humans.

Huntington (2000) proposed that culture-based civilization has a stronghold on individuals as well as on political systems to create hostile identities with respect to others. The formation of norms by societies can be viewed as a process to preserve their autonomy from dominance, neglect, violation, and abuse from other powerful actors (Acharya, 2011). The construction of history with biased approach rooted in the phenomenon of ethnocentrism, through the process of socialization, results in serious impacts upon human life and indeed, future generations of the hostile nations are also affected too (Behera, 1996). Indo-Pak rivalry is much visible in this regard, as both oppose each other, at almost all levels and forums regionally and internationally. The Indo-Pak disputes and differences have extremely escalated over the period of decades and even made them toxic to deal with, due to the incompatible ideological formation (Yaqoob, 2016).

The continuous hostility between Pakistan and India has roots in historical as well as ideological differences. The rules of Muslim and British in the sub-continent impacted the ego of Hindus and indeed, same fact can be understood in shape of extremely ethnocentric Hindutva political philosophy that inculcated a notion of hatred in the sub-continent. As a reciprocal action, Muslims of the sub-continent decided to safe-guard their respective identity and went on for demanding a separate homeland. Lieven (2011) proposed that two-nation theory was the ideological base for the partition of the sub-continent, as Muslims considered themselves a different nation from Hindus on an ethnocultural basis. Afterward, since independence, both nation-states are involved in re-writing the past events with respect to their present political ideologies in order to get support from the masses, resulting in hostile identities across the border (Behera, 1996). These identities and interests have inflicted heavy material and non-material losses across the borders. Indo-Pak conflict resulted in huge socio-economic losses together with regional instability affecting the whole region (Javaid et. al, 2016). The embedded hostility constructed over the decades resulted in the structural enslavement of humans in both countries resulting in poverty and underdevelopment (Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency, 2011). The enduring rivalry between the nations lies in the two ideologies of statehood which can be observed in the nationalist movements in sub-continent (Paul, 2005).

In this regard, the constructivist approach is emerging as a mainstream perspective which is in a distinct position to analyze Indo-Pak historical hostile relations. The constructivist approach looks into the social construction of identity and subsequent actions in relation to agency and structure with respect to inter-subjectivity (Morgan, 2005). Constructivism discusses the impact of construction

of social meanings attached to the ideas, knowledge, objects, and practices that make the world either secure or insecure (Wendt, 1999). It is considered as a middle-range theory lying in between the rationalist and reflectivist theories including postmodernism to look into the role of identities (Acharya, 2008).

Constructivism

The roots of Constructivism can be traced back to the works of many scholars from the eighteenth century to twentieth-century (Jackson and Sorenson, 2006). Constructivism, as a perspective, came on the scene of International Relations after the end of cold war as the traditional perspectives failed to predict and explain the phenomenon (Nugroho, 2008). Nicholas Greenwood Onuf was the first to coin the term “Constructivism” in the discipline of International Relations in 1989, proposing that agents and structures behave in the same patterns (Onuf, 2012). This paradigm sees world political system as the outcome of human practices embedded in ideological interpretations. Alexander Wendt, one of the distinct constructivists of all times, has created foundations of a new approach aiming to enhance understanding of the functioning of the global political system by integrating and building a bridge between two major mainstream traditional international relation perspectives (Erdag, 2013). The origin of constructivism can also be observed as an outcome of debates between different school of thoughts in linkage with the demise of USSR, resulting in an academic vacuum like situation demanding for a need of a new approach in International Relations for comprehensive explanation of the phenomena (Jackson and Sorenson, 2006). Constructivism explains socio-political facts of International Relations on the basis of ideas and norms developing due to the interaction processes on various levels (Jackson and Sorenson, 2006).

Constructivism assists the scholars of International Relations to understand intra-state as well as inter-state relations. It is seen as an alternative approach which actually challenges the contemporary rational approaches with respect to the functioning of agents and structures on the basis of identities and interest (Slaughter, 2011). It discusses the impact of the construction of social meanings attached to the objects and practices which make the world either secure or insecure (Wendt, 2000). Constructivists highlight the formation of ideas, norms, values, and beliefs in different socio-psychological settings, which result in acts of enmity, friendship, bias and discrimination among the agency and structures (Slaughter, 2011). One of the core assumptions of constructivism is that the behaviors of structures can be altered to become productive to the world by the influence of the international organizations (non-state actors) by the process of communication, persuasion, lobbying, and shaming (Keck and Sikkink, 2014). Constructivism is distinct from the traditional approaches, as it discusses the inter-subjectivity of facts, deep-rooted in identities (Nugroho, 2008). It was the genius of Alexander Wendt when he published his scholarly research work “*Anarchy is*

What States Make of It” which just made an enormous influence on the scene theoretical foundations of International Relations, as it became one of the mainstream paradigms challenging others (Nugroho, 2008).

