

## **Changing Patterns of Security of India and Pakistan in the Age of Nation Branding: Role of Image and identity of State**

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### **ABSTRACT**

India-Pakistan traditional animosity has been characterized by the nuclear deterrence and missile race in South Asian region. However, contemporary changes like enhanced global outreach of India, increasing role of Indian diaspora and its expanding public diplomacy has altered the extent of challenges for Pakistan. Pakistan, since 1998 has largely relied on its nuclear parity with India rather than depending on conventional weapon capabilities. The paradigm shifts in India's foreign policy strategy by focusing more on its soft power outdated the security rational of Pakistan as it substantially lacks the respective means to develop counter response. The contemporary Indian approach against Pakistan is comprised of manipulation of information while using 'sharp power' strategy. India's global outreach through its nation branding has transformed the nature of India-Pakistan rivalry into a war of narratives where Pakistan appears significantly weak due to its obsolete security sensitivities. The state elite and strategists in Pakistan primarily overlook the need to craft the positive image of state through strategic self-presentation and exclusively focus on deterring India through nuclear parity. This study aims to analyze the India-Pakistan rivalry in the context of nation branding through image and identity of India as a new security parameter for Pakistan. This research is primarily qualitative and has incorporated explanatory approach to address these questions. The underlying study suggests that contemporary Indian strategists do not seem to encourage the possibility of full-scale war, neither with China nor Pakistan. Consequently, new realm of security competition between India and Pakistan lies in war of narratives where Pakistan can also employ sharp power tactics by highlighting duplicity of Indian policy as well as marketing of Pakistan's indulgent side of state and society.

**Key Words:** China, Diaspora, India, Nation Branding, Pakistan, Soft & Sharp Power.

## **Nation Branding: Spectacle of State Power and Sharp power**

Smart power has become a critical part of modern-day power politics in International Relations. Power as an ability to alter the behaviors of states actors involves certain set of tools. These tools are generally encompassed of usage of force, reward or payment largely identified as hard power and at times the tools of attraction; largely known as soft power. Smart power is largely understood as an effective integration of hard and soft power ( Armitage, R.L; Nye Jr.J.S. (ed.), 2007). (Stoessinger, 1979) explicated state power as an ability of a country to use her resources in a way that influences the policies of other states. (Skoneczny & Boguslaw, 2021) expanded the view by inferring that political elite has to work on an economic, ideological and cultural base to establish this sort of influence on other states.

In the perspective of state power, soft power is embodied with respective culture, values, legitimate polices and projection of respective state through its diaspora. (Coutu, 2008). Soft power is largely identified with democratic states where they by means of persuasion, influence other state actors to accept their actions (Skoneczny & Boguslaw, 2021). In 2017, some of the scholars started to identify set of activities defying the idea of hard and soft power while analyzing the strategies of some of the countries like China and Russia which they tend to call as authoritarian states. The respective study identified that sharp power centers on distraction and manipulation techniques. (Walker & Ludwig, 2017) However, (Nye, 2018) illustrated sharp power as a part of hard power while describing it as “the deceptive use of information for hostile purposes”, while emphasizing that sharp power is not the exclusive realm of authoritarian states. (Skoneczny & Boguslaw, 2021) have listed the sharp power strategies as information warfare, manipulation of elections, providing support to political entities and social organizations for lobbying, propaganda and disinformation activities, history politics, scientific cooperation, international economic undertaking and hybrid conflict. The ‘hybrid conflict’ is categorized as the utmost effective strategy of sharp power where a state actor (like India against Pakistan) refrains from employing directly its military though undertakes other means of influence towards her rival state through economic, political and diplomatic means.

