

## **Role of Media as a Counter Narrative to Indian Propaganda: An Analysis of PTV Current Affairs Program**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Pakistan got independence in 1947 and just with the delay of one day India got independence. However India established its first State channel right after three years of independence. The weak political structure and limited resources did not pave way for the establishment of state channel in Pakistan for a long. India meanwhile promoted its narrative in the world by using its state media and therefore weakened the position of Pakistan on the international political sphere. In 1964 Pakistan established its first state channel named as Pakistan Television at Lahore with the primary aim time of promoting Pakistan's narrative and stabilize its position on the international forum. It was the time when Pakistan and India came across with the confrontation on Eastern border that ultimately led to a full fledged war. That was the beginning of Indian propaganda and brought both the state channels i.e. PTV and Durdarshan on the verge of verbal war. India being obsessed as a regional hegemon always played a decisive role against Pakistan. Therefore Pakistan for its survival launched the series of current affairs programs to counter the Indian narrative. The Indian propaganda on attack on Indian Parliament and Kashmir specifically the activities of Mujahideen and its narrative of Pakistan's support to assist mujahideen was stupendously countered by Pakistan.

**Key Words:** Pakistan, India, Media, Durdarshan, PTV, Indian Parliament.

## **Historical background**

The word media is derived from the 'Latin' word 'Medius' which means middle or intermediate; it is the plural of Latin word 'Medium' which used for as a channel of communication, simply means a source through which something is conveyed to others. Media is a big and main source to provide information to the people through, radio, newspapers, television and internet and books as well (Orlik, 2007). According to Beth B Hess media is the plural of Latin word which simply means channel through which something is transmitted or carried and the term was media is referred to the agent of communication (Hess, 2010). There are basically two types of media; one is the electronic media and second is print media. The electronic media is consisted on television, radio, computer and recording etc. on the other hand print media consists on books, journals, magazines and newspapers (Schaefer, 2012). Malcom X quoted that the media is the most powerful entity on earth. Media has the power to make the innocent guilty and to make the guilty innocent and that's power because it controls the mind of the masses (Giddens, 2005). The history of media can be traced back in 30,000 years ago from the cave ages where the people made paintings. It was the initial stage or age of media with storage and transmission. The Diamond Sutra first printed book with wooden blocks in China in 868 CE. If we go back in history of alphabet it can be traced also our three thousand years old. Human history is evident that humans started to transmit and store information through rock carving. It can be called the media of that time the journey of media started in different shapes and in 1456 human entered in printing press technology (Keenan, 2006). Johannes Guten Berg invented first printing press which came revolution in the way people learn and think. In 1690 1<sup>st</sup> newspaper was printed by public occurrences which later shut down by the government and another newspaper was published in London by the London Gazette in 1640. In 1830 the dynamic of media changed due to the Industrial Revolution in the US which created the new different need of media for the expansionism of business and other gains. Thomas Edison invented the phonograph which became a popular form of home entertainment and after 2 years the motion pictures projector leading towards the silent film industry. In 1896 Marconi invented the radio technology which moved mass communication from wired to wireless (Musburger, 2009).

In nineteen century world entered into the new world of moving picture and first Television station launched in New York. The history of two world wars clearly showed the importance of media through which power exploits the minds of people and showed the cruelty, violence and destruction of war and motivated people for peace. It was also the start of media propaganda and the role of propaganda was more effected and cheap to exploit the people for their own interest and the phenomenon of media imperialism emerged with the phenomenon of propaganda USA from world war to still 21<sup>st</sup> century used media as a weapon and spread propaganda around the world and to gain its strategic gains or political

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objectives (Carruthers, 2000). Jim Morison quoted that “Whoever controls the media, control the minds”. In 1922 England launched its British Broadcasting company (BBC) which was the part of big propaganda and still plays a vital role in both world wars. And it is still continued on its own way (Morison, 2014).

