

Post 9/11 Prone Staging Of International Electronic Media And Challenges To Pakistan's Global Image



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Abstract: *In this paper the Western and Indian electronic media remains in focus. The terror attacks which took place on September 11, 2001 did not only shake United States of America; they shook the entire world and everyone living in any nook or cranny of the globe. The incident changed the entire political, economic and diplomatic landscape of the international and global community and what began then continues to change and shape the international world of today.*

Key Words: Post 9/11, Prone Staging, International Electronic Media, Challenges, Pakistan's Global Image

Introduction

According to Muhammad Ishaque Fani's paper "Pakistan's Foreign Policy: Challenges and Opportunities after 9/11" (1), there were three major consequences which occurred after the September 11th attacks. Firstly, there was a revelation, to the entire world, that international terrorism exists and is an actual threat that needs to be taken seriously. This had impacted the states' global stature and reshaped the perception of world community on the basis of, 'with us or against us' slogan of

the United States. Consequently states' image suffered throughout Muslim world in particular. Secondly, it was decided, upon consensus, that this international terrorism had to be countered with military action and just political action would not suffice to diminish such a grave threat. Thirdly, it was also decided that this counter terrorism action would be taken under supervision of the esteemed United Nations' Security Council resolutions. In all three consequence of 9/11

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attacks electronic media had played a key role in agenda and stage setting for Afghanistan.

Misrepresentation of International Image of Pakistan: Negative Portrayal of Electronic Media

Pakistan and Afghan Wars: Propaganda of Indian and Western Media

Pakistan, being one of the closest neighbors of Afghanistan, held a pivotal place in war against USSR and against the terrorist groups. Ever since Pakistan had helped the United States of America in the Cold War, by supplying the many Afghan military fighters with ammunition and arms as desired by America, the two countries (Pakistan and America) had developed a cordial relationship. As soon as 9/11 attacks took place and the decision was made that the United States of America would take military action in Afghanistan to counter terrorism, Pakistan offered not just support to the United States of America, but also offered its airbase and committed to helping out with Pakistan's own intelligence and military assets in US led war against terrorism. The major reason, this aspect is important to discuss, because Pakistan offered support to US twice – first during the Soviet War and then again during the more recent War on Terror. It is incumbent to remember that President Musharraf's speech in which he declared that Pakistan would help the United States in this War against Terror in Afghanistan, was met with outrage from those within the country of Pakistan; especially religious parties who saw this as a direct betrayal of their own Muslim brothers and sisters in Afghanistan. And yet, even with this immense pressure from within the country, President Musharraf remained

firm on his decision that Pakistan would offer support to United States in whatever manner it was required. Yet, regardless of this unwavering determination that Pakistan always fought against terrorism and extremism, since 9/11 Pakistan is portrayed by Western and Indian Media as a country that harbors Jihadi militants and has close ties to extremist groups.

Propaganda of Electronic Media against Pakistan on Haqqani Network

A prime example is a recent article published in *Brookings* on January 5, 2018 titled "Why Pakistan supports terrorist groups and why the United States of America finds it so hard to induce change." This particular article, like numerous others, talks in depth about the extremely complicated political relationship between Pakistan and the United States of America. (2) It highlights the Trump administration's decision to stop sending military aid to Pakistan and reinforces the idea that Pakistan, as a state, supports terrorism and has constantly done so by supporting the Haqqani network and the Taliban, have allowed them safe haven in Pakistan and continues to provide both military support and intelligence to both the respective groups. The same article goes on to talk about Pakistan's close ties with numerous terrorist organization and their unnecessary involvement in Afghanistan, and how all this, affects the United States of America as there have been a great number of American soldiers and military personnel who died in the war in Afghanistan. (3)

Electronic Media Restrains in Recognizing Pakistan's Contribution to the Peace and Stability

In general, this is ordinarily the stance that international mainstream media has taken regarding Pakistan ever since 9/11. Completely putting aside the fact that Pakistan has always supported the West in this particular region, the country's name continues to be tarnished by affiliation with terrorism, sectarian violence, religious extremism and other such vices. Media has evolved a major source of information for the general masses. Anything that is seen on TV or even on the news is accepted as the absolute truth and undeniable reality, without anyone questioning its authenticity, legitimacy or context. That is, in fact, how the global and international image of a country is projected through the monopolized Western media and as well Indian media in the case of Pakistan. It has less to do with how the country actually is and more to do with how the country is perceived to be by those on the outside. When it comes to an international image, perception is everything. Whether that perception is deceptive or not has very little to do with anything. A very significant example is that of India. While India has a history similar to Pakistan's and there is religious extremism, sectarian violence, human rights violation, poverty and yet, India has a very different international image than Pakistan. Not only is it on much more stable ground economically and politically, it also enjoys better diplomatic relationships with numerous developed countries and is perceived to be a country that is secular, multicultural and full of culture and spice. While Hollywood only uses Pakistan to

link its name with terrorism or nuclear activity, India is often shown as an exotic land that is rich with all kinds of treasures.