The sharp power strategy of a state against its rivals becomes more effective when respective country has promising global image. The contemporary literature on state power elucidates ‘Nation Branding’ as crafting of favorable image of states through marketing stratagems which involves their substance, strategy and metaphorical actions. The idea of nation branding is to highlights nations in a globalized and competitive markets where their uniqueness and visibility are central to occupy the space and attention in the target market. (Anholt S. , 2005) Illustrates that through nation branding, an unproblematic, unitary and clear identity of a nation is constructed which leads people to see respective country in a different manner. Nation branding, in broad terms, refers to a nation's method of projecting a specific image of itself outside of its territorial boundaries in order to

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accomplish certain advantageous goals. The idea is tied to the existence of a 'great global market' in which nations, cities, and regions compete with one another to draw in the most visitors, consumers, investors, students, events, and so forth. (Fan, 2006) explicates nation branding as a combination of branding and communicative strategies of marketing to promote and enhance positive image of a state. Nation branding is comprised of competing among the countries at international level to market their goods, services and to attract tourists as well as international students. Intelligibly, nation branding is the way states present themselves to the world. (Anholt, 2011) expounds that nation branding can be primarily demonstrated by cultural relation. He asserted that the experience of states that have effectively practiced cultural relations over many years provided that steady, imaginative cultural exchange does in due course shape an atmosphere where reverence and tolerance certainly paves ground for increased trade in skills, knowledge, products, capital, and people. This view tends to develop the notion that existence of effective public diplomacy largely involving people of these countries enhances their understanding of culture, political system and values while having strong tendencies to trade with each other more persistently, freely and with larger mutual profit. It's difficult to evaluate a nation's reputation. It is important to take into account a variety of economic, political, cultural, and social aspects, as well as stakeholders' perceptions across the globe. This is complicated by the fact that, by their very nature, the perceptions of external stakeholders are biased due to their origin, culture, and experiences.

Nevertheless "branding" a nation is no easy task. First off, a nation's reputation goes far beyond the components emphasized in a national branding campaign, such as its imaginative design, the scenery, or the goods or services showcased. Equally significant to the target audiences' overall perceptions of a nation is what is communicated, whether intentionally or unintentionally. The branding strategists have limited control over how these perceptions are created however they can create an impact by certain means. Second, evaluations go beyond a nation's potential for economic or commercial growth. It also takes into account things like what the nation is doing to raise the standard of living for its people and how it contributes to the welfare of people outside of its borders. The vast majority of nations now work with public relations or communications consultancies, though the precise type of advice they need largely depending on the challenges the nation is facing. Some branding initiatives aim to increase a country's exports' competitiveness by associating them with favorable stereotypes about the nation. In developing countries, nation-branding initiatives traditionally center on promoting tourism. Australia, which was recently named the nation with the strongest brand by the Nation Brands Index, benefited greatly from projecting an adventurous image through international television programmes and motion pictures, perhaps most notably the 1986 movie *Crocodile Dundee* (Teslik, 2007).

## **Key Research Questions**

This research paper in the context of India-Pakistan rivalry, primarily deals with two aspects of nation branding as an expression of state power. First, the process and strategies by which India proceeded with the nation branding process. Secondly, India's contemporary strategy of sharp power towards Pakistan which changed the battle field between the two countries. The study addresses the following research questions;

- How India commenced the process of nation branding?
- How nation branding along with defensive realism approach incorporated a paradigm shift in Indian approach of security?
- How Indian global outreach and nation branding has changed its strategy towards Pakistan?
- Why Pakistan needs to transform its security strategy against India?

## **Indian Nation Branding and Key Local Initiatives**

The nation branding strategy of India primarily focuses on encouraging investment in four key areas; infrastructure, human resource, trade and tourism. The discourses of incredible India as the largest democracy of the world are communicated with an integrationist approach where these messages target both external and internal audiences. Despite various disruptions in global supply lines, geo-political tensions and off-shot of post-pandemic world, in year of 2022, India emerged as the fastest growing economies of the world. The foremost success of India is the transformation of its agrarian economy to a service-oriented economy. The origin of nation branding strategy of India can be traced back to 2002 when BJP-led government launched the 'Incredible India' campaign as a part of its policy of National Tourism. The objective of this campaign was to project India as a high-end destination while constructing its distinctive identity. Under this campaign, oversea tourist markets were targeted by publicizing favorable images of India in print, electronic and online platforms. The strategy was expanded by presenting India as a probable film location in 2006 at World Economic Forum held in Davos by launching another campaign as 'India Every Where'. Furthermore in 2009, to make Indian domestic environment more promising for tourists, local campaign 'Guest is God' was initiated to encourage local people in India to contribute to tourist industry by welcoming foreigners and to show acts of hospitality. Later, with technological advancement of India, these endeavors were digitalized and reached to comparatively a larger number of audiences. Websites like incredibleindia.org were launched & TV advertisements by different private Indian companies strengthened the narratives of Indian state. This digitalized nation branding used Indian wildlife, iconic architecture, signs of Indian civilization and yoga as face of Indian state which attempted to portray India as a center of colorful culture, rich civilization, and infusion of nature, modernity and hub of spirituality.

