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20

The Role of Media in National Security: A Case Study of 1998 Nuclear Explosions by Pakistan

By Dr. Nazir Hussain - Series Editor: Maria Sultan

South Asian Strategic Stability Institute

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

APC	All Parties-Conference
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
CNN	Cable News Network
COAS	Chief of the Army Staff
CTBT	Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty
DCC	Defence Committee of the Cabinet
LIW	Low-Intensity War
NEC	Nippon Electric Company
NTM	Network Television Marketing
PAEC	Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission
PTV	Pakistan Television
RP	Radio Pakistan
STN	Shalimar Television Network
US	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics



CONTENTS

1. Introduction	2
2. Understanding the Role of Media	2
3. Media and National Security	4
4. Media and Indo-Pakistan Security	6
5. Evolution of Media in Pakistan	6
6. 1998 Explosion and the Pakistani Media	7
7. 'Now or Never'	8
8. Conclusion	10
9. Chronology of Events: May 11-30, 1998	10



The Role of Media in National Security: A Case Study of 1998 Nuclear Explosions by Pakistan

Dr. Nazir Hussain*

Abstract

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. This study aims to analyze the role of media particularly of Pakistani print media and its impact at the time of nuclearization of South Asia in May 1998. It is observed, while analyzing the news stories and headlines related to that event, that the print media in Pakistan was more than patriotic as it followed the nationalistic approach and highlighted the popular and mass perception to help the state fulfill its national security obligations. The potential of media as a force multiplier and a weapon of war must be realized. Failure to recognize and counter enemy's handling of media could lead to unprecedented military and national failures. It must be realized that today decisions are no longer based on events but on how the events are presented. Thus, the obvious answer is that in the contemporary technological era, the media would continue to be a tool to pursue the national interests effectively.

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1. Introduction

The media has become an important tool of the statecraft in the modern era. It is the 'fourth estate' which helps the state to further its interests, objectives and goals. Since the dawn of information revolution and the use of media for 'attaining war objectives by other means,' media is an important element in opinion-making/building, creating heroes & villains, and creating monsters & enemies. The use of 'embedded journalists' during the Gulf War (1990-91) was to project a certain perspective on the war at the global level.

The immense power of media in creating popular/mass image was used subsequently by states to offset their enemies and foes, internally and externally. But regardless of the degree of independence and impartiality available to the media, it has been widely seen that in matters of national security and interests, media follows the nationalistic lines. Increasingly, now nation states and non-state political actors have recognized the immense power of media and its use for their objectives.

However, the dynamics of media impact are quite different, varying and diversified in different countries. In the context of Indo-Pakistan security relations, media has taken a nationalistic approach forwarding and pushing the national interests. Be it wars (1965, 1971), crisis (1990 nuclear alert), border skirmishes (Kargil) or the low-intensity war (LIW) in Kashmir, Pakistan's national media has advanced the official view.

Regardless of the compromise on 'independence and integrity', media has been used by both the states to promote their national cause at the cost of germinating hatred and acrimony. The coverage of nuclear explosions carried out by Pakistan and India in 1998 is one of the distinct examples in this regard where popular sentiments were highlighted and media played

an important role to push forward the national agenda. During that era media adopted a nationalistic approach to highlight the state perspective.

Therefore, this paper is an attempt to highlight the role of media during the nuclearization of South Asia in 1998. However, the paper would focus only on the Pakistani print media during the May 11 to May 30 period to analyze its role in the national security. It would also focus on the role of media in national security and its contribution in creating the mass awareness about the national cause.

2. Understanding the Role of Media

Media and politics have a strong connection in the contemporary strategic environment. The earlier role of media, as a source of information/communication between people and state, and between states, has been transformed and widened. Now the political actors work in the environment shaped by the media.

Media shapes the perceptions of leaders and people. And on the basis of these perceptions the political actors formulate the policies, especially during the situations of crisis or political changes i.e. elections. However, media can never be independent: either it works under the government pressure imposed through laws or under the influence of financier, as it has become a moneymaking industry.¹

The role of media is predominantly determined by its relationships with the state. In this regard there are three important theories:

- 1) In the Authoritarian system, the government in power controls the media. The purpose of media is to support and advance the government policies and serve the state. The criticism on government machinery is prohibited.

¹ Nazir Hussain, 'Role of Media in Internal Security of Pakistan', *Journal of Political Science*, University of the Punjab, Issue XIII, Spring 2008.

- 2) In the Libertarian system, media is owned by whoever has economic means to do so. The three purposes of media here are: 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? This is the mature form. The major responsibility here is to inform, entertain, sell but also raise the conflict to the plane of discussion. In other words, to bring the trouble spots under light.²

Since the 1980s, media has emerged as a potential actor in politics. Not only has it pushed the process of rapid globalization but also summarized the international politics. Information is a major resource in the contemporary global environment. Media is the key source of information and has become political, therefore, it has a potential 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 propaganda to promote their interests and bring desired changes in the prevailing system. Like the famous term 'CNN factor' during the Cold War, now international media and other information resources are being used to promote the state agenda e.g. the war against terrorism.