In the new global world, media is the big tool of public opinion and has the great and heavy impact on the thinking of humans to fights with sorts and arrows or with the modern weapons of 21<sup>st</sup> century is old phenomenon and now nations used media as a weapon and 21<sup>st</sup> century highlights the bundles of examples like Indians media and its industry used media to destroy the culture, religions and moral values of Pakistan and never lose any chance to spread the hypocrite propaganda against Pakistan. Indira Gandhi quoted that “now we win the war through media against our rivals (Pakistan)” (Gardezi, 2005). In March 1926, Indian Broadcasting Company was launched and the radio station was setup at Bombay under the direct control of government by the name of Indian State Bank. During the freedom movement Muslims launched their newspapers and magazines for multiple purposes which played a vital role for the wellbeing and political awareness of Muslims of the subcontinent. The conflict between both the nations can be traced back in 1857 when the Hindus blame Muslims for the independence and these conflicts continued throughout the freedom movements (Bhat, 2017).

Both countries got their independence from British in 1947 but a long history of conflict controversy, enmity and propaganda still continued to date. That resulted into three major wars and other little perpetual conflicts like cross border attacks as well these issues or conflicts lead states towards the nuclear offensive capabilities and unstoppable arms race that is the great danger for the peace and security of South Asia (Kapur, 2010). India always tries to damage the Pakistan and never loses a chance to degrade or damage the security of Pakistan at all the three levels, domestic, regional and global level. The major issues between these two nuclear powers are like water disputes, Kashmir issue, terrorism, cross border attack and some other hot issues like intervention in internal affairs, supporting anti national agents and others (Jaspal, 2001). In 1956, terrestrial Television was started its experimental telecast in Delhi and the regular transmission started in 1965 which was the part of all India radio. India has always offensive attitude toward Pakistan and wanted to achieve hegemony in this the region. In this regard India started nuclear arms race as well multiple type of strategy to achieve this political, strategic and power lusty objectives and media is the main part of Indian multiple strategies (Naqvi, 2010). Indian state media always spared propaganda against Pakistan from its binging to present. Indian media launched strong media campaign against the Pakistan when the incident of 9/11 happened and its media completely blame Pakistan and called that Pakistan is the house of terrorism and support the terrorist activities; this narrative was actually to damage the moral value of Pakistan and to isolate Pakistan from international community. Indian

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Doordarshan state channel always blames Pakistan on the issue of Kashmir and anti-nationals movement in her country (Naqvi, 2010).

In 1964, Pakistan launched its first official or state channel Pakistan Television (PTV) and the biggest challenge to encounter the Indian state television propaganda against Pakistan on the issue of Kashmir, cross border conflicts and terrorism. At that time PTV was a sole channel to encounter Indian stance or propaganda. Since date, the state channel has greatly raised the true narrative of Pakistan government and performed a pivotal role in fabricating the opinion of the people (Schoemaker, 2013). The stance of “A-Toot Ang” being the bottom line of the Indian establishment and civil government has perfectly nullified by PTV. Similarly over a period of time more specifically after the wars of 1965, 1971 and 1999 (Kargil War); the Indian propaganda of claiming Pakistan to create anarchy in the region was outrageously countered by the channel. It was the PTV that fought for the people of Pakistan at the regional and international levels and still protects Pakistan from Indian propaganda against Pakistan at the domestic, regional and global levels (Yusuf, 2013).

## **Theoretical framework**

In 1988, Noam Chomsky presented a propaganda theory and explained the model of theory in his book. Noam Chomsky explained that propaganda is the basic and main source to control the mind of people through media and it is a real war; to control the mind of people through force is old phenomenon now media is strong and cheap weapon to control the minds of people through propaganda. He explained that history proved that during the World War-II United States and its allied powers used media propaganda to control the public minds and spread hate against the Germany (Chomsky, 1988). The Propaganda Model (The Theory of Manufacturing Consent) was developed in 1988 in Herman and Chomsky’s seminal work – Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media. The primary argument of this model is that mainstream media works to restrict the network of political and social debate by serving as a propaganda organ for elites in the society. Media controls thoughts and opinions and serves the interests of the powerful and privileged. Under the false appearance of a free market for debate, the media determines, selects, shapes, controls and restricts the realm of political debate, thus producing an outcome that is convenient to the elite. According to Herman and Chomsky, news reaches consumers via five filters namely size, ownership and profit orientation of mass media, advertising as the primary source of income for mass media, sources for mass media news, flak and enforcers, ideology (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). For instance, when hundreds of thousands of East Timorese were slaughtered in a horrendous genocide under the regime of Indonesian President Suharto in 1975, there was hardly any testimony or opinion reported in the western media whereas in the same year, the massacre of urban population in Cambodia by Communist leader Pol Pot was extensively