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The projected idea of Indianness in global market was a product of collaboration between Indian brand experts and state's policy makers to promote tourism and their informal consensus to take advantages of resultant outcomes. These areas of cooperation were building reputation of Indian state, emergence of Indian brands as much as competitive as any brand from developed part of world, spaces for Indian goods in global markets and desirability of other countries to view India as a supplier of reliable services, skillful human force as well as an important market for consumption of foreign good due to large number of middle classes in India. However, this initial process of nation branding of India was constrained and impaired between 2002-2009 by various incidents like international press coverage of Gujrat communal violence (instigated by BJP-led government in respective state) which caused killing and displacement of thousands of Muslims and most importantly increasing tendencies of cultural dominance of 'Hindutva' ideology in Indian state narratives of projection.

A new India stratagem of nation branding was launched in September 2014 by introducing the facilitation of foreign investment in almost 27 sectors to promote local manufacturing and innovation. The respective campaign by employing slogan like 'Vocal for Locals' and 'Make in India' initiative highlighted Indian manufacturing sector on global level. The accomplishment of these initiatives are evident by the fact that Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflow registered as 45.15 billion US \$ had reached to 84.84 billion US \$ in fiscal year of 2021-22. Furthermore, Indian manufacturing sector while generating 57 million jobs in 2017-18 increased to 62.4 million jobs in 2019-20 and became the largest Indian sector in the terms of employment provider ('Make in India' campaign facilitate investment turning into an opportunity for growth, 2022). These achievements were accomplished by enhancing Indian policy makers' focus on four aspects; local sourcing, Research and Development, innovation and sustainability strategies.

The reform process in India seems distinctive from many of its South Asian counterparts as these not only enhanced the economic opportunities for India while eventually enlarging diplomatic muscles of Indian state but also empowered Indian society digitally while transforming country as a knowledge economy. The initiative of 'Digital India' was launched by PM Modi in July 2015 to digitalize the governance system of India while making government services and institution more transparent and accessible to Indian public. This e-governance included digital locker system at banks, online platforms to engage citizens like launching of Swachh India (clean India) mobile app and 'Aadhaar e-Sign' to digitally sign the documents. The 'Digital India' initiative also comprised e-health care system, online National scholarship system and digitalization of government records. The most promising pillar of this initiative seems to be 'BharatNet' Project as world's largest rural broadband connectivity which enabled and provided technologies to facilitate delivery of services to Indian citizens (Mohanta & Debasish, 2017).

## **India's Diplomatic Outreach and Public Diplomacy**

India has the largest diaspora population across the world which stands at 18 million people. Three countries individually like UAE (3.5 million), United States (2.7 million), Saudi Arab (2.5 million) and gulf states altogether (8.4 million) host the greatest number of India immigrants as two of these are quite critical for Pakistan in the terms of her strategic and economic interests (Ministry of External Affairs, 2021). Other countries which have significant numbers of Indian diaspora, relevant to Pakistan's foreign policy interests and Indian global outreach are Gulf States like, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, Canada, United Kingdom and Australia. The 'International Migration Report of 2020 by United Nations highlighted that between the period of 2000 to 2020, in the wake of high percentage of migration tendencies, almost 10 million Indians migrated to other countries (United Nations, 2020). This huge Indian diaspora facilitated the promotion of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), trade ties, foreign reserves through remittance, access to modern technology and financial inclusion of India into different economic sectors globally.