Nancy E. Bernhard³ has analyzed the close cooperation of the US administration and media that produced the cultural environment of the time i.e. anti-communism. The US utilized media to create embarrassment for the former USSR in pro-Soviet states through highlighting economic decay in the Communist bloc.⁴ Now the media has become a tool of American global

agenda to influence the rest of the world for promoting its strategic interest as is apparent from the post-9/11 scenario.⁵

Ideally, media should be impartial and free from the propaganda mechanisms. It should provide balanced account to the people. Media educates and keeps the public informed about the national and international political and other human realities taking place in everyday life. The purpose of media is to highlight the trouble spots in the society and press the government and public to devise suitable mechanisms to eliminate those troubles. At the national level, the responsibility of media is to build a bridge between people and governments.

Media serves as a checkpoint by ensuring that the government is working within its mandate. However, following the globalization, the responsibilities of media have also widened. It has to play a role for preserving and pursuing the national interests of the state and highlighting its perspective along with the global issues. It has to examine the conduct of international relations and again to highlight the trouble spot at global level in lieu of global security.⁶

According to Ilana Dayan, a media anchor, "the role of press in democratic society is not to take national security consideration, it is not to implement national policy, it is not to be patriotic. It is to be aggressive, it is to be suspicious, it is to be skeptical, it is to be hostile to the government."⁷ According to Ikram Sehgal, "as the fourth pillar in support of the essential tripod of the government, the executive, the legislative and the judiciary, the media is sometimes called the fourth estate.

Essential to the health of democracy is access to information, (1) to ensure that citizens make

² Fred S. Siebert, Theodore Peterson and Wilbur Schramm, *Four Theories of Press: The Authoritarian, Libertarian, Social Responsibility and Soviet Communist Concepts of What the Press Should Be and Do*, (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1956).

³ Nancy E. Bernhard, *US Television News and Cold War Propaganda 1947-1960: A Guide Book for What is to Come?*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

⁴ Ikram Sehgal, 'The Role and Conduct of Media in Accountability', Paper presented at the International Conference on the occasion of International Anti-Corruption Day, organized by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) of Pakistan, Rawalpindi, December 8, 2007, available at www.nab.gov.pk

⁵ See Brian Cloughley, 'Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Press: Credit and Credibility', at www.counterpunch.org of August 13, 2008.

⁶ Nazir Hussain, 'Role of Media in Internal Security of Pakistan', *Journal of Political Science*, University of the Punjab, Issue XIII, Spring 2008.

⁷ Prof. D. Weisenhaus, 'Media and Politics: Roles and Responsibilities', available at www.jrnsc.hku.hk

responsible, informed choices rather than acting out of ignorance or misinformation, and (2) to serve a checking function by ensuring that elected representative uphold their oath of office and carry out the wishes of those who elect them.”⁸ Another journalist and press critic, A. J. Leibling highlighted the dark side of media, “the function of press in a society is to inform but its role is to make money.”⁹ According to James Curran, a London-based media scholar, “the media not just informs; it also assists in accountability, conflict resolution, deliberation and representation of diverse views.”¹⁰

Among the several hypotheses about the effects of mass communication, one that has survived and even flourished in recent years is that mass media simply pays attention to some issues and neglects others; it would have an effect on public opinion and undermine the national interests. Agenda setting is the idea that the news media, by its display of news, comes to determine the issues the public thinks and talks about. The media agenda has the following effects:

- a) Mass media influences the public agenda directly, presumably by weight of attention and media authority.
- b) The public agenda (public opinion) influences the policy agenda.
- c) The media agenda also has independent direct influence on the policy agenda.¹¹

3. Media and National Security

The term 'national security' has long been used by politicians as a symbolic phrase and by military leaders to describe a policy objective. National security has a wide meaning and all embracing dimensions.¹² 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 comprehensive picture, encompassing all aspects of the policies of the country. Currently, 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 feasible fields. It is a viable objective, which is achieved through the information and dissemination process of the media.¹³

When the two institutions – military and media – meet during a conflict, clashes are expected. The media wants to tell 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. Otherwise, surprise is the most potent weapon in the commander's armory.

On the other hand, the media fears that military might stifle news coverage for enhancing their public image or cover up their mistakes. These are fundamental differences that will never change. Presently military and the media have begun to work together in harmony for national interests and security.¹⁴

Today, electronic media is the most effective and powerful means of mass motivation. A nation not motivated enough to withstand the aggression cannot aspire to preserve its freedom, faith and ideology for long. On the other hand, 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

⁸ Ikram Sehgal, 'The Role and Conduct of Media in Accountability', Paper presented at the International Conference on the occasion of International Anti-Corruption Day, organized by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) of Pakistan, Rawalpindi, December 8, 2007, available at www.nab.gov.pk

⁹ Iver Peterson, 'The Newspaper Industry is Thriving, But Several Projects Exploring Dangerous Signs,' *New York Times*, July 21, 1997.