The identity of the state is constructed by social structures rather than given by human nature (Wendt, 1994). One of the core assumptions of the constructivist school of thought is that the interaction of humans and states consists of ideas and patterns which are socially constructed hence rejecting the ontological position of rational school of thought. Another assumption is that materials are also part of the world constructed by human beings but it’s the subjective interpretation that gives meaning to those objects and practices. Constructivism assumes that ideas and beliefs give shape to the outer world determining the orientational perspective to the agents and structures. As ideas and beliefs are considered the product of society, the world is seen as a society and its political system as its product (Jackson and Sorensen, 2006).

Distinctness from the Contemporary Approaches

Before looking into the role of social institutions in the construction of hostile identity between the two traditional rivals, there is a need to briefly explain the distinctiveness of constructivism from other contemporary approaches. Ian Hurd (2008) has made useful studies to show its distinctness from other traditional perspectives by elaborating its features.

- Traditional approaches assume conflict as into the nature of humans and states, looking for more and more material power, while the basic feature of the constructivist school of thought is the social construction of a political system with respect to ideas and beliefs. The social construction of objects and practices are seen as with reference to time and space.
- The other feature which makes it unique from the rest of the mainstream paradigms is the way it sees the interest of the state. Traditional perspectives propose that national interest of the state is guiding star in acquiring material resources in the global political system. By contrast, the constructivist assumes that the interest of the state is social in nature and can be observed as an outcome of identities making process. The construction of actor’s interest and identity can be seen as product and influence of socialization and internalization.
- Another interesting feature that makes constructivism distinct is the relationship of structure and agent, how they interact and influence each other to construct a social situation and in turn how the constructed social situation influences both the structure and agent. The understanding of mutual influence is an important contribution to the social theory of

international politics which elaborates the change of behaviors with the construction and re-construction process.

- The traditional theories propose the world political system as anarchic but constructivists look into it with a distinct approach. Constructivism does not see states as rivals of each other with respect to competing on scarce resources instead look into it through the lens of social construction. As Wendt proposed a spectrum of global anarchical relationships based on the difference of ideas that states have for themselves and others.

Arguments of the Study

The main arguments of the research studies are as follows:

- Socially constructed identities lead to hostile identities in interstate relations.

The sub-arguments of the research studies are as follows:

- Identities are socially constructed in interstate relations.
- Interests of the states are socially constructed and are not embedded in geopolitics.

Significance

The significance of this paper lies in highlighting the role of ideas and norms contributing to the hostile behaviors in between India and Pakistan. The historical confrontations of India and Pakistan over a period of seven decades are generally studied by the lens of realist school of thought (Pakistan-India Relations, Challenges, and Prospects, 2014). Apart from material aspects, there is a need to understand the conflict between the two states with respect to deep-rooted ideas, norms, knowledge, and beliefs (Ali, 2015). The research studies applied the constructivist perspective on the historical rivalry between the two nations, in relation to deeply rooted socially constructed identities. The research paper is vital in the enhancement of understandings not only for society in general but also to policymakers in particular. The qualitative research method is used for this study to explore the inter-subjective facts. The document analysis technique is utilized to explore the facts concerning the socialization process which is resulting in construction of hostile identities.

Discussion and Analysis

How social construction of identity impact interstate relationships in the global political system? Alexander Wendt highlighted the socio-political fact by

proposing that the United States perceives more threatened from North Korea's five Weapon of Mass Destruction than five hundred Weapon of Mass Destruction of the United Kingdom (Ian Hurd, 2008). The same assumption of Wendt can be observed valid not only in context of global political system but also in Indo-Pak hostile relations, where Pakistan perceives military might of China less threatening as compared to India which is having weaker military capabilities than the former. It is pertinent to mention here that neorealism and neoliberalism are considered dominant perspectives to understand the conflicts in a global political system with respect to material power. On the contrary, constructivist approach looks into inter-state relations, either hostile or cooperative, with respect to the phenomenon of social construction. The India-Pakistan relations are full of tensed situations, ever since the partition in 1947. The historical evidence, with respect to conflicts, can be observed in shape of three major wars and with many borders skirmishes as a routine work between the two states. Moreover, the two nations are also involved in a diplomatic confrontation on almost all international forums. The hostile relations between India and Pakistan are embedded in contested identities, constructed and practiced across the borders. Social institutions are considered to have vital influence in the construction of socio-cognitive identities resulting in hostile behavioral patterns in the communities across the borders. This research looked into the influential role of social institutions in the construction of hostile identities in Indo-Pak relations.