Since 2014, Indian PM Modi visited almost sixty countries by his more than 110 visits to different states. The most frequent visits were made to United States as PM Modi visited the strategic partner of India seven times (Times of India, 2022). Pakistan's Prime minister (Nawaz Sharif; twice & Imran Khan; twice) visited US four times, during similar period of time. Pakistan's former PM; Nawaz Sharif (2013-2017) had made 65 foreign visits while Khan as PM (August 2018-April 2022) visited almost 16 countries through his 34 foreign visits. However, the range of countries, PM Sharif and Khan visited in comparison with Indian PM Modi seemed quite limited as Pakistan did not attempt to explore new opportunities and diplomatic avenues to broaden her diplomatic choices. These visits by Pakistan's Prime Ministers were either result of economic and diplomatic compulsions of the country, like visits to US, Russia, China, Saudi Arab, Turkey and UAE or comparatively to those states which were not able to offer Pakistan any significant strategic or diplomatic assistance other than discussing prospects of low-key bilateral agreements or these trips were largely to attend regional and international forums or conferences as part of formal diplomacy without providing any substantial and impactful advantages to Pakistan.

Pakistan's former PM; Imran Khan endeavored to address the emergent challenge by competing with India through his diplomatic narrative pronounced at international forums however without an articulated strategy of nation branding, the respective war of narrative against India did not materialize desired outcomes for Pakistan. Unlike India, Pakistan's strategists are not very clear about country's associations with regional and key powerful states in the terms of focus of its economic, energy and security needs. While Delhi is seeking support from Washington and Tokyo in a more strategic manner to execute its developmental design in the region, Pakistan seems confused between breaking from the past (its role as non-NATO ally of US) and pursuing new connections as a BRI participant

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state. Pakistan's recurrent inclination towards China and Saudi Arab largely appears as a reaction to either its disappointment from US or intimidating Indian global expansion resulting in isolating Pakistan internationally.

### **Role of Images and Strategic Communication**

Visual communication is pervasively powerful in contemporary age for image building of a state. (Heidegger, 1977) once stated that "the fundamental event of the modern age is the conquest of the world as a picture". This view is affirmed by the fact that states, organizations and companies use visuals into their strategic communication to market their messages by capturing the attention of target audience. The visual consumption into desired set of population enables companies to build brands while trading their services and good while states sell their narratives and creates positive attitudes for their citizens and institutions. Strategists in Pakistan are largely ignorant of power of images and its potential use as a strategic communication to convey desirable messages to a targeted audience which elevate or distort the image of a community, company, nation or a country. For instance, materialistic and competitive approach in South Korean society is quite visible and evident by different sources however the way South Korean music bands, films and dramas present while promoting certain values and trends, this not only established the frigidity of Koreans (which might not be true) but also made Korean food, fashion and skincare industry a matter of celebration across the world. The digital display of K-Culture of South Korea has even penetrated into those countries like China, Japan etc. where otherwise such influences, acceptance and outreach were not possible. It has also altered to some extent prevalent approach of racism against South East Asians Communities in different parts of world.

In a similar way, Indian movies attracted millions across the world as of 2017, overseas revenue estimated from these movies was, 367 million in US dollar with 27 percent growth rate of Indian film industry nationally and globally. Pakistan's policy makers even did not care to find any prospects to export its drama with language translation options and Pakistan's unique sense of music (which is quite strong in terms of its content, acting skills and presentation as compared to India) to South Asia or countries like China, Turkey or Gulf states. A matter of concern for Pakistan is that in recent years, its all-weather friend; China has emerged as an exceedingly profitable market for Indian films (Vohra, 2018). Although year 2022 remained as a leading-edge for Pakistani Films in the terms of representation and recognition on international level. However, subjects covered in these Pakistani films like 'Joy land and Sandstorm' seem too serious and issue oriented, as lack of a parallel entertainment based Pakistani cinema depicting the festivity of local cultures and showing the positive and lively picture of Pakistani society is utterly missing at international level.

