

Indian Offensive Behavior and Role of Pakistani Media as an Element of National Power

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ABSTRACT

The stature of any nation in the world is determined by the amount of authority it enjoys, exerting itself over other nations. This authority which a nation exercises is derived for its national power. The national power is the cumulative sum of certain elements existing within the ideological and practical domain of a nation. Human resource, military might and economic development are the tangible elements, whereas the ideology, morale of a nation, vision and leadership fall into the category of intangible elements of national power. Emergence of media has made it a strong contender in the major players of a state. The reach and impact of media are unquestionable. Propaganda is the key to achieve far reaching psychological gains, and no other medium than the modern day media can serve that purpose. Pakistan is no exception when it comes to the importance of media. Pakistani media enjoys the freedom and has the reach which if tapped properly can definitely be a source of furthering national agenda; Pakistani media thus can become an element of national power.

Key Words: National Power, National Interest, Media, Pakistan, Indian media

Historical Background

In 1964, Pakistan launched its first official or state channel Pakistan Television (PTV) and the biggest challenge was to encounter the Indian state television propaganda against Pakistan on the issues of Kashmir, cross border conflicts and terrorism. At that time PTV was the sole channel to encounter Indian stance or propaganda. To date, the state channel has greatly raised the true narrative of Pakistani government and performed a pivotal role in fabricating the opinion of the people. The stance of “A-Toot Ang” being the bottom line of the Indian establishment and civil government has perfectly nullified by PTV. More specifically after the battles of 1965, 1971, Siachen dispute and 1999 (Kargil War); the Indian propaganda of claiming Pakistan to create anarchy in the region was outrageously countered by the channel. It was PTV that fought for the people

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of Pakistan at the regional and international levels and still protects Pakistan from Indian propaganda at the domestic, regional and global levels.

What is Power?

What constitutes National Power? The meaning of power needs to be understood. Authority, Control, Ability are the terms which can be attributed to the concept of power with reference of a state. This power which is attributed to a state determines the stature of a particular state in the League of Nations. The emergence of Nation State phenomenon is debated; some believe that it is an unplanned by-product of 15th century intellectual discoveries in political economy, capitalism, mercantilism, political geography and geography. However, a few theories trace it back as a 19th century European phenomenon. With the emergence of Nation State concept, the world witnessed the birth of a phenomenon termed as National Power.

National Power

National Power is the capacity of a nation to achieve its set aims and objectives which it considers in its national interests. It includes the internal strength of a nation which can contribute to its external outlook in influencing its dominance over others in furthering its national interests. According to Organski,

“National Power is the ability of a nation to influence the behavior of others in accordance with its own ends. Unless a nation can do this, she may be large, she may be wealthy, she may even be great but she is not powerful”.

In this backdrop a relation between power and nation state can be drawn, that for any nation state there has to be national power to exert its agenda in line with its national interests.

National Power is a non-stagnant commodity. It remains a relative phenomenon with reference to changing geo-political environments around the globe, and internal realities. Therefore, it has to be dynamic in nature with constant evaluation of changing demands of international relations. Case in point, economic regression of USSR resulting into disintegration and reduced national power; thus diminishing role at the international stage in the latter half of previous century of the once power center of the world.

Modern Day Basic Elements of National Power

The elements of national power can broadly be divided into two categories i.e. tangible and intangible.

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Tangible Elements

Geography, Population, Location, Territory, Natural Resources, Technology, Economic Development, Political Structure and Military Advancement are considered to be the tangible elements of National Power.

Intangible Elements

Ideology, Leadership, and National Character and Morale are enlisted as intangible elements.

Threat Spectrum for Pakistan

While discussing national power, we should remain cognizant of the fact that National power is directly proportional to the fact of National Security. In the last three decades or so the threats to global security is general and to Pakistan in particular have become more unconventional. These threats are mostly invisible in nature and such elements of threat have powerful and motivating impact on the minds of people. The visible threats at both external and internal levels in Pakistan are very conspicuous; the external threats emanating from both Eastern and Western Borders, and internal threats from ethnic, sectarian divide, poverty, absence of social justice and illiteracy. In the midst of such wide threat spectrum, the internal threats are likely to be exploited by elements such as media.

Media

Media in this modern age have evolved as the fourth pillar of the state after, Legislature, Executive and Judiciary. Media both print and electronic have assumed that stature in the context of national power which cannot be undermined. Paul Josph Goebbel Hitler's Propaganda Minister said,

“Propaganda works best when those who are being manipulated are confident that they are acting on their own free will”. He also said, that “Not every item of news should be published. Rather must those who control news policies endeavor to make every item of news serve a certain purpose?”

