**Indian War of Narratives**

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The India-Pakistan conflict has been a long-standing rivalry, with both countries engaging in a continuous battle on the ground and in the realm of narratives. This war of narratives is an integral part of the broader Indo-Pak conflict, as both nations strive to shape international perceptions, domestic opinions, and their self-image. The roots of the Indian War of narratives against Pakistan can be traced back to the partition of British India in 1947, which resulted in the creation of two independent nations, India and Pakistan. India’s narrative concerning the partition highlights the violence and suffering inflicted upon innocent civilians, emphasizing the need for peace and reconciliation. The Mumbai attacks of 2008, the Uri attack in 2016, and the Pulwama attack in 2019 have reinforced this narrative, leading India to present itself as a victim of cross-border terrorism.

India’s nationalist discourse has been shifting towards Hinduism, a departure from secularism and diversity. This shift is promoted by the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP), aiming to shape the future of Indian society and link it with security policies. The Indian establishment is using hostile narratives to seek a position in the international system, similar to how regional and rising powers seek identity through identity narratives. However, the potential for India and its hostile identity narratives to make the region unstable is a serious concern, as it may seek open-ended power through these narratives, potentially making the region unstable. This shift in nationalist discourse is a significant concern for the future of India.

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Pakistan has been targeted by various strategic narratives globally, including being a rogue state involved in nuclear proliferation and hostility towards India. Pakistan, however, advocates for a responsible nuclear state, emphasizing nuclear deterrence for regional stability and pledging international commitment to nuclear restraint. Pakistan is also depicted as an irresponsible state harbouring terrorism and sponsoring state terrorism against India. The US manhunt for Osama Bin Laden in Abbottabad led to serious allegations against Pakistan as a state accomplice to terrorists. The narratives also portray Pakistan as a failing state, with questions raised on its nuclear proliferation and security measures. Pakistan is also perceived as a state where minority rights are not exercised, with many non-state actors exploiting these rights. The lynching of accused in the name of blasphemy is a new threat Pakistan is facing today. These narratives aim to cast shadows on Pakistan’s internal situation and raise concerns about its security measures.

European Non-Government Organization DisinfoLab discovered an advanced misinformation campaign called ‘Indian Chronicles’ directed towards Pakistan in 2005. The major wire service in India, ANI, is said to be spearheading the effort and amplifying news created on phoney media platforms. EU DisinfoLab also discovered 256 pro-Indian websites active in 65 countries and linked them to the Srivastava Group, an Indian holding firm with its headquarters in New Delhi. The Srivastava Group is spearheading an operation that has expanded to around 117 nations, focusing on UN and EU members. Ten NGOs with accreditation from the UN Human Rights Council have been used to attack Pakistan globally and advance Indian objectives. The campaign also used the name of a professor at Harvard Law School and a deceased international law expert to further its objectives. A dossier holding proof that India finances terrorism in Pakistan was recently released by Pakistan.

The Indian war of narratives against Pakistan has had a substantial impact on bilateral relations, fuelling hostility, mistrust, and a lack of dialogue, making it challenging to resolve longstanding disputes such as Kashmir. The heightened rhetoric has also led to several military confrontations, most notably the wars of 1947, 1965, and 1971, as well as the Kargil conflict in 1999. Despite ongoing tensions, there is hope for reconciliation between India and Pakistan. Diplomatic channels remain open, fostering trust and generating ideas through Track-II dialogues. Backchannel diplomacy can de-escalate tensions. Public opinion varies, with some advocating for hardline or peaceful resolution. International actors like the US, China, and the UN want peaceful resolution. Achieving lasting peace requires sustained efforts, political will, and addressing underlying issues and conflicts.

Pakistan has faced numerous conflicts and disputes since 1947, but its desire for peace with India has not translated into long-term collaboration due to Indian hypocrisy and deceptions. Third-party mediation has proven to be the most effective method of dispute settlement between the two nations. The United Nations has played a limited role in resolving the Kashmir conflict, but its decisions have the potential to make significant contributions. Successful bilateral peace efforts have often fallen short of resolving underlying problems due to the lack of an institutional framework and strong distrust between the two nations. To counter Indian narratives, Pakistan should ignore narratives without a spectrum of persuasion and create a counter-narrative. Open communication, fact-based information, and interpersonal interactions are essential for fostering understanding and trust. Civil society, academics, and ethical media outlets can dispel myths and advance nuanced viewpoints on complicated problems. India and Pakistan should work together to promote improved ties via conversation, diplomacy, and peaceful dispute resolution.

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