Impact of Indian Electronic Media Portrayal on Pakistan's Global Image

This topic is a two-tiered approach to understanding how India fits in to this entire discussion by, firstly, the manner in which Indian media has constantly played a major role in worsening Pakistan's perception in front of the international community and, secondly, all the ways in which India has worked wonders to improve its own global image and create a national brand which has actually made it one of the global powers in today's world. Being a direct neighbor to Pakistan and having such a closely shared history, India has always played a significant role in shaping the perception of Pakistan to the rest of the world. Through the way their media talks about Pakistan and the way it is constantly referred to in Bollywood movies and in their news channels, India has done more damage than good to Pakistan's image internationally.

Going back to the theory of mediatization, Schulz wrote "changing structural relations between media and politics has developed to a point where political institutions, leaders and practices are increasingly dependent upon media and conform to the logics of media production, distribution and reception." (4)

This means that politics and media has become so intertwined that politicians are well aware of the need to use the media to project a certain image. There is a certain way in which an image is produced and distributed by the media, in which the reception, by the general

public, is controlled. For example, the media has the power to show both the positive and negative aspect of something. In the past, we have seen countless incidents where a celebrity was said to have done something and, regardless of whether there was any truth to the matter or not, the media eventually made the story so popular by creating a hype that it became a part of accepted information rather than something which the public would critically look at and judge. When it comes to Pakistan and India, the media plays a very similar role of igniting hostilities and further worsening situations where they may not even have been as bad to begin with.

Indian Movie “A Wednesday”

However, to begin with the discussion regarding how India's media has played a significant role in worsening Pakistan's global image, let's take the example of the Indian movie, *A Wednesday*. It is common knowledge that Bollywood is much more recognized and has more popularity as an industry, than Lollywood and this also means that Bollywood has a greater viewership. It may not have a viewership as great as Hollywood but it does happen to be an extremely massive entertainment industry and has its own power to go along with the name. This particular movie, *A Wednesday*, (5) has an 8.2/10 rating on IMDB and has 4 wins and 11 nominations, which means it is a movie which has been viewed by an enormous amount of people. The plot of the movie revolves around an Indian civilian who pretends to be a terrorist and calls the police station threatening to have planted several bombs in the vicinity and having set a timer for a particular time if his demands are not met. His demands entail the release of four

Pakistani prisoners who were caught by the Indian army and locked up in connection with the Mumbai attacks which took place in 2008, that forever shook India. The movie shows in detail how each of these Pakistani terrorists were trained in Pakistan and their intention to blow up different places in India for the sake of Islam. There were shots shown in the movie depicting these young men being taught by quintessential looking Taliban or Al-Qaeda terrorists and being told that killing civilians in India would be a form of Jihad and would result in a great reward in the Hereafter. These men were eventually released from prison, due to the pressure on the police department, and upon meeting they all congratulated each other for having killed the most number of civilians. At the end of the movie, the civilian actually carries out his plan which results in killing all four of these terrorists – which was his initial goal. The conclusion of the movie was that the Indian civilian wanted to show the authorities that the Indian people were tired of waiting for the authorities to take action against the terrorists and they were no longer going to live in a state of constant fear.

Media Portrayal of Mumbai Attacks

While there is no denying the fact that the Mumbai attacks were extremely deadly and resulted in the deaths of over 150 people including over 300 injured, there is significant damage these attacks did to Pakistan's overall global image because the attacks were constantly linked with Pakistan. According to some Bollywood movies, the attacks were even coordinated by the help of Pakistan's intelligence and military while the rest of them just focus on the aspect of Pakistani terrorists. The main issue arises due to the fact that

Hollywood and Bollywood, both, constantly link Pakistan's name with terrorism and extremism. In both Hollywood and Bollywood movies, terrorists are either shown to be living in Pakistan, have links in Pakistan or have Pakistani names and outlooks – all of this forms a perception of Pakistan as being closely affiliated with terrorism. This perception is further strengthened when the Indian, and other international, news also constantly link Pakistan's name with terrorism, fundamentalism and terrorist organizations.