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reported on. Propaganda is huge industry infact, it extends over the both state and private media and used by state and businessman/elite class to exploit the people at both state and international levels. In 20<sup>th</sup> century public relation industry was established with the purpose to control the people and now it is spread around the whole globe. In this century war and mass media have enjoyed a long and strong relationship (Herman & Chomsky, 1988).

Noam Chomsky explained the propaganda theory model; how propaganda and systematic biases function in the mass media, the model seeks to explain how populations are exploited and how can sense for economic, social and political is manufactured in the public line due to propaganda. The theory explains the way in which news is structured for example through advertising of media ownership, fear of ideology or government lobbies like to support democratic regimes against authoritarian regimes. The model of propaganda theory first time presented by Noam Chomsky in his book 'manufacturing consent the political economy of the mass media'. The propaganda model views private media as business in which the owner are interested in their profit only. In the same way media is the main source of government to exploit the people and controls the masses according to their own interests (Chomsky, 1991).

Chomsky explained the study of the institutions and elaborated the five general classes of filters of media that determine the types of news in news media. Frist three are regarded as the most important after the 9/11 attacks on the United States. It blasted apart the notion that media acts as a check on political power or to inform the public, serve the public so we can better engage in the political process (Chomsky, 2011). In fact media manufactured our consent and they tell us what those in power, need them to tell us.... So we can fall in the line. For example democracy is staged with the help of media that works as propaganda machines. The media operates through the five filters 1) Size and ownership of the mass media, 2) Advertising, 3) sources, 4) Flak and last one, 5) Ideology premises of the system. **Figure 1.1** shows the five filters of media.



Source: The diagram is made by the researcher.

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The first filter has to do with ownership and second filter exposes the real role of advertising. The third filter show that how government, cooperation's and big institution influence the media and news narrative and these institutions know how to play the media game. They feed media scoops, official accounts and interviews with experts. In fourth filter story complete and you will see the flak machine in action that trashing stories and diverting the conversation. The fifth filter is to achieve the goal; to manufactured consent you need an enemy or target like Communism or terrorism and this consent is being manufactured all around you and all the time.

Noam Chomsky further explained following techniques of the manipulation of the people through media. The ten techniques of manipulation are; 1) the strategy of distraction, 2) to create the problem then offers the solution, 3) the gradual strategy (to accept the unacceptable thing, 4) the strategy of deterring other, 5) go to take people as little children, 6) use the emotional side, 7) keep the public ignorant, 8) encourage mediocrity complacent 9) self-blame and the last one is individual knows better. Historically, media established to manipulate the population which is highly efficient to mould the public opinion by using these technologies of media. He also explained that propaganda is mostly developed to create or destroy social movements, justify the wars, tempered financial crisis, oppress other ideologies and even given the phenomenon of media as producer of reality (Chomsky, 1988). Political Contest model is developed by Gadi Wolfsfeld in his work *Media and Political Conflict: News from the Middle East* (1997), the model contends that a major element of modern political conflicts is competition over the news media. During conflict there is a competition to promote one's own media frames as a means to achieve political influence. This is also done to mobilize public support for the conflict. The focus of this model is on unequal political conflicts in which one party is superior to the other (Wolfsfeld, 1997).

