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Impact of Electronic Media on Pakistan's Security

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Abstract *To control the mindset of any society, media plays an important role due to its ability to transfer information and thereby transform societies. Electronic media which thrives on conspiracies, has not lost its importance and TV is still a popular means of communication. By virtue of technological innovations, electronic media has a vast impact on all segments of society (exposure to modern technology and becoming vulnerable). In the contemporary world, terrorism is a major security threat in Pakistan. Continuous open electronic media coverage of issues occur with inherent bias. Against this backdrop, the role of media becomes crucial as the media agenda is gradually turning into the public agenda. Electronic media is inherently biases to the opinions of those reporting the situation. Admittedly media can influence a large chunk of society. Importantly, Pakistan's private TV channels while giving an insight to the audience, intentionally or unintentionally, may drive a negative mindset and give birth to perceived security threats. This paper attempts to ascertain the complex connection between security and the electronic media and also highlights the negative impacts of media on the security of Pakistan.*

Key Words:

Media, Security, Social, Society, Terrorism, TV, Internet, State

Introduction

Today, media is no longer limited to newspaper, television or radio but includes a variety of modern means of communication, both in written and audio-video form. Media has become fast, effective and accessible as it is shared information worldwide in no time. Everything can be saved electronically in computers, mobiles or other digital devices. Digital media has a great impact on states and societies with some good and bad sides. In recent times, academicians from the

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discipline of social sciences especially International Relations (IR) and Mass Communication have observed the media's positive and negative effects on national and international security and its point of reference in the foreign policy making. However, some studies overlooked the fact that modern technical advances have transformed the media in many ways. Media in all forms; press, radio, TV and internet is influencing national and global politics. The present study intends to fill the gap in existing literature in connection with media and national security. Hence students and scholars in the discipline of International Relations and Security Studies can use this paper as a credible source of information for extending the scope of research. The study helps the policy making circles in Pakistan understand the gravity of threat perception posed by electronic media to their security along with policy guidelines.

This paper revolves around the idea of ensuring peace and security through mainstream media and social media as the majority of today's world relies on the media for most of the information including politics. Whatever the media picks to focus upon, it is the primary information that people receive and if media ignores something to cover or disseminate information related to one issue then people remain uninformed. This process, agenda setting and agenda cutting respectively, forms various streams of narratives. The received information comes with the power of construction and destruction. In this scenario, national security takes in conversations and content shared on media, it also responds to propaganda of adversaries and external interferences.

The dilemma is that people are exposed to intricate information through media but information becomes useless or dangerous without appropriate education, attitude, context and creative abilities. Certainty, developing countries may have adopted technology but may not have developed scientific thinking in development and preserving national interests of states. Media sells messages of branding and improper information to the public which concerns national security activities and such coverage builds views of people and their behaviors that may not be accurate. However, media claims particular focus on political and security matters of a state.

This study endeavors to find out the answer of these questions; how do media on the name of freedom of expression, creating social problems? How can media organize people on delicate issues of internal security in Pakistan? How do media cover security related issue such as acts of terrorism and how does it cause societal rift. The objectives of this study are to figure out linkage media (conventional and new electronic) and national security threats, the use of social media by the governmental institutes in limiting or removing threats to national security and to examine how media is making threats to national security of underdeveloped states worse. This study is analytical and based on various documents, reports, reviews, articles of journals, newspapers and books. Discussing a framework of media, included with suggested solutions, will help in mitigating threats emanating from

new media as it can be used other way round to create national cohesion and responding external threats.

Linkages of Security and Media

Historically, the press has played a vital role in social connectivity, learning of cultures, and socio-political norms. Nowadays, healthy competition between print and electronic media has compelled publishers and media houses to carve out a new kind of readership or viewership. Hence, new trends of media cater the demands of viewers and readers (Basu, 2007). In retrospect, media was used as means for controlling and monitoring societal norms and it was the carrier of cultural, political, social and economic values of a society which transferred legal and value aspects from one generation to another so as to help the survival of system, prevention of generation interruption and covering sociability process. Thus Radio and television had been main source of information and communication; these technologies later converged with modern technology and revolutionized the information.