Keeping in mind the theory of mediatization and the extent to which media helps build a perception in the minds of those who may otherwise not have any source of knowledge or information about the subject or matter, the entertainment industry is also extremely effective in propagating a certain perception and image. For this reason, it is simply not enough to discuss just the mention of Pakistan in India's news, the Bollywood industry and several examples of movies must also be analyzed in the manner through which they portray Pakistan.

Negative Portrayal of Pakistani Culture

There is an entire list of Bollywood movies that have been banned in Pakistan because of the way in which they either portray Pakistan or the Pakistani army/intelligence. While the Indian government and officials may have actually tried to engage in diplomatic relations with Pakistan and improve trade relations, the Bollywood movies have always stuck to a depiction and representing of Pakistan through a negative lens. Most Bollywood movies consist of villains who happen to have Pakistani names such as “Moosa bhai or Yousuf bhai” and are most often wearing

Shalwar Kameez and a topi. Another Bollywood movie, *Qiyamat*, (6) showed three terrorists who tried to pressurize the Indian government in to giving the money, by threatening several government officials. These terrorists were named Ali, Abbas and one other Muslim girl. While developing stories such as this, within the movie, the rest of the depictions makes it quite clear that the terrorists in question are Pakistani and have little or no regard for the life of anyone who is not a Pakistani and not a Muslim. If nothing else, the terrorists in the movie will be shown speaking Urdu or Pashto as both are languages only spoken in Pakistan and not spoken in India.

Bollywood Movie “Sarfarosh”

In another extremely popular movie, *Sarfarosh*, (7) Naseeruddin Shah Plays the role of a Pakistani vocalist named Gulfam Hassan, who constantly encourages and helps perpetuate and propel the spread of terrorism within India. By showing a vocalist play his part in spreading terrorism within India, the movie subconsciously suggests to the viewers that any one, no matter how innocent they may seem, who has ties to Pakistan will most probably have a secret intention or will try to bring harm to India and do it for the sake of their country. While most other movies show Pakistanis as being terrorists or belonging to mobs, this movie shows the Pakistani man as being just another member of society who does not seem like much of a threat initially. Such a portrayal is even more negative because it leads to the dehumanization of Pakistanis and projects everyone living in this country under the same light.

At the same time, it creates a really

negative image in the viewer's mind. Also, the fact that except for banning such films in the country, Pakistan has not responded to Bollywood. The continuous use of Pakistan's image throughout the history of Bollywood has over time created a false image of Pakistan globally. It is not just Bollywood which decipheres Pakistan's image in this way, the entire Indian cinema (Tamil, Telgu etc) and even the local drama industry has supported one biased opinion that Pakistan is linked with terrorism, extremism & backward mentality.

Bollywood Movie "My Name Is Khan"

Out of hundreds of movies there is only one which shows Muslims as brothers or a part of this world. But the Bollywood being witty as always are very careful to link the Muslim to as Indian Muslim. Since the country still have vast majority of areas of the Muslim population. It is very rare or even close to a no that a Muslim being portrayed as protagonist. Such example can be seen in the movie *My Name is Khan*.⁽⁸⁾ The plot revolves around a middle class Indian Muslim child named Rizwan Khan played by the famous Bollywood actor Shahrukh Khan. The kid has Asperger's Syndrome which is not discovered until his adulthood but at the same time he is gifted with special abilities to almost repair anything. He always received extra affection from his mother & his tutor which made him a unique considerate character. He has a brother, Zakir, who always felt jealous of the affection received by Rizwan leaves for New York, Rizwan continues to live with his mother until she dies and his brother invites him to New York a little resentfully. It is at this time his brother's wife discovers Rizwan's syndrome. Story goes on that Rizwan starts working as a

sales person in his brother's company where one day he meets Mandira (played by Kajol), a single Hindu mother. They end up marrying each other and Mandira takes Khan's surname. They are living the perfect life until September 11th, where the family starts experiencing post terror attack related prejudice which results in the death of their son. Mandira in disbelief blames Khan that her son died because he had the name 'Khan' attached to it and adds that she does not want to be with him. When asked by Rizwan she sarcastically replies go tell the president that "My Name is Khan and I am not a terrorist". There upon Khan (due to his special nature) sets on a journey; travelling from states to states going through all the hardships and befriending strangers along the way just to convey a message that "my name is Khan and I am not the terrorist". Getting interrogated by FBI and helping the hurricane victims. His journey grabs the media attention and he end up meeting the president. The story portrays Muslims as good and clearly highlights there are good and bad people in every community but this time Bollywood does not link Muslims with Pakistan. So, one way Bollywood has adapted is that every bad Muslim which promotes terrorism has some kind of connection to Pakistan and if by chance there is a good Muslim. They must be part of our community.