It is also hard-pressed to find pictures on internet by typing 'Pakistan' that depict the progressive and modern aspects of state. The most Google results about

Pakistan are collection of frightening pictures and social media posts. The underlying reasons are that Pakistan indeed isn't marketed properly. These images built a giant influence and information apparatus which portrays Pakistan as a conservative terror driven state, hub of rape and honor killing, a battle ground for militant groups and a place where people are routinely lynched in the name of religion. The interesting fact is that in comparison with Pakistan, the extent and number of crimes related to corruption, rape, gender discrimination and communal violence are far worse in India. However, in post-liberalization, India tried to alternate its third world identity with an image of global player by highlighting its efforts for ecological sustainable development. In 2015, 'International Solar Alliance' was established by India as a group of tropical countries intended at reducing fossil fuel dependence by harnessing solar energy. This led to representation of India at World Economic forum website through various videos and articles, as a power hub of global clean energy powerhouse, a leader in renewable energy while endorsing India's largest beach cleanup operation (Pathak, 2022). Pakistan's plantation drive under the former PM Khan was also highlighted at World Economic Forum's website in November 2020 though in comparison with extensive Indian projection, Pakistan was described as most impacted developing country by climate change. The information available on website regarding Pakistan's initiative gives an impression of this policy as a compulsion of climate changes rather than Pakistan's urge to lead. Furthermore, Pakistan did not widely use the respective images and activities of plantation as green diplomacy the way India did.

### **India's positioning as a Civilizational force: Cultural Internationalism**

India has a rich and diverse cultural heritage that spans thousands of years. Recognizing the potential of cultural diplomacy in shaping its global image, India has been actively using cultural internationalism as a tool for nation branding. Cultural internationalism refers to the promotion of a country's culture, arts, traditions, and values on the global stage to foster understanding, build relationships, and enhance its reputation. India endeavored to champion many of the global issues to assert its credibility as a potential global player by its active awareness campaigns at national level. The projection of these activities was effectively emphasized by widely sharing the Indian narratives and activism in press, online platforms and international websites. This not only helped India to extend her global outreach but also to divert international attention from its severe violation of human rights in Indian-Occupied Kashmir & BJP government's apparent role in violent otherization of its India-Muslim population. Since 2000, 15 cultural properties of India have been added to the list of World Heritage of UNESCO and substantial proportions of these sites are religious. During 2000-2004, only 5 sites in India were registered in UNESCO tentative list however later arrival of Modi as Prime Minister in 2014 brought strategic shift in civilizational assertion of India by signing off on 26 cultural properties whereas 16 of these sites



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were linked with Hinduism (Singh & Winter, 2023). PM Modi's 'Hindu internationalism' and civilizational argumentation mobilized in worldwide discussions, aims to integrate secular-pluralist parts of India's traditionally institutionalized civilizational rhetoric with religious-nationalist components of Hindutva's polarizing civilizational discourse. PM Modi, for example, used Hindu philosophy to build on the concept of India as a perfect example of the ideals of pluralism and collaboration at the World Economic Forum in 2018, referencing the appropriate text in Sanskrit. Modi's utilization of Hindi to make his address to a foreign audience is of political importance since Hindu nationalists feel that Hindi is one of the primary means of transferring India's traditional core. Modi has also advocated for a Hindu nation-state, saying, 'we are inheritors of Vedanta philosophy that believes in the intrinsic oneness of everyone and celebrates unity in diversity: ekam satyam, vipra bahudha vadanti.' On the world arena, culture and geography join forces to promote a highly particularistic idea of Indian nationality, particularly a Hindu-centric one (Haug & RoyChaudhury, 2023).

Pakistan's foreign policy aims may include security concerns, economic growth, regional stability, and conflict resolution in its near neighborhood. These goals frequently take precedence over civilizational internationalism, which is seen as secondary. Pakistan is situated in a volatile area characterized by complicated geo-political dynamics. Due to historical wars and security concerns, Pakistan's ties with neighboring nations, notably India and Afghanistan, have been tense. In such circumstances, Pakistan's foreign policy is affected more by urgent regional difficulties than by wider civilizational and cultural objectives. The emphasis on civilizational and cultural internationalism has not always coincided with the need to sustain social cohesiveness both inside and outside of Pakistan. While Pakistan is a diverse country, its historical setting and the obstacles it encountered in its early years shaped its approach to foreign affairs, which frequently emphasizes its Islamic identity rather than a broader civilizational framework.