Social institutions utilize ideas and norms through the process of interaction and learning in the construction of self-identity. This self-identity, internalized in masses, creates self-esteem with respect to in-group resulting in ethnocentric behaviors towards out-groups. These socially constructed identities can be observed in hostile behaviors between the nations. Societal institutions, through the process of socialization, create ideological patterns influencing the actions of the state in inter-state relations (Wendt, 1992). Meanings are linked to the socio-political aspects of the global world through a complex mixture of ideas, norms, beliefs, and history. Meanings are attached to the material world further construct identities which result in the perception of friend or foe in the international system. Contrary to contemporary perspectives, the enmity between India and Pakistan can be observed as an outcome of deep-rooted ideational socio-cultural structures. The constructed perception of friend and foe creates cooperation and conflicts in inter-state relations. This aspect results in rejection of over-simplified notion of rational approach, which looks into variables like power, wealth, and survival as sole determining factors in inter-state conflictual relations. The neo-realist school of thought looks into the rivalry between India and Pakistan as a result of geopolitics, where both actors are involved in a competition of maximization of material power. On the contrary, Constructivist scholars assume that the interests of the states are constructed by social structures. The concrete or

brute facts of Indo-Pak relations are not totally rejected by the constructivist school of thought; but instead, it assumes that material aspect of the hostile relations can only be comprehensively understood by a study of intersubjective knowledge.

India and Pakistan are traditional societies, where the socio-cultural institutions are playing a dominant role in the lives of not only individuals but also have a significant role in the shaping of state policies towards outer world. As Wendt, keeping in view the proposition of unitary state encompasses every aspect of identity formation and its respective impact on the global political system as a product of domestic nature in respect of social structures (Checkel, 1998). Social institutions in South Asian society have a significant influence on the formation of identities that shape the patterns of individual and collective life. Inter-subjective understanding of the ideas, norms, beliefs, and history is vital with respect to the role of social institutions in Indo-Pak hostile relations. As Wendt (1999) proposed that daily life in the international political system can be observed as an ongoing complex process of identities and interests formation with respect to others, molding them into corresponding counter identities and playing out in respect of it. The conflicts in India and Pakistan are socially constructed leading to produce the identities and interests across the borders impacting the patterns in inter-state hostile relations. In the below paragraphs, role of social institutions is analyzed and discussed, to get a comprehensive understanding with respect to the social construction of identities and interests resulting in producing hostile relationships between the two bordering states.

Education

India and Pakistan are still undergoing enduring rivalry even after seven decades of the partition of the sub-continent. The antagonistic relations between the two states are escalated by the biased historical interpretations and manipulated compilation of curriculum with respect to ones' own nationalism. The historical literature is written across the shapes of the borders "others identity" as fearful, brutal, nasty and mean in a way that it not only shapes but also enhances their own patriotism with respect to their own country. It results in the creation of ideas, norms, and beliefs which not only defame others but also result in glorifying one's own heroes (Ibrar and Naqvi, 2012). In a way to invoke patriotic patterns and make the masses proud of their historical legacies, the curriculum taught in the educational institutions was compiled in such a way that the presentation of facts written in the curriculum supports the glorification of one's own country (Saigol, 2006). These controversial and biased interpretations of history have linkages with the construction of hostile identities and interests. In this regard, the curriculum of class VI on Pakistani side can best explain the same socially constructed phenomenon of identities. The author highlighted that "*Hindus attacked Pakistan in 1965 at the hours of the night so they are timid and cowardice and always had*

sneaky ways to fight with the courageous nation of Pakistan” (Saigol, 2006). The author further mentioned the constructions at the other side of the border; the curriculum in India is also depicting the similar notion in phrases like, *“Babri mosque was built at the same place where the Hindu God Rama was born.”*

The selection and utilization of words in the textbooks indeed resulted in the generation of sense of enmity towards each other, across the borders and it is much evident with respect to the hostile behavioral patterns among the masses of both nation-states. The distortion of historical facts leads to illusions and phantoms in the masses leading to the construction of identities and respective interests. Humans operate more upon constructed identities than true reasons. The regimes in both countries are found to be involved in manipulation of the curriculum at multi-levels to create hostile behavioral patterns in the masses in order to objectify the policies of state (Ibrar and Naqvi, 2012). The meanings attached to the social and material facts lead humans and subsequently state to act and react in certain antagonistic patterns, in synchronization with the internalized identities and respective material interests. These identities shape not only the behaviors of individuals in respect of non-state actors but also impact the decision of states in inter-state relations. These socially constructed identities and interests can be traced in the violent and brutal acts committed by state and non-state actors across the borders.