However, it is not only the Indian entertainment industry that depicts Pakistan in a negative manner and constantly affiliates it with terrorism, suicide attacks and violence – the Indian news media also opts for a very similar strategy. Much like the Indian entertainment industry, the Indian news media is also much more powerful than the Pakistani news media and has a significantly

greater impact in the international community, because it has a wider viewership.

War of Tweets

A very recent incident that took place was Prime Minister Imran Khan's visit to the United States of America, where he reminded the United States of America that Pakistan has given several sacrifices, both monetary and otherwise, for America's war on Terror.

A very similar argument took place over Twitter last year, where American president Donald Trump angrily tweeted:

"The United States has "foolishly" given Pakistan \$33 billion in aid over the last 15 years, and they have given us nothing but lies & deceit, thinking of our leaders as fools. They give safe haven to the terrorists we hunt in Afghanistan, with little help. No more!" (9)

This tweet caused an upheaval in Pakistan's foreign embassy. There were protests lodged against Trump tweeting this. The official reply came from Pakistan's Defence ministry saying the following:

"Pak as anti-terror ally has given free to US: land & air communication, military bases & intel cooperation that decimated Al-Qaeda over last 16yrs, but they have given us nothing but invective & mistrust. They overlook cross-border safe havens of terrorists who murder Pakistanis" (10) After this, it was claimed that the Foreign Ministry refuses to do anything more for the United States of America as the president called the state a "liar". (11)

An extremely relevant example comes just from the most current issue – Narendra Modi winning as Prime Minister in India for a second term in office. Almost immediately after his re-election, the Prime Minister of

Pakistan, Imran Khan, sent out a tweet congratulating Modi on winning the election and highlighting how he wished this to be the start of peace and prosperity between India and Pakistan. This gesture was one of goodwill and an effort to improve relations between Pakistan and India. The Indian media, however, was quick to point out that the Pakistani media termed Modi's victory as being an "empathetic mandate" due to the national security threat he had orchestrated in the past few months. By focusing on negative remarks made by the Pakistani media instead of words of goodwill and hope which had been shared, the Indian news media successfully portrayed Pakistan as being bitter and not in support of the current government of India.

This is just one example from a plethora of examples that show how the Indian news media has quite often manipulated or hyped up a situation to purposefully shed a negative light on Pakistan and either make the country seem dangerous, unstable or simply weak as a state.

Media Propaganda over Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB)

It is a very common habit of the Indian Media to involve Pakistan in almost anything; politics and cricket etc. In cricket, when Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) caught its players for Spot fixing of cricketer's Mohammad Amir, Salman Butt and Muhammad Asif. PCB did the right thing to inform the International Cricket Council (ICC) to maintain the spirit of the game. However, Indian Media was keen on portraying Pakistan's role in destroying the game. (12) Whereas, match fixing and spot fixing has been the part of Cricket almost

decades before they were caught. Even Indian cricketers themselves have been involved in such scandals. Indian media choose to remain fixated on this that Pakistan was destroying their beloved game. Also, by having such an influence on ICC they successfully managed to make sure that out of the trio only 1 player could return back to international cricket. The players were given longer bans. Meanwhile, Indian media did not wait to capitalize on this fact as well. This is just one cricket example. There are many in the past where Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has been involved when it came to decisions related to Pakistan and ICC.