### **India's 'China Test' and Strategy of Underplayed War: Possibilities for Pakistan**

India's increasing participation as a key global player at international forums and institutions is sinking Pakistan's options to counter India's traditional disgust towards her. In August 2021, Indian Ambassador; T. S. Trumurti as rotating president of United Nation Security Council (UNSC), allegedly misused his power when he denied Pakistan's participation in a debate (which was open to all UN Members) to discuss the situation in Afghanistan in wake of US troops withdrawal (India takes over as UN Security Council president, 2022). India's expanding diplomatic outreach can be assessed by the fact that its bid for permanent seat at UNSC is endorsed by four key powers (US, Russia, France & UK) as only China did not officially approve it. Additionally, its bid for non-permanent member seat of UNSC in 2021, India garnered overwhelming support by securing 184 votes out

of total 194 countries of UN General Assembly (India elected non-permanent member of UN Security Council , 2020)

In wake of extensive diplomatic advantages to India due to its effective nation branding and probability of using anti-Pakistan rhetoric in coming Indian national elections in 2024, peace initiatives seem unfavorable to Indian policy makers. Moreover, Indian policy makers' oratory and approach towards Pakistan is gradually becoming harsh and quite aggressive at diplomatic forums as the gap in material power (like military and economic certainties) of both countries is widening. The sturdier position of India and its transformation from regional adversary to Pakistan to a key global player is constraining Indian options to offer Pakistan a sense of equality in bilateral approach to address their disagreements. Additionally, it is predicted that in near future that Pakistan might face more hostile Indian diplomatic gestures as anti-Pakistan oratory can help BJP government to distract their voters' attention from their failure to recover large part of territory from China in Galwan valley. Since 2019 Pulwama Suicide attack, India did not face any major terrorist attacks on its territory however China-India military faceoff in June 2020 continued to threaten India security. Although India diplomatic focus at international forums is more directed towards bashing Pakistan for its alleged support to terrorism while building the anti-Pakistan narrative. India's recent gesticulations and pronouncements like PM Modi's visit of Kargil in October 2022, remembering the day India forces took control of Indian Occupied-Kashmir (IOP) in 1947 and Indian Defense Minister; Rajnath Singh calling August 5, 2019 (Abrogation of Article 370 in IOK) as an 'unfinished agenda' while mentioning the Indian intentions to seize back Pakistan's controlled Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan are such examples of anti-Pakistan oratory. (Singh, 2022) .These are empirical evidences of Indian strategic branding against a comparatively soft target like Pakistan rather than addressing its strategic flaws against China.

Furthermore, Indian strategist and policymakers have started to advocate 'no war' narrative to pacify China while focusing more on economic and strategic engagements both global and regional level. Rajnath Singh; the Indian Defense minister while inaugurating the 28 local infrastructure projects in 2022 discharged the probability of war initiated by India. Singh expounded that "India has always been against war. It is our policy... we do not believe in war, but it is forced upon us, we will fight" (Peri, 2022). India's strategic choice of underplayed war is crafted by Modi's National Security adviser; Ajit Doval. Doval's strategic thought on less likelihood of war explicated by his statement that "Wars have ceased to become effective instruments for achieving political or military objectives. They are too expensive and unaffordable, and at the same time, there is uncertainty about the outcome," (Deshpande, 2021). Indian strategy of evading a full-scale war can be assessed by PM Modi's 2014 address in New Delhi at Combined Commander's Conference where he highlighted key challenges to Indian security. PM Modi stated that "beyond the immediate, we are facing a future where security challenges will be less predictable; situations will evolve and change swiftly; and, technological changes will make responses more difficult to keep pace with. The

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threats may be known, but the enemy may be invisible. Domination of cyber space will become increasingly important. Control of space may become as critical as that of land, air and sea. Full scale wars may become rare, but force will remain an instrument of deterrence and influencing behavior, and the duration of conflicts will be shorter.” (PM’s address at the Combined Commanders Conference, 2014).