¹⁰ Prof. D. Weisenhaus, 'Media and Politics: Roles and Responsibilities', available at www.jmsc.hku.hk

¹¹ Denis Mcquail, 'Process of Media Effects', in Oliver Boyd-Borret and Peter Braham ed., *Media: Knowledge and Power*, (New York: Croom Helm, 1987), pp. 92-93.

¹² Nazir Hussain, 'Rethinking the South Asian Security: Traditional and Non-Traditional Paradigm Debate', in Massarat Abid and Qalb-i-Abid ed., *South Asia: Politics, Religion and Society*, (Lahore: Pakistan Study Centre, University of the Punjab, 2008).

¹³ Sultan M Hali, 'Media Imperialism', *The Defence Journal*, March 24, 2003.

¹⁴ Ibid.

up effectively to promote and expand security awareness among the people at large.

The media has been waging the war of its own to counter the hostile propaganda from across the borders. The role played by the electronic media is a morale-building factor. In the military parlance, morale is the will to fight for the national cause to the last. Thus, in war, psychological operation is not the only function which media is called upon to perform in the content of national security but it has to act as a bridge between the armed forces and the people.¹⁵

One of the most effective means of warfare is through propaganda, which is a complicated science and a planned exercise to undermine the will of the people. The primary tool of propaganda is the media. Hitler had entrusted an entire ministry to Goebbels to achieve his ends. Machiavelli and Chankya devoted volumes to the art of statecraft and deceit through propaganda.¹⁶

Some of the techniques adopted in a conflict through media to gain the desired results are repeating the lies, presenting personal opinion disguised as a fact, headline propaganda, selective control of information and the yellow journalism.¹⁷ Many military leaders have become aware that news media coverage of their operations can be a force multiplier.

Impressed by General Walt Boomer's example of encouraging the US Marines in the Gulf War to the point where most observers agree that the Marines received more credit than they deserved, mostly at the expense of the US Army. Many military leaders have come to the conclusion that media coverage not only develops public awareness and the support of military units, it has side benefit of enhancing

their morale by informing their families and friends of their achievements.

The 'Vietnam Syndrome' led most Americans to believe that they lost the war because of the total freedom given to the media in their coverage of the war. Their pessimistic reports tipped the public opinion against the conflict. In the Operation Desert Storm, the Pentagon decided to use information security to avoid a Vietnam-like situation. They demonstrated the means to blackout the battlefield anytime they chose, even in the presence of hundreds of representatives of world media.

Therefore, 'security at source' is used as a preferred approach, and is relatively a new concept in which the military strives to develop a plan as far in advance of the operation as possible to allow the news media broad access to the total action. In this approach, journalists are accommodated with the combat forces as was witnessed during the 2003 US attack on Iraq. Each report is first approved and then given the ground rules with which the reporter is expected to comply.¹⁸

Therefore, in a globalised society media becomes a lethal weapon against the enemy, and the populace as well. Information, as an element of soft power, is a strategic instrument within the context of grand strategy. As an instrument, it relies on the understanding and use of graphic, intellectual or sensory imagery, drawing on historical, cultural, linguistic, religious, ethical and other issues of substance and belief which affect people as individuals or groups within the strategic environment.

Studies have established that the governments have routinely exercised control over the media when it comes to the 'matters of national security.' It decides what information to be

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Michael W. Gamble and Teri Kwerliambli, *Introducing Mass Communications* (Singapore: Mc-Graw Hill, 1989), p.441, and James D. Harless, *Mass Communications* (Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Publishers, 1990), p. 63.

¹⁸ There are numerous studies on the issue. See David Miller, *Tell Me Lies: Propaganda and Media Distortions in the Attack on Iraq*, (London: Pluto Press, 2003); Steven Kull, Clay Ramsay and Evan Lewis, 'Misperception, the Media, and the Iraq War,' *Political Science Quarterly*, (NY) Vol. 118, No. 4, 2003-04; and Yahya R. Kamalpur and Nancy Snow ed., *War, Media and Propaganda: A Global Perspective*, (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004).

given, how much content has to be shared, and how to relay it to the public. If carefully executed, the entire process helps determine the thought process of the populace hence giving legitimacy to their cause or issue.

4. Media and Indo-Pakistan Security

South Asia is home to colour, culture and contradictions. It is a region rife with poverty, prone to conflicts and held hostage by acrimonious relationship of the hostile neighbors: India and Pakistan. Since the partition of 1947, both neighbors have fought three wars, came close to a nuclear stand-off in Kargil in 1999 while continuing a low-intensity war (LIW) in Kashmir. As a result of this decades-old hostility, South Asia today is one of the most militarized zones in the world and because of the protracted conflict the region stands nuclearized.