Pulwama Attack: Indian Media's Propaganda to Defame Pakistan Globally

Another very recent event that took place between India and Pakistan was the car bombing, also known as the Pulwama Attacks, in India on February 14, 2019 which resulted in the deaths of several members from India's Armed Forces. The entire incident was blamed on Pakistan instantly after it took place and Indian media went so far as to insinuate that the Pakistani government and intelligence were a part of planning and carrying out the attack. The manner in which the Indian news media reported and covered the attack and all the developments after it ignited such hatred and animosity towards Pakistan that it led to an actual national security emergency. (13)

The Indian media then reported, a few days later, that the Indian army had successfully carried out attacks against Pakistani militants, and whereas, in reality the Indian fighter jets had been forced to turn back

because the Pakistani air force was well prepared for such an attack. It was also insinuated that Pakistani army and air force surpassed the line of control and made the initial attempt to attack India. In reality, though, the Pakistani army and air force was only instructed to be prepared for a surprise attack and to respond immediately if such an attack occurred. Later on, when Pakistan had captured Indian Wing-Commander, Abhinandan Varthaman, he was treated with the utmost respect and care and was even released back to India within 48 hours after his capture. This was Pakistan's way of extending an olive branch towards India and showing India, and the rest of the world, that Pakistan had no intension of a war or any tension on the borders. The Indian media, however, took this olive branch and depicted it as Pakistan being pressured by India to return their Wing-Commander and Pakistan having no choice but to give in to the pressure. The reason why this incident is extremely significant in the course of this discussion is because Pakistan actually made the right move by not starting the war, and then not responding with hostility towards the situation and remaining diplomatic instead. This was, perhaps, exactly the move Pakistan needed to show the rest of the world that it is not the violent, rigidly Islamic country harboring terrorists – which it is projected to be.

The Indian news media, however, having a much stronger foothold and more of an impact internationally was successful in creating the narrative it wanted that Pakistan was only returning the wing-commander because it had succumbed to India's threats and that it was Pakistan that had lead the attacks against India and was causing tension

on the borders. Tuning back to almost any news channel or talk show from those days would give an extremely clear picture of how greatly the Indian media distorted the reality and levied all blame on Pakistan for constantly being a disruptive, instable and weak neighbor.

By focusing on the negative aspects of Pakistani media and the Pakistani public and projecting an alternative narrative that constantly makes Pakistan look and appear bad, the Indian news and entertainment media has played a significant role in worsening Pakistan's global image to the rest of the world.

The sheer mass of Indian media is enough to affect the image of Pakistan. Indian media competes with Pakistan at every level and highlights the negativities involved. This also results in hatred among the two countries. Falsifying news and the negative perspective often ends up in Pakistan through social media which then leaves feelings of hatred towards other. In comparison, Pakistan's media is more mature or controlled when it comes to this.

Pakistan's Global Image: An Analysis of CNN and BBC Portrayal

The Western media with its 'everything pervading power' and great international impact and influence is additionally aggressively occupied with censoring Pakistan and dirtying its picture among the media of other countries. Under the predominant conditions, it is significant for the government that rather than just depending on the state-to-state discretion, those at the top level of governance need to ensure that they play their part in presenting a superior image of

Pakistan's position and improve its global image universally, countering the negative and damaging publicity against it and instead focusing on depicting the image of a nation commenced made up of positive things such as the struggle to improve its monetary, social and political conditions in accordance with the global and internationally acknowledged standards. The rise of an autonomous judiciary system and a free media in Pakistan are, in actuality, steps in making improvements in Pakistan's global image. The steps taken towards gender balance and strengthening of women are additionally extremely positive improvements.

These accomplishments can be utilized to accomplish wanted outcomes given that the government takes solid measures to reinforce its Personal Relations and global image and outlook at the universal level. This is the period of data, media and specialization. In that capacity, the global image building task should be taken care of by well-prepared, notable and proficient authorities of the Information administration, established for the very reason. Be that as it may, it is matter of incredible disgrace that even our press areas established in remote areas are either not appropriately prepared or come up short on the fortitude that is important to do justice with their jobs. It isn't just a genuinely necessary improvement that needs to be reinforced but press areas in remote locations are extremely important in order for the media to even be able to do its job with honesty and integrity rather than having to rely on third person accounts for areas where they cannot visit.