India is largely pursuing strategies of defensive realism against the Chinese preeminence to secure her relative power. India’s foreign policy towards China can be elucidated as band-wagoning approach where India is balancing China through alliances. India’s key leadership primarily believes that India’s global prestige constrains China’s ability to go to full scale war with India. On the other hand, India’s global stakes in reality put her territorial integrity below its global designs in order of national interests’ priorities. This was reflected when PM Modi on June 19, 2020 tortuously accepted occupation of almost 2000 square kilometer of Indian territory by China while denying any sort of intrusion on Indian soil and contradicted his own government’s press release. On September 16, 2022, PM Modi reiterated Indian stance when met Russian President Vladimir Putin at Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Summit. Modi while discussing Ukraine war issue with his Russian counterpart asserted that era of (state to state) war is over (Sawhney, 2022).

Contemporary military theory suggests that ‘wars are not won on battle fields but they are won in people’s mind’ in the cognitive domain’ (kvernbekk & Hansen, 2017). The lost case of Indian-held Kashmir and emergent anti-Pakistan feelings among substantial section of Afghan youth are also one of the lessons for Pakistan that insubstantial narratives gradually make one to lose the tactical battles. Despite a robust resistance in India-held Kashmir in 2016 as a result of the killing of young freedom fighter; Burhan Wani at the hands of Indian military, Pakistan failed to use well the sufferings of Kashmiri pellet gun victims by employing the said images to highlight Indian atrocities at international level. Nevertheless, India’s new war of narratives against Pakistan is evident by its misinformation campaign unveiled by ‘Dis Info Lab’; an EU based non-governmental organization. Respective organization identified this misinformation campaign as India’s 15 years operation since 2005 to target UN and EU to serve Indian purposes (Alaphilippe & Adamczyk, 2020). This cyber propaganda campaign was seemingly paving grounds for categorizing Pakistan in the grey list of FATF on the bases of severe charges on the country for allegedly sponsoring violent extremism. In the wake of emergent political crisis in Pakistan, some of the Indian news channels and purported analysts started taking political side of PTI leader; Imran Khan. For instance; a retired Indian army man; Major Gaurav Arya applauded Imran Khan for his anti-establishment narrative and criticism directed towards the military elite of Pakistan. This Indian strategy is to augment chaos in Pakistan by discrediting popular political leadership like Imran Khan by giving an impression that his policies largely supported Indian designs. On the other hand, while taking advantage of political polarization in Pakistan, by

apparently taking sides of Pakistan's political leadership, India media tried to malign the image of Pakistan's armed forces nationally and internationally.

### **Why Pakistan Needs to Transform its Security Strategy Against India?**

Pakistan's security analysts have radically overlooked the nature of change into Indian security paradigm. Alike India, Pakistan needs to identify its 'Principle Strategic Contradiction' which can help her to determine her strategic priorities while identifying through optimizing and prioritizing the decisions regarding the most critical challenges and her future choices. The principle strategic contradiction can enable Pakistan to explore new opportunities while exploiting the weakness of its adversary. In the wake of India's shifting strategic approach towards China, Pakistan seems only a source of annoyance for India rather than a prime threat. The way, Indian analysts are stressing on 'China test' to gauge the strategic matrix of India, in a similar way, Pakistan needs to ascertain its strategic priorities to address its security challenges. In the given scenario, where Pakistan is in quagmire of political polarization with an unpopular government at federal level, an intense internal milieu of anti-Establishment narrative and most significantly an unprecedented wave of political activism, the security challenges do not suggest to focus on conventional or nuclear buildup or military skirmish against India.

In the contemporary day and age, Pakistan is in dire need of an aggressive diplomacy and global outreach to address its economic shortcomings and constraining Indian policy of isolating Pakistan. Pakistan needs to redesign its diplomatic relations to be more interest driven rather than reaction driven. There is less probability for Pakistan to face any impending conventional military or nuclear threat from India. There are plenty of reasons for respective probability as Indian options towards Pakistan are primarily limited due to India's high stakes in its expanding role in global politics. India's growing proximity to US is now somewhat constrained by geo-political compulsions, China's strategy of boxing India in regional milieu and a likely Russian inclination towards China and Pakistan with likelihood of replacing India as beneficiary of cheap energy resources. The Indian assessment of 'China test' requires to pacify its relationship with Pakistan while establishing relative peace with its traditional rival in South Asia. This is the reason that India seems more interested to internationally isolate Pakistan by directing its criticism towards Pakistan's alleged support to terrorism rather than planning any military adventurism against Pakistan.