Electronic media has had a crucial role in influencing the world's view of a country and its people; their lifestyle, understandings, feelings, and values. The emergence of new information and communication technologies marks a turning point in the history of communication (Rana, 2012). Therefore, states are facing hard-hitting encounters to monitor, track and limit the use and misuse of social media as it relates to states' security. However, a limited effort by governments to counter media reports has become detrimental for Pakistan's security. Positive features of Pakistan's society, such as, peaceful and loving people including the Sufi culture, have not been depicted appropriately by the media. A serious challenge is the large amount of hurtful images of furious conflicts and religious radicalism in international media. This is spurring world-wide fear of Pakistani people and challenging national security as people assume what they see is true.

National security is the safekeeping of the nation as a whole; its requirement is to maintain the survival of the state through the use of all instruments of national power including media. Admittedly, comprehensive national security is based on internal security, domestic prosperity and protection from external threats. It makes the role of media more crucial (in opinion making, creating heroes and enemies) as media has become an important part of presenting Pakistan's image to the world. Presently, some communication has revealed several irrelevant secrets, or half-truths, to the general public.

Similarly in the name of freedom of expression and speech, issues of law and order are surfacing in almost every state in Pakistan. The global nature of Internet presents a set of international problems such as cybercrimes and legislation on it (Bhargava, 2004). Happening of incidents in one corner of world nowadays reaches in no time to whole world; this speedy circulation of information is attributed to the fast media. As a matter of fact, geographical, cultural and political

borders cannot hold back information in one area; its potential to burst barriers is a breakthrough. Media is a tool to disseminate information and opinions. It plays a significant role in transferring and exchanging of information, thoughts and cultures of different nations.

Media as an essential tool of communication can decrease wrongdoings and social weaknesses by transmitting ethics and moral values. Conversely, with the advancement of media, crimes, insecurity and social vulnerabilities have been augmented. Many media related stories are popular because the largest age group is young people and stories showing youths and teenagers are increasingly interesting. The image of Iraqi military was presented on media in a way that it would inflict heavy causalities on the coalition forces and it was perceived by majority in same manner (Badsey, The Media and International Security, 2013) These stories tend to rely more on electronic media.

Positive Aspects of Media

Certainly, media can steer either positive or negative effects as it functions as a 'double-edged sword' (Tai, 2015). There are special features of media in informing audiences, the speed of broadcasting news and information, constancy in delivering different matters and vast information quickly. Certainly media is bringing awareness of social issues to ordinary people and forcing the fine-tuning of social and individual behavior. The positive outlook of media recognizes it's functioning as a commanding force in sensitizing general public and disseminating diverse issues adequately which affects human life. For example, social media is raising awareness on various neglected issues and different networking sites including Facebook, Whatsapp and Twitter are largely used by youth to speak for the unrepresented groups of societies. Furthermore, it has made young people vibrant and innovative. The right use of the power of media is the best way for clearing minds and linking ideas and beliefs. With these mentioned attributes, media should be taken as a persuasive tool in controlling crimes and its potential must be used to maintain order in societies.

The traditional electronic media (TV-radio) was to disseminate new information. However, today's media works for education and entertainment. Actually it helps in upgrading the quality of our lives (Basu, 2007). Modern electronic media has a large number of viewers, its reach in remote areas and effectiveness is causing an increase in its influencing capability. Hence, TV and social media both are playing vital roles in creating new societal bonds. It is apt to say that Information Technology (IT) has brought a revolution in thinking and linking of societies as it freely analyzes numerous national and international issues, suggests different options, anticipates the options to choose the precise resolutions to direct public. The web has given people the opportunity to embrace a more social and connected life of creative exchange (McDougall, New York).

In addition, media's recreational role plays a vital role in eliminating frustration as it offers a wide array of entertainment for all the segments of the society. Today's media is powerful and a reasonable tool for educating societies and has a great potential if used wisely and with vision. Therefore raising awareness and educating masses to solve embedded social problems, national cohesion and promotion of civic sense must be the primary objectives of media in various countries. Media provides documentation for which it accelerates its effort to find reliable verifiable adequate and complete information. Besides, media also strengthens a state's position and its credibility in an effective manner. However, its own credibility has emerged as a big issue notwithstanding its availability to remote areas

Negative Aspects of Media

Digital media has made its access to remote areas and now audiences are increased more than ever before. This electronic form of media has a powerful impact on the way people communicate for personal reasons, school and even business. Social unrest is being observed due to the media's extensive coverage of every aspect of state and society. It is engendering skepticism and widening ethnic, religious and class rifts which were already present in societies. Moreover, increasing number of divorce, family violence, and social crimes are also linked to the power of media. Imitated crimes occurs after intense media coverage of mass murder, terrorism, hijacking and other types of crimes on TV and films and it gives birth to copycat crimes. (Helfgott, 2008) Bad behaviors of children in schools and other family or social challenges are very much prevalent in society because of the captivating characteristic of media which gives birth to copycat crimes, limited amount of empirical researches touches upon this phenomenon (Surette, 2015) However, different programs of radio and television can provide behavioral patterns through TV drams, programs, movies, and radio shows. Moreover, social sites are dramatically changing nature of protests too.