As always, media helps shape what is referred to as the common narrative – it is the narrative which is accepted as truth by the

general, ordinary people and citizens. The more logical it seems, the more likely and easily people accept it. If we go back to the previous discussion from the very beginning of this chapter, it becomes obvious that it was initially the United States of America that began funding Afghan militants in their efforts against the powerful Soviet Union. Since the United States of America could not directly touch base in Afghanistan, they asked for support from Pakistan and funneled money through Pakistan to Afghanistan. Billions of dollars were spent in buying arms and ammunition and funding militant groups in order to help the m win in their struggle against Russia. When Russia was defeated and no longer remained a super power, the United States of America also retracted from this region. The actual damage though, had already been done. The majority of arms and ammunition remained in the region, the numerous military groups remained, the militant and extremist ideologies remained and the notable migration of Afghan families in to Pakistan continued to take place. In the very midst of all this, it was simply forgotten that something should have been done to disarm the entire region as soon as the cold war ended. It is for this very reason that as soon as Afghanistan was pinpointed as the main and central hub of extremist terrorism, the international and global media was quick to connect Afghanistan militant groups with Pakistan. It was pointed out that Pakistan harbored and funded several terrorist groups. However, an important piece of information that was skipped over was that the initial funding initially came from the great United States of America. While that is the actual entire truth and context of the complicated

situation that actually took place in this region, the international electronic media floated a narrative that blamed Pakistan fully and completely for being sympathetic towards terrorists and terrorist organizations and showing leniency towards them. It was, in fact, after these accusations that President Musharraf banned several military organizations such as Lashkar-e-Tayyaba and cracked down on many Madrassahs for teaching extremism-inducing syllabi. It was also during the very same time that President Musharraf shut down over 10,000 Madrassahs all over the country of Pakistan and demanded that all Madrassahs incorporate modern education in to their syllabi in order to distance Pakistan from the militant and extremist terrorism it kept being affiliated with.

French Media Portrayal of Pakistan's Image

Regardless of any of these efforts, Pakistan has not been able to redeem itself from the global image which was plastered on it after 9/11. It has constantly been linked with terrorism ever since and almost all news out of Pakistan are blown out of proportion. A documentary by France which can be found on YouTube, talks solely about the Tahreek-e-Taliban, Pakistan. This particular documentary dwells in to the gory details of how these military groups get together to train and how they have been extremely successful in several attacks within the country. (14)

Repetitive and Primetime Coverage of Pakistan in Bad News

Pakistan had been in news for the events which

took place after the siege of Laal Masjid, the assassination of Benazir Bhutto and the attempted assassination of Malala Yousuf Zai. These are all events which took place in Pakistan but made headlines in the global media.

Electronic Media Portrayal over Lal-Masjid

Although the Pakistan as state was busy in operation but International electronic media propagated Pakistan's capital a safe haven for the terrorist. The siege of Laal Masjid was seen as terrorists having taken over the capital of Pakistan and refusing to back down. According to the general mainstream international media, this happened because the Pakistani government was unable to take strict measures to safeguard its own people against terrorism and terrorists. This, of course, further emphasized the already negative image Pakistan had in the global media.

The Assassination of Benazir Bhutto

The assassination of Benazir Bhutto is an event which still remains a mystery. However, the common narrative in the international and global media is that she was assassinated by the Tahreek-e-Taliban because they could not allow a woman to be in power. Regardless of how much truth there is to this claim, this quickly became the acceptable narrative in the international media and Pakistan quickly lost whatever positivity it had gained in the international community after the liberal democracy that marked the end of President Musharraf's regime.

Attack on Malala Yousuf Zai

The worst hit, though, was the one Pakistan's global image took after Malala Yousuf Zai was

shot in the head and then quickly taken abroad for treatment. The country was very quickly remembered only as a country that harbored terrorists who were against the education of woman. While the reality is that it is very common for girls to study in schools, colleges and universities in many areas of Pakistan – the image of the entire country was diminished to that of an extremely dangerous, backward society where a young girl can be shot in the head as she walks home from school. What made the situation worse was how majority of the general public in Pakistan chose to backlash and badmouth Malala for disgracing Pakistan in the international media. The global media very quickly picked up on these tidbits and Pakistan's global image simply crumbled.

The conversation was no longer about cities and wars, it was about a young girl who had almost lost her life in her pursuit of education and, according to the global media, the general public of the country chose to side with the oppressors rather than the young girl who they went on to label a traitor. At this point, Pakistan's global image took the worst hit possible because the international community could see no sympathy from the country for Malala Yousuf Zai.

Terrorists Attack on Army Public School Peshawar

The narrative got even darker when the APS attack happened in Peshawar on December 16, 2014. It seemed that Pakistan was a place where militants, affiliated with the Tahreek-e-Taliban, could simply walk in to an army school, gun the place down killing over 150 people including students and teachers. A country where even the young ones studying in school were not safe from terrorists was

seen, internationally, as a country that had no ability of security measures to protect itself from the terrorism that brewed inside it.