Both nations have been skeptical of each other from the very start, at the heart of which lies the perceived as well as real security threats of each nation. The security climate of the region remains tense as both nations have used Kashmir among other factors to sustain the anti-enemy rhetoric.

Since 1947, the evolution of these nations' security has been enemy-specific and enemy-centric. The security policies of both states are interplay of several factors, which have helped shape its perceptions as well as actions. More often than not, India and Pakistan have looked outside, rather than inside, to take stock of the security threats. As a result, the enemy vilification and justification that started with the independence carnage continues unabated.

The already strained relations are further taxed by the misinformation, misperception as well as the over analysis of the threat emanating from the nuclear-armed neighbors. Both states have utilized the mass media to inculcate the politics of fear to silence critics of the government policies. Despite the vibrant media environ-

ment, it is easy to see that the 'sensitive' topics of national security are neither analyzed nor challenged.

Media reportage is often colored and harnessed in the garb of national interest. What is terrorism for one is freedom struggle for the other. Heroes of one nation are the villains for the other. The media is 'expected' to endorse the government definition of who constitutes the hero status and the media is allocated the job of identification and demonization. However, in matters of national security and cause, mostly the media has been supportive of the government policies in both the countries.

5. Evolution of Media in Pakistan

The print media in Pakistan has been through an extraordinary range of experiences for its brief history. It has seen spells of colonial-style arrogance of civilian governments and brazen straitjacketing of it by military rulers as well. Sometimes it has been denounced for endangering states security, hounded for betraying national ideology and pilloried for committing plain treason. It has suffered imposition of hefty fines, suspension or closure of publication, seizure of the printing press.

It has borne harassment, arrest and violence of varying degrees, and has sometimes been starved into submission or cornered to the point of extinction. Therefore, the media has become the most hegemonic tool of making and breaking the perceptions and particularly when there was no satellite media, the press was considered to be the most powerful. In this aspect where on the one hand if it was found in line with the national interests, on the other hand it was also seen as a tool by powerful people to promote their vested interests, may it be at the cost of national cause. However, when the real crunch came and the national security was jeopardized the print media came openly and wholeheartedly in support of the national cause.

The Pakistan Television began its transmission with help of the Nippon Electric Company (NEC) of Japan. First transmission was aired from Lahore on November 26, 1964 and subsequently it was aired from five TV stations: Lahore, Karachi, Islamabad, Peshawar and Quetta. In 1992, the Pakistan Television launched a second channel, named PTV-2. PTV World was another channel added to its network.

In 1989, for the first time other than PTV, a state-owned company the Shalimar Recording Company began its own transmission service under the call sign of Shalimar Television Network (STN). STN leased out its prime time to a private-sector programming and marketing agency, the Network Television Marketing or NTM. On the other hand, the print media is a vital force in Pakistan's political life.

At the time of independence, only four major newspapers were published: *Pakistan Times*, *Zamindar*, *Nawa-i-Waqt* and *Civil and Military Gazette*, all located in Lahore. A number of newspapers moved to Pakistan, *Dawn* began publication as a daily in Karachi on the day of independence in 1947. Other publications including the *Morning News* and the Urdu-language dailies *Jang* and *Nawa-i-Waqat* were also shifted to Pakistan.

In the early 1990s, there were over 1,500 newspapers and journals in the country, including publications in Urdu, English and in regional languages. Newspapers and periodicals are owned by private individuals, joint-stock companies, or trusts. Presently there are more than 50 news channels in Pakistan. Other newspapers and publications are 497 dailies, 1,236 weeklies, 270 fortnightlies and 2,182 monthlies.¹⁹

Total circulation of newspapers is two million i.e. one paper for 60 people, only seven papers have more than 100,000 circulation. Moreover,

12 million radio sets in the country and TV coverage is expanding rapidly and reaching more than 38 million households: approximately 42 per cent of urban and 16 per cent of rural.²⁰

6. 1998 Explosion and the Pakistani Media

In the Indian national elections of February 1998, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) became the largest single party. The party platform demanded nuclear testing, which was widely supported by its coalition partners in the government. The BJP, therefore, moved quickly to demonstrate a willingness and ability to act. After five Indian nuclear tests on May 11 and 13, 1998, Prime Minister Vajpayee declared India a nuclear state.

However, by this act of nationalism India blew apart the global arms control and non-proliferation regime. The BJP hardline leaders, including its President K. Thakre, started issuing aggressive statements over Kashmir, an issue which is integral to Pakistan's territorial integrity and independence. In such circumstances, how could have Pakistan restrained itself?

For 17 long days, the period between India's nuclear tests and Pakistan's nuclear response, the Subcontinent faced a real danger of war, which could have started either with a pre-emptive Indian strike against Pakistan's nuclear facilities or India's act of aggression in Pakistan-controlled or Azad Kashmir. Left on its own to face the potential Indian aggression against Azad Kashmir, Pakistan finally had no option but to go nuclear. Pakistan went ahead with the explosions because the only choice left with the Pakistani nation was either to give in to India's long-cherished hegemonic ambitions in the region or to stand up and fight against it. Pakistan chose the right path by conducting six

¹⁹ Waqar Gillani, 'Pakistan Worst in Media Harassment in South Asia', *Daily Times*, May 7, 2004.