Television

For the last couple of years, the two main screens, the television and the computer, have become popular (in Pakistan particularly). TV discourse is explicitly designed to be heard by the absent audiences, which is why camera work, screen graphics, language, voice quality and attire, all are treated as meaning making semiotic resources (Lorenzo-Dus., 2009). In modern TV culture, violence has become a dominant feature and attract funding for support.. Extensive news coverage of any issue largely affected on the opinion of people, for instance, television in the US during 1988-1991, changed opinions of people who were exposed to high levels of television news, they emphasized military rather than diplomatic solution in the

Persian Gulf (Basu, 2007). Television channels are in competition to keep viewers captivated, thus using sensationalism and drama to boost ratings and attract advertising dollars. It is also observed that media sometimes become irresponsible because media managers have their background in the corporate sector rather than journalism.

Certainly, due to various examples of the media's siding and fictional stories, its objectivity is becoming dubious. Agenda setting and agenda cutting strategies show biases of media houses as they disseminate information with their personal choice by adding hateful words or twisting stories. Half-truth is always dangerous for those who do not know history and details of actual issue. The imbalanced obsession of events, incidents, accidents and statements cause confusion. Improvement in ratings and getting more viewers ship, push media houses to adopt sensational tools for attraction.

The coverage of television is not bad at all but real issue lies how TV channels cover stories. It is noticeable that TV channels create sensation and sometime blame any individual or organization without evidence and prove it on TV channels by exaggeration or dramatization. It creates syndromes of mental illness and depression in society. The case of US attack on Afghanistan in 2001 is an obvious case, nonstop footage of fighting scenes remained dominant over many TV channels which not only served terrorist's cause but also got good rating.

TV channels normally use framing with agenda setting to prove that the issues they are showing actually are important. In agenda setting, 'more attention a media channel gives to any occurrence or phenomenon to grasp public attention' (McCombs, 2004) is very common and observable in race of rating. In 'framing' images and words both make the frame in which media "selects some aspects of a perceived reality and makes it more striking to validate its own definition" (Papacharissi, 2008). For instance after 9/11 presenting Muslims as terrorists is so common in media with exaggeration. Various TV channels covered the incident of 9/11 attacks hurriedly to show that American attack was just. Thus, framing has become popular concept in the communication science (Stromback, 2014). Building of a frame concerns the interaction between different actors over how to frame an issue in news (Stromback, 2014). States' internal and external security situation is nowadays occupied with the effects of framing of security related issues.

The performance of conflict in TV talk shows projects an emotional public sphere (Lorenzo-Dus., 2009). As the electronic media can be accessed by a small segment of society and vested interests of various groups project their identity. The coverage of media is therefore giving birth to polarized society. Such as all events and happenings in Pakistan are not wicked but due to negative propaganda and discussion is daily on air so the projection of crimes causes erosion of true identity. Commercially driven, ultra-powerful media primarily serves their sponsors rather than the public (Khan, 2010). It can easily take away the sense of

hope from the masses as sensitive public can make surroundings suspicious. It shows that the responsible journalism and objectivity has been jettisoned and speculations can hardly be separated from facts.

Social Networking and Modern Appliances

Advancement in the computers and mobiles has aided social media to grow. Therefore, with the exchange of information, both for good and bad is taking place at domestic, regional and international level. Nowadays smaller screens have encouraged the emergence of new trends and mass media have become mobile. The spread of social media, driven by internet boom and mobile technology is changing the living style of society (C, 2012). The usage of wireless gadgets such as mobile phones and laptops are the new trends giving world a new thinking through social media. It includes participants' conversations, sharing of information and ideas independently, without confirming right and wrong information. Such unnecessary and irrelevant information causes commotion in societies. However, advantage of digital code messages is that they can be distributed and transmitted electronically (Stromback, 2014). Facebook always share wonderful moments of friends' life and YouTube unleash the talent of ordinary people.