Media and Propaganda

The nature of conflict in post-cold war world has transformed. Soft war is the new way to go and media is the new weapon. Low Intensity Conflict, Sub conventional warfare are the names of present generation of warfare and media stands out as one of the favorite arsenals. Case in point is U.S led invasion of Iraq on the pretext of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). The CNN, BBC, Fox News and the list

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goes on of the mainstream western media which made the world believe that Iraq was in possession of Weapons of Mass Destruction and was a threat to the world peace. Thereafter, it was revealed to the world that no such threat was possessed by Iraq; however the U.S and its allies particularly UK did achieve their strategic goals and just blamed the “*WRONG INTELLIGENCE*” for their military campaign and United Nations Security Council and rest of the world couldn’t do much to undo the brutalities of U.S and UK. The second Gulf war was the practical manifestation of the power of propaganda and the tool through which it was spread out the media.

In the world over media is being managed in a way to serve the interests of the state policies. Moreover, the big names of media industry in U.S like CNN and Fox News have a different brand of programming for both international and domestic viewers. In the post-World War II era, it was the American media including Hollywood which portrayed the Soviets as monsters and Communism as an evil. With the downfall of Communism the same mainstream Western media embarked upon the journey to make the world believe that Islamic extremism and terrorism were the only threats to the global peace. Projection of North Korea, Iran, Cuba, Syria, and even Pakistan in the western media has always been far from reality. Currently the human minds live in the world of perceptual reality which is stronger than the actual reality, and it only happens so because of media.

Functions of Media

The basic function of electronic media is to inform, educate, influence and entertain. This medium has the largest audience due to its reach, coverage and its ability to impact minds is ever increasing. Following is a brief description of some of the functions of the electronic media are as followed.

To Provide Information

The audience expects to find and get the authentic information only from media. The trust quotient of the masses over the politicians and leaders has touched new lows owing to the constant lies being told to the common people world over. The prime objective of media remains to provide their viewers the most authentic and reliable piece of information.

To Provide Education

Electronic media was the first who introduced the idea of virtual education. Even in Pakistan from late 80’s education shows of Allama Iqbal Open University were aired as part of virtual study packages. The electronic media has the capacity to be a platform to for the provision of education. If used imaginatively and a special vision it can do wonders in the field of education. All over the world awareness campaigns on different social issues are being run through the electronic media.

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This aspect if given importance can serve to develop civic sense about social issues of the masses.

To Influence Public Opinion

Paul Josphe Goebbel once said, “*Give me resources, I will make people believe that devil is God*”. The emergence of information age has opened new vistas of impacting the mind sets and thought process of people. Media has the wherewithal to identify the issues both at domestic and international level. Moreover, further carry out the analysis and crystallize the issue by presenting different options to people in settling those issues.

To Entertain

Entertainment is one of the major ingredient of the electronic media, especially, in a country like Pakistan where the outlets for entertainment remain very scarce. Media can provide a wide range of choices for different sections of the society.

Media and Pakistan

Till the end of the previous century Pakistan was only exposed to the might of print media, as the electronic media i.e. the radio and television were limited to state owned corporations. It was with turn of millennium that opened the flood gates of independent media, when the regime of General Pervaiz Musharaf gave licenses to private owners to open their television channels. At present in an access of 150 TV channels are operating in Pakistan. Form just one TV channel in 2001 to this present figure clearly signifies the boom of electronic media in Pakistan. The cutting edge electronic media enjoys over the print media is of its reach and impact. Talking of Pakistan, this difference gets more pronounced. A country where the official literacy rate is 59.9% which includes those people who can sign themselves. Interest in the readership of newspapers, and periodicals may not be as much as it would be for watching different TV channels.

Ownership of Print and Electronic Media Houses

In Europe and U.S, a stated policy is being adhered to with regards to the ownership of media houses. An embargo exists on media houses that an owner of either of the media house cannot operate in the other medium. This arrangement has been done to provide the masses different perspectives of ideas and avoid domination of any certain media establishment.

However, in Pakistan it has been the total reverse of the above stated policy. All the prominent print media establishments ranging from Jang, Nawa-e-Waqt, Express Tribune and Dawn to name a few have ventured into electronic media.

Media and National Power

Growth of media and especially electronic media has made it a major player in the world politics. In the year 2011 the scandal unearthing the unethical practices including phone tapping and briberies adopted by a British publication house, News of The World was more of an eye opener for the world. Owing to the impact and influence media can create in this age of technology, it does have acquired the stature of an element of National Power. As established above, the aspects which determine national power, it was also highlighted that these elements of national power have to be dynamic to constantly address the needs of changing political, economic, and strategic requirements of the region in particular and world at large. The all famous phrase, “Live the American Dream” has been sold to the world through the American movies and media. It definitely is their element of national power. The national interest is safeguarded by the state through media, though U.S claims to be the champion of democracy and freedom of expression. Documentaries like Loose Chain and 9/11 Fahrenheit made on 9/11 attacks are banned in U.S in the name of national interest.

Pakistani Media –An Element of National Power

Media in Pakistan has gained a very prominent stature. Though, Pakistan is a 3rd world country, and its democratic credentials are not very promising; however, the amount of freedom enjoyed by Pakistani media is unprecedented. The ever increasing growth of television and radio channels has become more of a challenge than just expansion of an industry. At the same time with the birth of social media in the last decade or so, the changing dynamics of media in Pakistan have complex nature. The role of media in Pakistan can be explained with the following few aspects.