²⁰ Khalid Nadvi and Mark Robinson, 'Pakistan Drives of Change Synthesis and Policy Implications' Department of International Development Fund, UK, March 2004.

nuclear explosions.

When the South Asian nuclearization process was initiated by India on May 11, 1998 and its culmination occurred with Pakistan's sixth explosion on May 30, 1998, the Pakistani electronic media was state-owned: Pakistan Television (PTV) and Radio Pakistan (RP). The private electronic media was nowhere in sight at that time.

Both, PTV and RP, presented the views close to the government and highlighted the national security issues through discussions and debates by security experts, academicians and journalists. However, gauging public opinion through official media lacks credibility and authenticity, especially in the backdrop of non-existent private electronic media. Pakistanis believed the CNN and BBC news more than the PTV and RP.

Interestingly, the print media was fairly independent. The three media-owning groups – Haroons, Mirs and Nizamis – had the largest and most well-read newspapers namely *Dawn*, *The News* and *The Nation*, respectively, along with the official *Pakistan Times*. *The Nation* echoed the national sentiments, although it generally represented the government version as the owners were close to the government of the time.

Dawn and *The News* were considered independent; nonetheless both highlighted the popular sentiments prevailing at that time. Therefore, these newspapers highlighted media's role and major policy trends mainly through the lead stories, editorials and opinion pages during the nuclearization of South Asia in May 1998.

The May 11 and 13 nuclear tests by India were almost identically reported by these newspapers. *Dawn* reported 'India carries out three N-tests', simultaneously it carried a statement by Dr. A.Q. Khan that 'Pakistan is not

scared.' *The Nation* captioned as 'India goes nuclear' and also carried the official response that 'Pakistan needs 7 days to conduct nuclear tests.' *The News* carried an interesting headline on May 13 'Defiant India conducts two more tests' and in the same manner carried Pakistani response that 'Indian threat will not go unanswered: Pakistan.'

7. 'Now or Never'

The 17-day period from May 13 to May 28 was very agonizing for the Pakistani government and nation. The deep analysis of national dailies during this period reveals that the print media was regularly highlighting the popular perception and views through its columnists, security experts and public at large. In fact, the print media was fully behind the government in responding to the Indian tests. The then opposition leader, Ms. Benazir Bhutto's statement of May 22 was boldly highlighted by all newspapers in which she assured 'complete support to government over Indian threat.'²¹

The all-parties conference (APC) convened on May 24 to consider the Pakistani response was again highlighted by these newspapers: 'APC urges government to show nuclear capability' was captioned by *Dawn*.²² These newspapers also continuously highlighted the Indian threats of taking action in Azad Kashmir and the subsequent Pakistani responses.

This heightened the public mood and demand for responding to Indian threats as soon as possible. All these newspapers invited the public opinion and several pages were devoted to highlighting the public mood. The message was very loud and clear that 'we want tit-for-tat' and overwhelming majority quoted Z.A. Bhutto's statement that 'we would eat grass but develop the nuclear capability.' Majority of the security experts believed that Pakistan had already missed a chance in 1979 (in the wake of

²¹ *The News*, May 23, 1998.

²² *Dawn*, May 25, 1998.

Soviet invasion of Afghanistan) when it could have detonated the nuclear device and that by not going ahead with nuclear explosions Pakistan would not be able to do it in future. Therefore, the message was 'now or never.'

Luckily, the opportunity occurred to personally feel the heat and witness the popular sentiments. David J. Lynch, *The USA Today* European correspondent, along with several other media people came to Pakistan to have firsthand knowledge. Lynch was taken to the downtown Rawalpindi, the heart of the city Raja Bazaar, Moti Bazaar and Sabzi Mandi, to interview the people. He was surprised to know that the poor of the poorest were the least concerned about the economic sanctions as a consequence of

Pakistan going nuclear. For them it was a matter of national survival, pride and honour, which they could not compromise. Subsequently, when Pakistan exploded the nuclear device these newspapers showed their jubilation; 'Pakistan opts to go nuclear; Account evened with India, says PM',²³ 'Pakistan tests five nuclear devices; Pakistan joins nuclear club; Nawaz says sanctions could be blessing in disguise'.²⁴