Certainly, social networking has become essential in the everyday lives of many people. However, mostly user of social media are young people, average 18 to 35 years old, usage has recently been increased by older adults too (Social Media Fact Sheet, 2017). People are widely connected and their interaction around the world has become easier. Anyone can interpret any incident on social media and dangerous perceptions can be built. Using digital technology, particularly new feature of social media such as live streaming video, allows users to generate content and instantly upload it (Fuchs, 2015) which is indeed dangerous. A 19 years old in Pakistan can freely tweet about security situation without caring laws and an 45 years old can tweet, sitting in the US, about Trump's policies openly, however, their metadata help states to infer about certain situation. However content and metadata increase so fast and making sense of the usage of big data (Fuchs, 2015).

Mostly, users of social media remain unanimous and sometimes cannot be traced by law enforcement agencies. The improvement in the sector of media and particularly social media has augmented the ability of non-state actors including terrorists, and criminals. Although states are using technique of Language and Sentimental Analysis (LSA), study of patterns in linguistics contents (Fuchs, 2015), but it is no sufficient in fast communication system. Government, national security agencies such as the military and the police have to change their response from traditional way as individuals are manifesting power too, through networking

sites, with that of states. In this backdrop, national security has become connected feature of media.

Traditional concept of national security is to protect territory, its people, values, laws, national interest from both external and internal threats of all kinds. The definition of security has expanded, now it includes unconventional ways of thinking. Actually, interstate conflicts have dwindled with the end of Cold War, later intrastate issues such as civil wars grabbed world's attention and now focus has shifted to the abilities of terrorists, criminals and rioters (Brooks, 2013). The internet is a dominant forum at global level for discussion between communities. It can be said that the age of the internet has produced an age of online terrorism and empowered terrorists to use the web to recruit and spread their messages (Bilgen, 2012).

Social networks are being used for political and social purposes too which has potential to aggravate grievances. Technology and society are created together and are mutually constitutive, therefore technology cannot be a cause of insecurity, and it serves merely as a tool (Bilgen, 2012). The role of internet and social media in international relations with particular focus of Arab revolution of 2011, facilitated uprisings in Tunisia, Syria and Egypt (Kimutai, Social Media and National Security Threats).Social networks inform, mobilize and created communities, seek to hold governments accountable. (Ipek Danju, Yasar Maasoglu b, Nahide Maasoglu, 2012) The social media in the Arab region successfully mobilize protestors and brought a change. Security situation is to date is witnessing continuous skirmishes and political shakiness, all upsetting economic development and fabricating society. Hence, it is right to say that social media is a tool of the revolution and its cause.

Internet and Terrorism

With the end of Cold War, the mass media of communication has intensely changed, mainly because of the global access of the Internet mobiles with latest technology. Technological innovations dramatically changed social behaviors and evil genius also got benefits; even terrorist groups have started to utilize social media as an instrument of terrorizing people. Internet has swapped the print media for terrorist organizations as publicity of their agenda has become very easy, websites were formed by terrorists to spread their messages. Hence, internet for terrorist organizations has become vital as they receive more attention as ever before and it is much easier to garner support through media.

Media houses with internet, serving cause of terrorist because terrorist incidents appear a boon for them as they are siphoning money and experiencing surge in ratings. The past decade has sufficiently provided examples of favorable association between terrorist organizations and the media (Frey, 2007). Some terrorist attacks in history designate the US and the Middle East, actually the

builders of terrorism exploit the media for the display of their efficiency and propagandas. Media gets record audiences and gigantic rating by giving coverage to terrorist incidents. Public gets involved in such incidents and get tuned with TV channels displaying dramatic news. Hence, it is reasonable to claim that beneficial relationship between media and terrorism persists.

Terrorists are mainly interested in spectators, the reaction of audience is important for them and victims are worthless. To gain attention of public through media is goals of terrorists; therefore selection of area is also related to media coverage. Terrorists aim to be regarded like legitimate world leaders and media sometimes gives them their desired status. Given these intentions, terrorists conduct attacks sensibly with full awareness of the impact of media reporting on outsized segment of society.