The five major arguments put forth by Wolfsfeld are:

- The political process is more likely to have an influence on the news media than the news media are on the political process.
- The level of control that 'authorities' exert over the political environment is one of the key variables that determines the role of news media in political conflicts.
- The role of media in political conflict varies over time and circumstances.
- The best way to understand variations in the role of news media in political conflicts is to understand the competition among the antagonists (conflicting parties) in two ways – structural and cultural dimensions.
- Even though authorities have advantages in terms of quality and quantity of media coverage, challengers can overcome these obstacles and use media as a tool for political influence (Wolfsfeld, 1997).

In lieu of propaganda theory and political consent model Indian state media and private channels are spreading propaganda against Pakistan to deteriorate the image of Pakistan at both national and international levels.

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**The Indian state (DD) media**

**Attacks on Indian parliament**

**The Indian news media (DD):**

Immediately after the attack, stories and commentaries on the theme of security dominated coverage in this channel. Opinions related to national security, defense and intelligence failure, security lapse and security threats emerged as sub-categories under this theme. A heightened sense of security in the wake of attack in different parts of the country was emphasized by highlighting the need to beef up security arrangements. India's callous approach to security was vehemently criticized in commentaries and opinion. Overall, this channel adopted an extremely critical posture and came down heavily on the government for its failure to protect the temple of Indian democracy. In context of security, the coverage was also critical of resistance by political elites to security checks and their perception of being's above the established law (Dutt, 2018).

On terrorism and included stories on countering terrorist activities, opinion pieces critical of the government's soft posture on terrorism, hard-line and nationalistic statements by leaders calling upon people to unite against terrorism, developments in the international security environment in post 9/11 scenario and international support to India's stand against terror. Stories and commentaries under this category pushed the blame on Pakistan for exporting terror to India, singling out evidences in support of India's stand on terror and mobilizing popular opinions against terrorism. Tone of coverage in this category was critical of India's policy with regard to terrorism and framed India as a weak, powerless entity fighting against terror (Madhav, 2018).

**Investigation of the attack**

The coverage from DD news channels, it could be inferred that media posited itself as a parallel agency investigating the attack. Vivid and excruciating details of the manner in which the attack was carried out, the process of investigations into the attack were spelled out during coverage. Speculations about who could be involved in the attack, its motive and other possible targets of the attackers were debated with help from official sources namely police and intelligence officials. Nature of the attack as well as the possibility of involvement of terrorist groups from Pakistan was discussed extensively (Bakshi, 2017). Though, many news stories under this category failed to clearly identify sources of information instead opting to use terms such as 'highly placed sources', 'investigating agencies', 'officials' etc. Progress, twists and turns in on-going investigations were a major part of this category. Indian response in DD state news channels was, as anti-Pakistan with an evident dose of tough and hawkish statements from official

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machinery of the state. Reactionary statements, drastically opposite reactions emerge from the coverage, thereby serving as a platform for a war of words between the conflicting parties (Dawar, 2018).

Entire coverage in this state channel was framed within the dominant paradigm of 'security'. The issue of security permeated every aspect of coverage in this channel, ranging from possible security threats in the future to security precautions after the attack to a critique of Indian state approach to security issues. Coverage sharply criticized the attitude of political elites in the country towards security and impressed upon the fact that Indian state was least concerned about security of its people. Coverage contributed to security hype after the attack and succeeded in creating panic among citizens; first through heightened security concerns and then by upping the ante in terms of war with Pakistan (Bikram, 2018). However, the coverage did attempt to express concerns on behalf of citizens with regard to security for the political elite versus security for ordinary people. In the initial days of coverage in DD, Pakistan was not figured explicitly as a source that could be blamed for the terror attack. However, as coverage gained ground, Pakistan's name appeared in news stories and reports. Early coverage contained indirect references to Pakistan and its involvement in the attack. These references were mostly subtle in the beginning and assumed nationalistic overture as investigations into the attack progressed. Coverage was given to hard-line and nationalistic sentiments expressed by Indian leaders, pointing fingers towards a possible Pakistani involvement in the attack (Ghoswami, 2018).