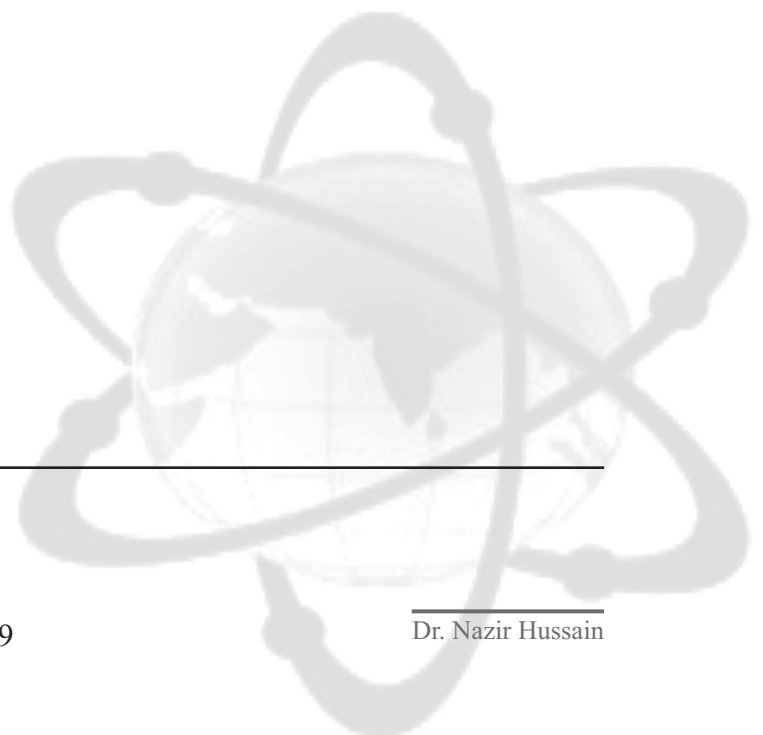
The most reassuring was the headline of *The Nation*, 'Pakistan a nuclear power'.²⁵ Interestingly, soon after the Pakistani nuclear tests, *Dawn* published an Indian General's statement that 'Calm prevails on border, says Indian General'.²⁶

²³ *Dawn*, May 29, 1998.

²⁴ *The News*, May 29, 1998.

²⁵ *The Nation*, May 29, 1998.

²⁶ *Dawn*, May 30, 1998.



8. Conclusion

In the age of information revolution, media is the most influential tool and instrumental in persuasion of national policies and interests. It becomes evident that governments desperately need enhanced media support for projection of their clear stance and moral ascendancy. While analyzing these news stories and headlines, one is convinced that the print media in Pakistan was more than patriotic; it followed the nationalistic approach and highlighted the popular and mass perception to help the state fulfill its national security obligations.

However, as depicted by one security expert that in the Pakistani scenario, unfortunately most of the reporters cannot make a distinction between a company and a brigade, a destroyer and a fleet tanker or a F-16 and M-16. If this condition persists, then who would be there to narrate the story based on facts and truth related to security issues? It is the time that the government takes suitable steps to enhance the media profile.

The potential of media as a force multiplier and a weapon of war must be realized. Failure to recognize and counter enemy's usage of media could lead to unprecedented military and national failures. It must be realized that today decisions are no longer based on events but on how the events are presented. Thus, the obvious answer is that in the contemporary technological era, the media would continue to be a tool to pursue the national interests effectively.

9. Chronology of Events: May 11-30, 1998 (as reported by Pakistani newspapers)

May 11, 1998:

India on Monday successfully conducted three underground nuclear tests after a gap of 24 years and said it possessed the ability to make nuclear weapons. The tests were conducted at 3:45 p.m. (1015 GMT) at Pokhran in the northern desert state of Rajasthan. Indian Prime

Minister AB Vajpayee said that 'tests were conducted by a fission device, a low-yield device and thermonuclear device', he said that 'tests were similar to the underground nuclear test, also at Pokhran in May 1974, and that there was no release of radioactivity into the atmosphere.' Principle Secretary to the Prime Minister Brajesh Mishra said in a three-page statement that India, which has refused to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), however remains committed to nuclear disarmament.

May 12, 1998:

US President Bill Clinton said at the White House that he was deeply disturbed by India's announcement that it had set off three underground nuclear blasts and he would fully implement US laws that virtually dictate sanctions as a penalty for testing and recalled the American Ambassador to India for consultations. He said that action flew in the face of "the firm international consensus" to stop the spread of nuclear weapons. Japan was also in the favour of sanctions, while Russia warned the US that slapping sanctions on India for conducting underground nuclear explosions could prove counterproductive, however reprehensible the atomic tests were.

Pakistan's Foreign Minister Gohar Ayub Khan on Monday rapped the international community whose dismissive approach encouraged India to achieve its nuclear aspirations. He said that Pakistan was looking into the situation to draw a "response" and "Pakistan reserves the right to take all appropriate measures for its security."

May 13, 1998:

Defiant India conducted two more underground nuclear tests Wednesday and said its testing was now complete and it was prepared to consider a testing ban. Both explosions were sub-kiloton and were carried out at Pokhran range at 1221 hours (0651 GMT). Indian Prime Minister AB Vajpayee said that "we took this decision after a lot of thought and it was our fundamental

right...., our duty and we were ready to face any kind of sanctions.”