The incident of 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center, and Pentagon are glaring examples of media's effort to grasp world public attention and aggravated discourse on terrorism. The discourse of fear has been built through news and reporting which engender new epoch of terrorism and rhetoric of security started to control mind. The global news media helped bring into being the global security regime came after the shocking attack on the World Trade Center (WTC). The media, among others, dubbed that attack as *9/11*, this term has since become an integral part of international discourse (Conflict and Communication, 2005). Terrorists were aware that attacking the standard places in the US will be sensational news around the world.

Similarly, media prepared grounds for the US to attack on Iraq and Afghanistan. The first was to embark upon Afghanistan on the name of war against terrorism in 2001. Subsequently, the global news media started to justify US attack on Iraq.

"During this period, the global media's activity was confined to two key media environments: the global news television networks, such as the BBC, Sky News, CNN and the Internet. In the months leading up to the war in Iraq, but even more markedly during the war itself, the leading global news networks' national affiliates

(a) Determined their editorial decisions

(b) Supported their news value judgments.

CNN emerged as a patriotic American channel par excellence, while Sky News took a markedly pro-British, pro-government view…. Thus, the three networks helped the United States (and Britain) to establish their pro-war regime" (Conflict and Communication, 2005).Another case of the worldwide mobilization of the media can be seen in the international media espoused the term of White House's famous *Axis of Evil* and reports were framed on media and internet accordingly.

Recommendations

Under the light of media's positive and negative power and its effects on security, the below mentioned recommendations can be taken into account to minimize threats to security.

- Media can report terrorist incidents but must be very careful in framing of events and coverage. Media must reexamine the situation (different from terrorists) and should change its rhetoric while covering the terrorist related events. This will be helpful in mitigating fearful atmosphere. News coverage must be with a lesser amount of dreadful scenes and less sensation.
- Objectivity should be observed while reporting any incident. The media must play a fair role; it must disseminate accurate information, without taking any one's side. Emotions and reason must be carefully gauged as anchors sometime unconsciously impose their own perspective, instead of objectivity.
- TV channels should deliver the factual, relevant and clear information by avoiding misinterpretation particularly terrorist-related events. To end the element of panic, media must shun extreme viewpoints by using soft language.
- Media can work as a tool of public diplomacy instead of an instrument of propaganda. With a clear counter narrative, so that terrorists' account can be denied and extremists' views can be refuted.
- The dearth of passable rules must be dealt by introducing new laws. Parliament must emphasize o self-regulation and media-owners, journalists, content controllers must endure a comprehensive process of eligibility.
- Too much control of TV channels can be broken by launching more autonomous TV Channels, should not base on advertisement revenue, and granting of a greater number of licenses for community based electronic media will help to end cartelization. TV channels working on fair and given criteria should be compensated with a reasonable delivery of revenue.
- Prevention of the spread of extremist viewpoints is possible by removing websites menace to security.

Conclusion

International community is not immune to forces of use and misuse of digital and media. The use of social media with new communication instruments has brought serious security threats and raised privacy concerns. The new vectors for cyber-attack are serious concerns of government and the military. Criminals and terrorist organizations with bad intentions and seditious elements, frequently use electronic media particularly internet to spread their agenda with exclusive intention to recruit, radicalize and reach out target audience.

The void between media and state stance generate skepticism in societies and may widen existing rifts amongst diverse groups. So, counter strategies to meet new challenges of social media must be the state priority. Although international media has achieved considerable merits but quality of local media is deteriorating. Local media is struggling for the implementation of regulations, efforts are being made on personal and state level but efforts are erratic rather without proper framework and rules. An inadequate enforcement effort such as taking notices against TV channels is inviting lethargic process of judiciary. The communiqué of ferocious groups is greatly relying on the internet; this dilemma exists largely due to the debate of freedom of expression and censorship. Hence, it becomes vital to adopt counter measures against the cyber activities of terrorists, including tracking online terrorist activities. This is necessary to educate public and provide correct perspective and information to them on the one hand and effectively counter and neutralize false, malicious and misleading narrative of certain groups and anti-state elements.

In nutshell, new appliances are provided to people but handling with information is yet difficult as pre conceived contexts are important in perception building. Therefore counter strategies are direly needed to use media as an apparatus of security rather letting it to be an instrument of evil genius. It is the dire need to understand that reality is always distorted and to avoid perception clash negative attributes must be shun through TV channels. New dogmas as well as new technologies are indispensable for states to refine its security strategies.

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