Nature of sources used in the coverage of issues signals media's dependence on information from official (state based) sources like police officials, investigating officials, intelligence personnel and elite leadership of the country. This offers an extremely skewed picture of the issue concerned wherein official narrative stands out as dominant. There is no scope for an alternative understanding to emerge as the issue is viewed within the domain of 'security', 'state' and 'terrorism', wherein any sympathetic reference to anti-state activities/elements is considered unpatriotic. Lack of clarity and transparency towards sources employed in stories is clearly evident in face of non-attribution and non-identification of quotes. Speculative undertone to the coverage is particularly observed in this newspaper especially when investigations into the attacks proceeded. One story for instance predicts that such attacks will lead to incidences of communal disturbances in the country. Considering the magnitude and nature of the attack, it is quite clear that media indulge in speculation (Sardesai 2018).

Through its program DD news media tried to project the Parliament attack as a threat to Indian democracy. Calls for national unity were expressed in the coverage with terrorism framed as a threat that the entire country faced. The platform of this news channel was used to exhibit solidarity of Indian public opinion, unity and integrity of the country in wake of a threat posed by the enemy. Thereby, media serve as a vehicle for mobilizing public opinion during such



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incidents. Though critical of political elite, DD rarely challenges versions of investigation offered by the police and intelligence agencies. Security lapse was projected as a prominent theme compared to intelligence failure. As far as investigation of the attack was concerned, mostly official line was toed. Criticism of the government's foreign policy response (diplomatic offensive) was mild, and not admonishing. Few follow-up stories were reported on issues related to investigation and the range of Pakistani perspectives was limited and restricted to official statements (Ranganathan, 2018).

In sum, all the news program that on-air by DD; terrorism as a news frame is posited in terms of 'binaries' or 'opposites'. In this dichotomous framing, India is identified as 'victim' of terrorism and Pakistan as 'perpetrator'. There is no scope for an alternative narrative to emerge as the discourse repeatedly reinforces enemy image associated with Pakistan. There is no reference to the terrorist attacks in Pakistan and Pakistani people suffering in the same. A subtle anti-Pak agenda is forwarded through identification of the Pakistani state as an abettor of terrorism, the dominant frame being devoted to exposing Pakistan lies and anti-India sentiments. Opinions from the Pakistani media also offer limited perspectives dominated by conspiracy theories hinting at India's self-engineering of the attacks to malign (Thaper, 2018).

Coverage in this channel is driven by events in India-Pakistan standoff over the course of the attack. Centre of coverage shifts from blaming Pakistan to war like situation to demand for extradition of terrorists to the SAARC summit and finally to the much hyped address by General Musharraf. Focus on the past is lost as one event follows the other, which speaks a lot about media's inability to contextualize its reportage of events. Terrorism as news frames were built in very narrow terms, as a problem that afflicted only India. The failure to adopt a South Asian perspective to it (and also to the Vajpayee-Musharraf meeting at the SAARC summit) signals unwillingness on media's part to bring foresight and vision to coverage of conflict (Gupta, 2018).

### **International opinions**

Under this category, reactions from prominent leaders in the US and the UK were covered. Stories expressing international support to India in the wake of terror attacks prominently figured under this theme. Role of the US in Indo-Pak stand-off as well as American concerns towards conflict escalation in the region also found space. Commentaries in this section discussed the attack in reference to post 9/11 strategic and security environment. International opinions about the event majorly reflected views and role of the US. These were framed to impress US support and approval of Indian demands for Pakistani accountability. More than opinions generated in South Asia, it is the US perspective that was considered significant (Kanwal, 2018).

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### **Other content categories derived were**

- Human interest stories about security personnel who laid down their lives in the attack and opinions of their grieving relatives, impact of Indo-Pak tensions on ordinary citizens.
- Impact stories related to security, trade, politics, culture and diplomatic relations between the two countries.
- Feature stories narrating experiences of Members of Parliament (MPs) during the attack.
- War of words, diplomatic exchanges and increased hostilities between India and Pakistan in the context of troop mobilization.
- Reactions of the Indian and Pakistani leadership, Pakistani involvement in the attack.