Pakistan's Global Image and Electronic Media Portrayal: Critical Analysis

The discussion has heavily focused on everything that the international electronic media has done and is doing to present a deteriorating global image of Pakistan and everything that the Pakistani media itself is doing to further worsen this image. The discussion has emphasized time and again the need for Pakistan to consciously improve its global image in order to help change the perception of the world in regards to our country and State. This is extremely essential for Pakistan politically, economically and diplomatically.

In the midst of this discussion on news and the global and national impact of 9/11, it must be remembered that the country which has lost the most due to terrorism and extremism is actually Pakistan, itself. According to a report "The Escalating Tragedies in Pakistan, in 2005-2010" published by Brown University:

"The US has also used Pakistan as a major supply route for weapons, fuel, and material in to Afghanistan, in addition to launching cross border attacks in to Afghanistan from Pakistan's territory". (15)

This increased US support has coincided with a dramatic escalation of the conflict between local Pakistani insurgents and their government. Most of the fighting is concentrated in the Northwest, near the border with Afghanistan, but the bloodshed not infrequently affects civilians throughout Pakistan." (16)

Among the key findings of this report are several staggering facts, which everyone living within the State of Pakistan knows to be true but may not be common to the rest of the world, and especially the international community which fails to acknowledge the cost of war our own citizens have had to pay due to this extremism and religious terrorism – all of which Pakistanis, themselves, want to be rid of. The United States of America began drone strikes in the year 2004 and, although the legality of these drone strikes is still under question, this has resulted in the deaths of thousands of people – many of whom are civilians. The estimated figure mentioned in this particular report is over 23,000 and these do not include the number of people who may have later on died from injuries and wounds and neither does it include those which have not been identified. Furthermore, this report was published back in 2010, which means the actual count has increased manifold in the past 8 years. What is most astounding is the finding that many of the suicide bombings within Pakistan were actually done as a direct retaliation to the drone strikes by the United States of America. (17) It must be understood here is that the drone strikes, carried out by the United States of America – which were already questionable in terms of legality to begin with – led to suicide bombings within the country and were then portrayed in the international media and news as another proof of terrorism within the country. This caused a country that was already going through terrible loss, as civilians were being accidentally killed in drone strikes and civilians were being killed in suicide bombings which were a retaliation against drone strikes, and the n the country

was further portrayed as one that could not handle its own issues of religious extremism and terrorism.

This, then leads to the question of national image once again, as it was a well-known fact that the drone strikes were being carried out and heavily funded by the government of the United States – a country that has built its entire global image on being the pinnacle of humanity and civilization. These drone strikes were of questionable legality, as mentioned before, and had resulted in the deaths of thousands of civilians – deaths which were not even mentioned in the international media. And yet, none of this even slightly tarnished the global image of the United States of America. In fact, even when there has been an attack inside the United States of America, such as the fact that there have been twenty-two reported school shootings in the United States in just this year so far. (18) This is an astounding number and had this been any other country in the world, its global image would have been in tatters. However, the global image of the United States of America was solid enough to not even be affected by this gory piece of news. The country was not labelled an inhumane place, its people were not labelled as oppressors or killers and no country in the world cut off trade or economic relations with the country due to these deadly drone strikes. On the other hand, Pakistan was never shown in the international news as a country that has persisted and resisted and gone through so much in the war against terrorism and extremism. Quite the contrary, actually, as we have already seen and discussed – Pakistan has always been portrayed as a state that sanctioned terrorism, supported terrorists and had a population that thought in a similar

manner. This is not to say that Pakistan itself does not hold any of the blame or that the major players within Pakistan, such as the government or media, did a great job of trying to change the narrative or present the world with a counter narrative. However, keeping all this in perspective, it is rather obvious that the international media was already biased against Pakistan after 9/11 and had passed a collective judgment which held Pakistan responsible for the spread of extremism, and therefore, this is the only image that the international media focused on propagating.