The US, Norway, Netherlands and Sweden froze aid and Iran asked Pakistan to go for nuclear test. Gohar Ayub said: “Indian actions pose an immediate and great threat to Pakistan's security and will not go unanswered.” COAS General Jahangir Karamat and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif met almost an hour before the Defence Committee of the Cabinet (DCC) meeting and took vital decisions for the very survival of Pakistan.

May 14, 1998:

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif chaired the special cabinet meeting, which was first since India conducted five nuclear tests in three days. He told his aides that Pakistan would not yield to any foreign pressure in taking a decision on responding to India's action and there will be no compromise on national security.

The prime minister also constituted a six-member special cabinet committee to evolve a strategy for addressing the situation arising out of the Indian nuclear tests. This was headed by Foreign Minister Gohar Ayub and included Finance Minister Sartaj Aziz, Information Minister Mushahid Hussain, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Siddique Kanju, Religious Affairs Minister Raja Zafurul Haq and Kashmir Affairs Minister Abudl Majid Malik. The first meeting of this committee lasted for about two hours, as it had been assigned the task to firm up proposals and recommend a strategy to deal with the situation and look for the best possible way in responding to the Indian threat.

May 15, 1998:

Indian Prime Minister AB Vajpayee said on Friday that his country is “a nuclear weapon state” and “we would not utilize our nuclear weapons against others. But if we are attacked, we will not hesitate in using them for defence.”

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said that “we had

the capability and we did not test the bomb for the last 15 to 20 years. We are in no haste to test the bomb immediately after India tested the bomb.” He also met high-level US delegations headed by Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbot. He urged the international community to understand Pakistan's concerns in the wake of five underground nuclear tests carried out by India earlier this week.

He said: “We are now thinking, watching what the attitude of the world is. Are they taking it lightly or they are taking it strongly? Whatever decision we make will be determined by our security interests.” US Deputy Secretary of State Mr. Talbot failed to win assurance from Pakistan that it would refrain from a tit-for-tat response to India's nuclear tests.

May 16, 1998:

Foreign Minister Gohar Ayub said in an interview with BBC that nuclear explosions were just a matter of time and that the Government of Pakistan had chosen to conduct an explosion. He said “it is very close to certain”, but the timing was not decided yet. Foreign Secretary Shamshad Ahmad told a press briefing in Islamabad on Saturday: “Our response will be well-considered, mature, sober and comprehensive. Ours is a mature nation and we will not act in madness as India did in the past and particularly now.” He said Pakistan would uphold its image of a self-respecting nation and will take decisions alone on vital national interest.

May 17, 1998:

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has said that Pakistan possesses nuclear capability and can carry out nuclear test in 12 to 24 hours. He said at his Model Town residence: “We are not worried on the nuclear tests carried out by India recently because Pakistan has the same potential to conduct nuclear tests.” He said that his government would not take dictation from international powers on the testing of nuclear

deterrent. "We will not take any dictation as being a sovereign state, Pakistan has every right to take measures for its national defence and security."

The failure of the G-8 countries in imposing collective sanctions against India appeared Sunday to have pushed Pakistan a step closer to countering the Indian nuclear threat. Foreign Minister Gohar Ayub was in favor of tests and said his government has decided to test a device; it is just a question of when. "It will now be a political decision of when to test", he said. "I cannot disclose you when It's not going to be in a public stadium, where we will have a big bang for all to see."

May 18, 1998:

Indian Home Minister Lal Krishna Advani warned Pakistan that last week's decision to test five nuclear bombs showed India would take a tough stance over Kashmir. Islamabad should realize the change in the geo-strategic situation in the region and the world, and roll back its anti-India policy, especially with regards to Kashmir. Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah was also in the favor of giving tough reply to Pakistan.

Foreign Minister Gohar Ayub again said on Monday that Pakistan has done necessary "spadework" to respond to India in a befitting manner. He said: "It is just a matter of time to go for nuclear tests."

May 19, 1998:

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif took a strong exception to the Indian threats of undertaking an adventure in Azad Kashmir and resolved that Pakistan cannot sit back in such a situation. He said: "We get to take these threats and warnings seriously as India did what it said after the BJP government assumed office. It is again very serious threat. We had to take a necessary action against India's threat."

India's ruling Hindu nationalists Tuesday again

warned Pakistan that it would pay a heavy price for "fuelling the conflict" in the Indian-Occupied Kashmir. Krishnan Lal Sharma, spokesman for BJP, said: "Time has come when the government should take a tough stand and foil Pakistan's attempts to stoke militancy."

General Jahangir Karamat and Nawaz Sharif met on Tuesday and discussed the existing situation in the context of "serious threat" to national security.

May 20, 1998:

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said that with the failure of G-8 countries imposing collective sanctions against India it appeared on Sunday that it will push Pakistan to go for nuclear tests. He said: "We will prove our nuclear worth within 18 to 26 hours."