### **Pakistan state channels PTV**

#### **Attacks on Indian parliament**

Pakistan state channel PTV, openly condemns the attack and attempts to distance itself from any involvement in the attack on the Parliament and hints towards involvement of other Hindus nationals in the attack. Indian state media adopted the aggressive stance after the attack and India's diplomatic offensive against Pakistan and in counter narrative the state media showed the role of Pakistan against terrorism and deny the involvement of Pakistan with logical arguments and scientific evidence. Credence was given to propaganda theory of India's own hand in the attacks as an attempt to malign Pakistan in the international arena. Resultantly, terrorism emerged as a content category as the attempt was to project high moral ground and assures Pakistan's cooperation in the fight against terrorism. Post attacks, discourse was linked to troubles in Kashmir, especially Indian role in Kashmir and struggle for freedom in the region. Frame of propaganda theory' i.e. India hatching the parliament attack plots to defame and damage image of the Pakistan Throughout the coverage, Pakistan's support to the freedom struggle in Kashmir was endorsed (Alam, 2018).

International opinion about the Indo-Pak standoff was framed in a peculiar way in state T.V. One could find commentaries from international media that posited Pakistan and its stance in the entire incident in a positive way (for example, Kashmir unrest not terrorism). Appreciation for Pakistan's efforts in combating terror was prominently covered. Framing of the Indo-Pak crisis was done to emphasize Pakistani solidarity against any kind of Indian misadventure. In the frame under terrorism, presence of right-wing extremist organizations like Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), Bajrang Dal and Shiv Sena in India was highlighted to draw similarities between threats of extremism in both India and

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Pakistan. However, such a comparison stood bereft of substantiation and logical explanations (Abid, 2018).

**Other content categories derived were:**

- ❖ India's attempts to create trouble for Pakistan.
- ❖ Indian atrocities in Kashmir.
- ❖ Indian firing and shelling on the border/villagers as 'victims' of the shelling.
- ❖ Highlight negative statements by Indian leaders and conservative Hindus.
- ❖ Pakistan as victim of Indian aggression.
- ❖ India's favour of war and Pakistan's opposition to it.
- ❖ Pakistan's efforts at de-escalation, Indian efforts at raising the war cry.
- ❖ Indian refusal to share evidence with Pakistan.
- ❖ Highlight the Indian propaganda

Careful analysis of coverage revealed that while routine news stories were meant to evoke nationalist sentiments and opinion and commentary pieces offered a balanced perspective. Even in diversity of coverage, dominant view forwarded was a pro-nationalist one.

**Conclusion**

Media's role in Indo-Pak conflict is not limited to that of a 'communicator'. It facilitates creation of political realities/narratives through which issues of peace and conflict are absorbed and understood by readers. News discourse in the media should be viewed from the prism of dichotomous/binary realities. Political realities of conflict are not merely presented by the media; these are framed, constructed and then put forward to audiences in tandem with a set agenda. Media serves as a carrier of official and popular views. It plays the role of a facilitator for accommodating diversity of views and is a space for deliberating various aspects related to peace and conflict such as – which side is right/wrong, proposing solutions to the conflict, mobilizing public opinion in favour of or against a proposed solution etc. During a diplomatic stalemate, media acts as a channel of communication between antagonists. In case of India-Pakistan, state apparatus looks to the media for cues on formulating policy responses. The mediating aspect of the media's role thus comes to fore. While a few notable exceptions of media coverage during both events of peace and conflict blame the 'other' for all problems in one's country and promotes ideas of jingoist nationalism. During events of conflict, media coverage blames the 'other' for their role in exacerbating tensions, while during peace talks, failure to reach an agreement is blamed on the 'other'. Though style and form of coverage in both media is different, objectives remain the same. Subtly, the Indian DD news channels are strengthening voices of hate and hostility against Pakistan.

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