Narrative on Counter Terrorism

Pakistan’s involvement in war against terrorism can be traced back roughly to year 2003-04. At that time the nation stood divided on this subject. A clear divide was seen in the complete society. A large segment of the population did not believe it to be their own war, rather thought that Pakistan was fighting the U.S war. Media was no exception in that foggy environment of confusion. The state narrative was not getting any worthwhile support from the media, and further disintegration of thoughts was spreading nationwide. Then came a time with special reference to the Army Public School Peshawar tragedy when we all saw that how the entire country came on one page about the counter terrorism policy, and media was the one player which built the anti-radicalization narrative.

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No More Holy Cows

There was a time when both print and electronic media showed restraint while talking about important state institutions which included Judiciary, Executive, and more importantly Military. This remains debatable that how much freedom the media should exercise while discussing matters of national security which involve security establishments. But as of now Pakistani media does take every body to the cleaners.

Changing Social Outlook

Gone are the days when a jeans clad woman walking on a road would attract a lot of attention or a television host / actress seen without scarf (Dupatta) would trigger a social debate. This changed social outlook has only been possible due to the reach of electronic media and its impact on the minds of people.

Media Freedom vis-à-vis Primary Functions

Fragment With the increased influence media is enjoying. It is felt that this freedom has made media non oblivious of its actual responsibilities and functions. Giving information is a primary function, but when media starts manipulating the information for its own vested interests, then the trouble begins. Case in point is the news of land allotment to retired military officials. Forming public opinion remains a basic role of media, but when the media starts doing that against the interests of state institutions, then it is crossing the red lines. Case in point is the attack on journalist Hamid Mir. Giving entertainment is again media's primary functions but when the media puts cultural, and social values at back burner and telecast all foreign content including India. Showing award functions of Bollywood, and all advertisements carrying Indian celebrities has to be a matter of concern for the nation.

Development of Media is an Element of National Power

The state of Pakistan has to take the ownership in devising a mechanism basing on short term and long term national objectives to bring media on board. This can only happen if media is made to realize that they are part of the solution and not the problem. Pakistan can develop media into one of its element of national power if adopts following measures:-

Establish Identity

Pakistan as a state has to decide that what type of identity it wants for itself. Even after 70 years of independence the identity crisis looms over the nation. The debate

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over the ideas of the Founding Fathers of how they wanted Pakistan to be should be finished now. The state once for all after developing consensus should put an end to this issue, and then get media on board to present Pakistan at the world stage as it wishes it to be known.

Revamping PEMRA

Pakistan Electronic Media Regulating Authority was established under PEMRA Ordinance 2002 to facilitate and regulate the private electronic media. It has a mandate to improve the standards of information, education, entertainment and to enlarge the choice available to the people of Pakistan including news, current affairs, religious knowledge, art and culture as well as science and technology. However, this authority at large is believed to have become a tool in the hands of the government to twist the arms of media. Despite being an autonomous body it normally functions on the behest of Ministry of Information and Broadcasting; thus becoming a subsidiary of the ministry.

PEMRA has to be an independent body in its soul and spirit and not just on papers. A board of governors comprising members of media fraternity, jurists, and retired civil servants / military service men should be formulated. Representation from all segments of society is imperative to formulate a balanced policy to serve as a watch dog on the media, with pre-dominant media representation.

Media Policy

Instead of imposing bans and black outs on the media. The state should invite all stakeholders in devising a media policy. This media policy has to serve as the guiding torch. The DOs and DONTs should be conveyed in the realm of ideological domain of the state. Subjects such as Two Nation Theory, Islam as a binding force, and stance on Kashmir should not be debated upon. Red lines have to be drawn and let be known to all.

Formulation of National Narrative

The state has to come up with a strong cohesive national narrative. No matter how many policies are being devised and how many authorities are established. Media cannot be an element of national power if there is an ideological divide.

Acceptance to Voices of Dissent

In a civilized world the difference of opinion is considered to be the beauty of life. Divergence of views and opinions should always be welcomed. No matter how divergent the strategic orientation may be, but ultimately it has to converge on one point and that is national interest.

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Conclusion

National Power of a state determines the stature of a nation in the community of nations. U.S, UK, Germany, France, Russia, China, Japan and other countries of developed world have the right approach to exploit their inner strengths. It is the state which determines its national objectives, formulates national policies to pursue those national objectives, utilizes its resources ranging from human to capital to achieve its aims to serve its national objectives. Pakistani media has the capacity to be an element of national power. It has the reach, the influence to serve the national interests. Media needs to understand that they cannot set a national agenda rather they can further the national agenda set by the state. At the same time the state needs to develop an understanding that media is not merely a tool to serve political interests at domestic level, but has become an element of national power to serve the national interests.

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