Media

In the modern era, media emerged as a key institution of influencing societal thoughts, as access to information became very convenient. Media as a social institution is very significant in constructing identities of in-group against the out-group across the globe. India and Pakistan hostile relations are taken very enthusiastically by media houses across the borders for various purposes. The media presentations of Indo-Pak rivalry intensify the sense of social comparison phenomenon between the two nations, resulting in contestation in inter-group relations. The antagonistic media role across the borders has increased the divides between the two nations (PILDAT, 2016). The images, words, and characters utilized by media to convey specific ideas and values resulting in ethnocentric behaviors against the others. The construction of others is carried out in a way to portray them as different, fraud, fearful and brutal than one own group. The biological and physiological comparison is presented in favor of one’s own group identity. Mainstream media is responsible for exaggeration of events, by constructing one-sided biased approach to issues with respect to one’s own country position resulting in non-access and non-understanding of real facts to masses (Ali and Ajaz, 2014). The masses are internalized with manipulated ideas and patterns which result in stereotypes against the others. Media broadcast programs on

constructing the in-group identity are comprised of ideas, ideologies, and lens of viewing the outer world in synchronization with the historical patterns. The norms and values which media propagate are very influential as same are generated from power centers like state and its other institutions. The vital point in this regard is that the masses easily internalized these ideas disseminated through media as same are taken for granted and seem as natural due to the reason that other institutions of socialization also share the same ideas, norms, and beliefs. These identities portrayed by media assist the individual in viewing the out-group as friends or foes. Behind the scene, various social actors play a vital role in providing the proposed identity to be propagated.

Critical analysis of the contents of electronic and print media explains the better understanding of the way ideas and patterns are given meanings to fabricate and internalize identities in the masses. The study of images, words, gestures, and characters suggests that how media construct the identity of one's group with respect to others rooted in ethnocentrism. In electronic media, the guest participants in talk shows from both the states victimize not only each other by verbal assault but also their emotional debate results in the construction of negative symbols with respect to intensification of hostility in Indo-Pak relations (Mustafa, 2013). Media is playing its role as a conflict-stoker, resulting in the construction of emotional identities across the border giving rise to new controversies (Gul, 2013). The print and electronic media are not assisting in the construction of environment of peace and stability; instead, it is acting as a catalyst to further deteriorate the relations between the two countries and spreading ideas of hate and discrimination (Ramu, 2010). A study was conducted to analyze the role of print media in Indo-Pak relations by looking into the major newspapers. The research has shown that print media has exhibited biased role in few issues on one hand but also adapted maturity while addressing the issues keeping in view the patriotism (Yousaf, Ullah, and Ali, 2013). The media across the border is enslaved to their national identities and has exhibited a fixed role in portraying one's own country with favoritism and with prejudice towards others (Bose, 2011). Media role is considered significantly influential as the biased social construction of identities is vivid and same is resulting in hostile identities and interests in inter-state relations in South Asia.

Religion

India and Pakistan are involved in conflict right after the partition of the sub-continent. The ideological beliefs and cultural differences are considered as root causes of partition. Even after seven decades of Independence, both rival nation-states are obsessed with Hindu and Muslim Identities that can be traced back to their past with respect to hostile behaviors. Chomsky considered the extremist identities across the border threatening for the peace and stability in the region

(Shank, & Feffer, 2007). Pakistan and India are a traditional society where religious ideas and beliefs shape the identities and interests of the masses. The social patterns in traditional societies can be viewed as a process to preserve their autonomy from dominance, neglect, violation, and abuse from other powerful actors (Acharya, 2011). The enduring hostile relations between India and Pakistan are based on religious ideological identities (Navlakha, 2009). The religious institution has utilized the territorial disputes between the two states and further fueled the conflicts by drawing hard lines between the Muslims and Hindus. It is considered that the disputed territory of Kashmir acts as a source of permanent threat leading to hostile Indo-Pak relations (Siddiqa, 2004). In Pakistan, Kashmir is considered a part of the country on the basis of religious ideology while in India it is taken on a Hindutva philosophy (Ali, 2015). Religious forces in Pakistan and India have expressed solidarity with the state in respect of hostility to India and influenced the masses by utilizing hostile ideas and words as part of their teachings resulting in the construction of hostile identities and interests. Three major wars are fought by India and Pakistan over territorial disputes resulting in massive human and material loss (Rizvi, 2011). The religious institutions across the border perceive other state and its people as a threat but also consider the same as an enemy of their religion. This threat perception results in internalization of hostile identities and interests in the masses.

