Role of media and handling of internal security issues

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Introduction : Media, the means of communication that reaches or influences people widely has a significant place in the statecraft machinery especially in the age of information revolution. It is the source of information for a society regarding any issue be it local, regional or global, people rely and even trust on what is presented to them by media. Therefore, this dimension / value of media increases its significance as an influential and instrumental tool with regards to building confidence or promoting mistrust among people on issues related to national security. This significance of media can be witnessed at the times of crisis of national level. It turns out to be evident that governments desperately need enhanced media support for projection of their clear stance and moral dominance.

Any communication channel through which any kind of information, news, entertainment,education, data, promotional messages etc. can be disseminated is called media.Media could be broadly classified as:

1. Print Media (newspapers, magazines, books, etc.)

2. Electronic Media (news websites, social networking sites, mass SMS schemes, television,internet, radio, cinema etc.)Besides there are many other forms of mass communication which can't be classified in either ofthe above forms like various forms of dances etc.

Principles governing media : The experience of freedom of press with the British made our founding fathers realize its importance and hence it was included in the constitution in the form of freedom of speech and expression as articulated in the constitution in Article 19(1) a. This freedom of speech and expression is not absolute but is limited by scenarios given in Article 19(2) of the constitution. The article says that nothing in the freedom of speech and expression shall affect the operation of any existing law, or prevent the State from making any law, in so far as such law imposes reasonable restrictions on the exercise of the right conferred by the said sub clause in the interests of thesovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, decency or morality or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence.

Internal security challenges and Role of Media :

Media is considered as influential channel for effective communication. It supports in promoting the right things on proper time. It provides a real exposure to the mass viewers about right or wrong process. Media is the source of information for a culture for any societal or political issue. Whether the issue is local, regional or global, people rely and even trust on information provided to them by media. Therefore, this dimension / value of media increases its significance as an influential and instrumental tool with regards to building confidence or promoting mistrust among people on issues related to national security. This importance of media can be observed at the times of disaster of national level. Even though, sometimes, media is related with spreading false news but it is a fact that it helps to inform people about the realities as well. Media, the means of communication that reaches or influences people broadly has a significant position in the statecraft mechanism especially in period of information rebellion.

The huge influence of media in creating popular image was used subsequently by states to counterbalance their enemies and foes, internally and externally. But irrespective of the degree of independence and fairness available to the media, it has been extensively observed that media follows the nationalistic principles when dealing with matters of national security and interests. Progressively, nation states and non-state political actors have well identified the great influence of media and its use for their objectives. However, the dynamics of media impact are quite different, varying and diversified in different countries. When discussing about the Indo Pakistan security relations, media has adopted a nationalistic approach forwarding and pushing the national interests such as in wars (1965, 1971), crisis (1990 nuclear alert), border skirmishes (Kargil) or the low-intensity war (LIW) in Kashmir.

Media is considered as strong support which helps the state to promote its interests, objectives and goals. Since the beginning of information uprising and the use of media for attaining war objectives by other means, media is vital component in opinion making or building, creating leaders and anti-heroes, and creating monsters and enemies. Regardless of the compromise on 'independence and integrity', media has been used by both the states to encourage their national cause at the cost of growing hatred and acrimony. The coverage of nuclear explosions carried out by India and Pakistan in 1998 is one of the major examples in this regard where popular

sentiments were emphasised and media had major role to push forward the national program. During that period, media used a nationalistic approach to highlight the state standpoint.

It has been established that Media and politics have a strong link in modern strategic environment. Previously, media has played the role to provide extensive information and communication between people and state, and between states but in contemporary situation, media has been transformed and broadened. Now the political actors work in the environment shaped by the media. Media shapes the perceptions of leaders and people. On the basis of these observations, the political leaders formulate the policies, especially during the situations of crisis or political changes such as in elections. Conversely, media can never be independent. Sometimes it works under the government pressure imposed through laws and media can also work under the influence of financer, as it has become a commercial industry. The role of media is mainly determined by its relationships with the state.

There are three important theories related to media

1. In the Authoritarian system, the government in power controls the media. The main aim of media is to support and improve the government policies and serve the state. The criticism on government mechanism is banned.

2. Second is the Libertarian system in which media is owned by whoever has economic means to do so. Under this theory media work with three aims such as to inform, to discover truth and accountability of the government.

3. In the Social Responsibility system, media is controlled by anyone who wants to say something. The major responsibility in this theory is to inform, entertain, sell but also raise the conflict to the plane of discussion.

Many scholars have recognized that media has powerful role in politics. It has pushed the process of rapid globalization as well as summarized the international politics. Information is a major resource in the current global environment. Media is the major source of information and has become political, therefore, it has capability to influence the global structure and it may bring a change in the structure. Although the role of media in international politics is positive, sometimes it is influenced and used by the major actors as a source of publicity to promote their interests and bring desired changes in the prevailing system.

Media and National Security

National security is prime importance of any nation to maintain peace and harmony. Nations face numerous internal security challenges. Threat posed to any element of national power creates security problems. The role of media in war is not just to project the developing activities in a particular area but to offer a wide-ranging image, encompassing all aspects of the policies of the country. Presently, the war is not only fought by the armed forces but the whole nation is engaged in the economic, scientific, political and social endeavours and production in all possible fields. It is a practical objective, which is accomplished through the information and distribution process of the media. When the two institutions military and media meet during a conflict, it is expected to have clashes. The media wants to articulate the story and the military wants to win the war and keep casualties to a minimum. The media wants freedom, no censorship, total access and the capability to get to their audience quickly. The military on the other hand, wants control. The greatest fear of a military commander in a pre-invasion scenario is that something might leak out that would tip off the enemy.

In current scenario, the role of electronic media is the most effective and powerful to persuade masses. Strong motivated people cannot be forced to abandon their struggle against heavy odds. It is for this aspect of unique coverage and impact that the electronic media can be geared up effectively to promote and expand security awareness among the people at large. The media has been conducting the war of its own to counter the hostile propaganda from across the borders. The electronic media is a morale-building factor. In the military jargon, morale is the will to fight for the national cause to the last.

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