Operation “Zarb-e-Azb”

Another extremely important aspect of this discussion is the fact that Pakistan’s very own Armed Forces carried out an extremely successful, and highly unpopular, operation against the terrorists that resided in Swat, Waziristan and other hubs in the North of the country. The military operation, Zarb-e-Azb, was launched in June of the year 2014, against the terrorist outfits and groups in the FATA region, which is in the north of Pakistan. There were several different attacks that led up to the need for such an operation. In June 2008, there was a terrorist attack on a tourist site in Malam Jabba – which used to be a very popular tourist spot for foreign tourists and travelers. In the March of 2009, there was a massive terrorist attack on the Sri Lankan cricket team in Lahore. While no one from the cricket team was killed or injured, this instantly became a major international news and most countries in the world immediately issued warnings to their citizens against traveling to Pakistan. As we all know, international cricket was completely eradicated in Pakistan from that time. However, the attacks did not stop there

and in June of the year 2013, terrorists attacked another very popular tourist site – the Nanga Parbat Base Camp. All these attacks, in such close proximity of one another, greatly affected Pakistan's revenue generation and also gravely damaged Pakistan's global image. The international media covered each of these attacks to a great extent and constantly warned the rest of the world to cancel any trips to Pakistan unless the security issue was resolved.

At this point, the government and Armed Forces of Pakistan attempted to hold peace talks with the Tahreek-e-Taliban in hopes of working out issues and resolving matters before any more lives were lost. However, in 2014, the terrorist attack on Jinnah International Airport was the absolute final straw, at which point, it was obvious that the militants and terrorists were not interested in any kind of peace talks and negotiations and, so, the Operation Zarb-e-Azb was officially launched.

According to a paper titled "An Overview of Pakistan's Security Situation after Operation Zarb-e-Azb" (2017), a place that had before been "plagued with terrorism-bombings, IEDs, explosions, target killings and kidnappings" (19) completely changed in just two years of the operation. The paper goes on to mention that:

"Two years after the Operation, command and control centers of TTP and other militant groups were effectively dismantled from North Waziristan. This was followed by a repatriation process for the Temporarily Displaced Persons (TDPs) which began in March 2015." (20)

After the attack on the APS school children in December 2014, which left the entire country in shock and grief, the military

and political leaders got together to formulate a 20 point plan that would counter terrorism in a manner aggressive enough to prevent such an attack from happening again. This particular plan was called the "National Action Plan" and it greatly helped boost the Operation Zarb-e-Azb as it became more important than ever to completely dismantle these terrorist groups from their very roots.

By April of the year 2016, the Armed Forces of Pakistan were successful in regaining control over North Waziristan, which had previously become completely controlled by the terrorists and militant groups. "An area of 4,304 km was cleared from terrorists, 43 while 253 tonnes of explosives were seized. In addition, 7,500 bomb-making factories were sealed in Shawal, 3500 terrorists killed and 992 terrorist sanctuaries were destroyed. 490 soldiers of the Pakistan Army lost their lives during the Operation.⁴⁴ In February 2016, during its final phase, Shawal Valley was cleared and terrorist hideouts were demolished." (21)

The conclusion to be drawn from this entire discussion regarding Zarb-e-Azb and its genesis is that Pakistan, itself, recognized its problem with terrorism and extremism a long time ago and the military and political leaders of the country took steps to try and eradicate these threats which were growing in the country. However, this extremely successful operation, which completely dismantled the hold of the terrorists from an area that was once their "hotbed", was given little to no coverage in the international media. News or information regarding Operation Zarb-e-Azb could have gone a long way to help fix some of the damage done to Pakistan's global image. Pakistan would have been viewed as a country

that was doing something to fight against these terrorists and fix the problem rather than the view right now, which is that the state of Pakistan supports all the terrorism that takes place in the country, and anywhere else that the Tahreek e Taliban Pakistan takes responsibility. While images of Zarb-e-Azb and stories from the region caused outrage and uproar in many parts of the country, these same images would have helped reprimand Pakistan's global image in front of the international community. And yet, far from showing images of the successful operations, the international media did not even mention it in any news, movie or TV show.

Conclusion

In fact, even now, any Hollywood movie or TV show, post 9/11 where Pakistan's name is

mentioned has just one story line – a terrorist attack about to happen by a terrorist organization functioning from within the country. The question, therefore, of how Pakistan's global image has been affected after 9/11 is that it has simply and steadily gone downhill. There has been no redeeming it. Globally, Pakistan is perceived as a country that is much too dangerous to visit because any one who is not a Sunni Muslim is shot. It is perceived as a country where women have extremely limited rights and are clad in Burkas, forced to stay inside their homes. While many other countries are now nuclear powers, Pakistan is forever remembered as a country that has a nuclear bomb and is always on the brink of terrorists using the bomb to destroy any one who is not a Muslim. These perceptions lead to a global image that terrifies the majority of the international community.

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