India's far-reaching nation branding provided that engagement is perpetually more dynamic with extensive promotion. Pakistani strategists' need to understand that India has a stronger edge in war of narratives with Pakistan due to its global outreach and positive image building of Indian state. Pakistan requires a consolidated strategy to use all of its diplomatic, educational and cultural exchange channels and platforms to disseminate Pakistan's narrative. However, it calls for

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an extensive and aggressive diplomatic strategy by activating all diplomatic channels by connecting them to Pakistani youth, sports persons, human right activists, artists and university teachers etc. who are going abroad for different purposes for long- and short-term stays. For instance, Pakistan must encourage scholars and researchers by financing them or providing scholarships to attend academic, cultural or research events to those whose researches are impactful to improve Pakistan's credibility. To widespread the Pakistan narrative on its fundamental foreign policy issues like Kashmir problem, Pakistan's government should do efforts to establish research panels on respective area at global conferences and research events. Pakistan cultural spectacle needs to be shown recurrently through export of its films, drama & documentaries by translating into different significant languages through sub-titles to reach a broader audience. To counter Indian diplomacy and nation branding which is significantly making Pakistan's voice internationally irrelevant, an aggressive approach is needed to highlight the apparent decline in democracy and press freedom in India. For this purpose, all government, diplomatic and related public sector institutions need to use their social media platforms to highlight these atrocities and flaws of Indian political system, duplicity in Indian policy abroad and at home.

Nevertheless, the diplomatic war of narratives from Pakistan's side also needs consistency which has not been seen in previous efforts. For instance, in 2020 with an intrepid approach, Pakistan released a new 'political map' officially declaring all the disputed areas with India to assert its certain claim of ownership (Ahmed, 2022). On the instructions of Government of Pakistan, Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan dispersed the related information among public and private universities which led to arrange a number of interactions between academia and students however, this practice soon ended in vain due to inconsistency and lack of monitoring. Furthermore, the strategy of political map was even not executed aggressively on diplomatic fronts by lack of its frequent display online and physical.

Pakistan must learn about the integrationist Indian approach of nation branding where they addressed both external and internal audience while pursuing different engagement campaigns for India. Pakistan in its previous approaches either overlooked the external spectators or disregarded its internal addressees. The remarkable but intermittent integrationist approach (Engage and Promote) was displayed by Pakistan in response to Balakot air strikes by India on February 26, 2019. The two India planes were shot down to express Pakistan's conventional military strength while displaying diplomatic calmness and releasing the captured Indian pilot in a way that shattered Indian narrative of Pakistan as an offender or a weaker state. Additionally, a video was released by Pakistan's military showing captured Indian Wing Commander; Abhinandan Varthaman acknowledging Pakistan's military officials, treating him well. This video's infamous line 'tea is fantastic' targeted the both internal and external audience while helping Pakistan

to widespread its narrative against India internationally while keeping its public in support of Pakistan's respective policy.

In the age of digital marketing, branding is what the media and public opinion do to states. This is an ample proof that engagement as the first priority of nation branding will eventually lead towards promotion of state interests. The unofficial celebration (must be an official one) of February 27 as a 'Surprise Day' by Pakistani social media users to remind Indians about Pakistan's strength is evidence that despite the fact that Pakistan's armed forces are center of criticism for their alleged role in politics, images and narratives do play a significant role for state's desired chronicles. Pakistan must recognize the urgent need to transform its security strategy against India in terms of countering sharp power strategy of India largely facilitated by her nation branding. In an increasingly interconnected and competitive world, the perception of a country plays a crucial role in shaping its international image, attracting investment, fostering diplomatic relationships, and promoting cultural exchanges. By re-evaluating and repositioning its security strategy, Pakistan can move away from a narrative dominated by conflict and hostility, and instead focus on projecting itself as a progressive and peaceful nation. Emphasizing its rich cultural heritage, economic potential, and commitment to regional stability can help Pakistan reshape its image and gain the trust and cooperation of the international community. By doing so, Pakistan can pave the way for a more prosperous and secure future, not only for itself but also for the entire region.

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