In Pakistan and India, religion and nationalism have been used, adopted and implemented by the regimes to exploit the ideological identities for their own benefits. The tool of socialization was utilized by Pakistani and Indian governments to artificially create hostile national identities based on the religious and ethnic basis (Lall, 2008). The religious and nationalist identities go on with hand in hand; as one cannot be segregated from the other. Even if the powerful governments in the two states intend to bring positive change, the same cannot intervene in hostile identities situation, as the public considered it like treason against the state ideological foundations. Religion is used by the state as a tool to internalize hostile identities in the nations across the borders (Ali, 2015). These facts resulted in the strengthening of religious institutions resulting in deep penetration in culture. Religious sentiments in the public are easily molded in both countries, as emotional attachment can be found to be at its highest level especially with respect to Indo-Pak rivalry. The religious attachments inculcate antagonistic behavioral patterns in the masses across the border, resulting in intensification of historical rivalry between the two nation-states.

Politics

Political institutions across the border have not only exploited the hostility between the two nations for political gain but also factored in the escalation of the rivalry. The political interests of leaders and parties have internalized the hostile identities

in the self-interest. In order to get their political goal, they have used the ideas, words, gestures, and values to manipulate the facts (Ali, 2015). The political institutions exploited the national and religious identities across the borders which are visible in the socially constructed structures and patterns of politics. The politicians have internalized enduring rivalry to such an extent in the public that now it's become difficult to segregate nationalism from hostile behaviors against the other. Historical analysis suggests that political leaders utilized the Kashmir as a tool for their political gain. In this regard, the over-ambitious aggressive approach by Modi government in recent times is a significant example. The Modi Sarkar in India in link with the Hindutva philosophy manipulated the facts in order to get the political gains in the recent elections and indulged itself in construction of negative portrayal of Pakistan and acted aggressively towards Pakistan in shape of surgical strike in February 2019. Pakistan retaliated and inflicted heavy losses on the Indian side by shooting down its two jet fighters. It is pertinent to mention here that Pakistani political and military leaderships acted very pragmatically in this specific episode and it is much evident with respect to policy of maximum restraint and release of captured Indian pilot as a goodwill gesture towards constructing an environment of peace.

However, apart from the aforementioned example, Pakistani politicians too are involved in the construction of hostile identities historically. A good example in this regard is the speeches of mainstream politicians while addressing the public gatherings chanting, "*Modi ka jo yar ha Ghaddaar ha Ghaddaar ha*" (whoever is Indian Prime Minister Modi's friend is a traitor). These kinds of slogans generate a sense of hostile images in the masses. The utilization of words, ideas, and beliefs by political leaders and their parties depict a symbol of hostility having an immense influence on the public. Whereas an outcome, one has to show hostility against others to prove one's own patriotism to the respective country. The politician through heated discussions in media programs and speeches in public gatherings intensifies the ethnocentric behaviors in the public and the same result in the construction of hostile identities. These socially constructed identities are reflected in the policies of the state wherein pressure of the public, the state cannot operate on true reasons in inter-state relations but on uncalculated and irrational approach.

Conclusion

The history of India-Pakistan relations is full of conflicts ever since the partition of sub-continent in 1947. The rivalry is generally studied keeping in view the realist school of thought. In contrast, this research study applied constructivism, which is one of the main emerging schools of thought in International Relations. The studies looked into the role of actors, institutions, and events in the construction of identities in humans and states that result in hostile relations between India and Pakistan. It is proposed that the social meanings attached to the

ideas, beliefs, norms, and patterns constructed the identities and interests in interstate relations. The research found that institutional formation of identities through ideas, norms, and belief produce hostile patterns between the two nation-states of South Asia. The socio-cognitive processes resulted in internalization of confrontations in the masses between the two nation-states. It is proposed that social institutions of education, media, religion, and politics are influential in the construction of identities and respective material interests that generates rivalry between the two neighboring countries.

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