Foreign Minister Gohar Ayub said that it was only the matter of when. He told the cabinet that the government has decided to test a nuclear device. Privately Pakistani officials said that the America offered a possible end to sanctions which Washington imposed on Pakistan in 1990, believing it possessed a nuclear bomb. But Ayub said: "We have taken in view everything and discussed what it will cost us and we will go ahead."

May 21, 1998:

Nawaz Sharif reiterated that New Delhi's latest threat on Azad Kashmir was being taken seriously by Islamabad. He said Pakistan cannot ignore the grave threat to its security. He said already the BJP government had carried out one of its pre- and post-election threats of exercising the nuclear option by conducting nuclear tests. The BJP had also made certain threats on Azad Kashmir. He also criticized the world community and Russia for opposing sanctions on India.

Gohar Ayub told a Japanese newspaper Thursday that Pakistan may reconsider its nuclear option if the world powers offer credible

security guarantees to Pakistan. He also met with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and both are likely to assemble at the Presidency on Tuesday for further discussions with President Rafiq Tarar.

The United States and Japan will cooperate to ensure Pakistan's security following the five nuclear explosions by archrival India early this month and to block Islamabad from exploding a nuclear device of its own. A senior Japanese official said: "There is a time constraint and we will take a quick action to pursue Pakistan not to go nuclear."

May 22, 1998:

US President Clinton said his administration appreciated and recognized that Indian nuclear tests have not only dealt a severe blow to the non-proliferations regime, but more importantly, they have created a serious security threat to Pakistan. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif informed the US president about the alarming situation created by belligerent Indian postures. The prime minister added that the BJP government, having carried out five nuclear tests, was seeking to blackmail the world community to acquire the status of a nuclear weapon state.

Opposition leader Benazir Bhutto on Friday announced "unconditional" support for the government of Nawaz Sharif against any Indian threat to national security.

BJP Vice President Krishnan Lal Sharma warned that "if it continues with its anti-India policy, Pakistan should be prepared for India's wrath."

May 23, 1998:

Nawaz Sharif said on Friday that any misadventure will meet a resolute response, as the nation had evolved a consensus to respond to India's challenges and threats. He said: "We are not seeking any bargain. Our undivided focus must be on the preservation of our national

security interests." He repeated the words "any misadventure will meet a resolute response."

May 24, 1998:

India will launch a major offensive action against foreign guerillas in Occupied Kashmir, the Press Trust of India reported on Sunday.

The Pakistan Awami Ittehad-sponsored all-party conference (APC) has urged the government to demonstrate the country's nuclear capability in a befitting response to the Indian explosions which have endangered the security of Pakistan.

May 25, 1998:

COAS Gen. Jahangir Karamat on Monday said Indian forces might begin operating along the Line of Control in Kashmir and warned this would trigger response instantly as preparations enter a critical stage.

Nuclear tests by Pakistan are now widely believed to be imminent. Some sources say that test could take place on Thursday (today) or Friday at the latest. Dr. A.Q. Khan visited the venue of the test and returned later to Islamabad after finalizing all necessary steps in the final run-up to the testing.

Certain measurements have been taken to forestall the possibility of any pre-emptive strike by the enemy. These measures include defending the country's airspace as well as a high alert on the country's borders.

May 26, 1998:

India has rejected the criticism by the 15-member European Union (EU), which recommended a delay of loans to India through the World Bank and other institutions after India set off five underground nuclear tests this month. It also rejected the EU's call for it to sign the CTBT in the wake of its five nuclear tests. Indian Defence Minister George Fernandez said India would "inevitably" arm the country's

missiles with nuclear warhead following its five underground tests this month.

Pakistan has completed preparations for a nuclear test and could carry one out within hours, CNN reported, citing US intelligence sources, says an AFP report.

May 27, 1998:

Knowledgeable sources said on Wednesday, Pakistan has enhanced security around its nuclear sites.

May 28, 1998:

Pakistan conducted five nuclear tests in Chaghi district with an average recorded intensity of 40-45 kilotons yield. The Australian Geological Survey registered Pakistan's five nuclear tests as an explosion with a magnitude of 5.0 on the Richter scale. According to well-placed source, a team of around 150 scientists, engineers and technical personnel headed by Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission Chairman Dr. Ashfaq Ahmad Khan and Dr. A. Q. Khan supervised the tests.

Emergency was declared in the country by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. China regretted Pakistan for nuclear race in the South Asia and Japan also considered putting sanction on her.

May 29, 1998:

The Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) said on Friday that five nuclear tests were so powerful that they turned the black granite to grey-white, there was no radioactive leakage and they were "completely safe." The tests were carried out in the Chaghi hill range of Balochistan.

The statement said the tests were performed with the devices buried deep into the bellies of rocky mountains in the Chaghi range. The mission has on the one hand boosted the morale of the Pakistani nation and achieved an honorable position in the nuclear world and on

the other hand validated scientific theory, design and previous results from cold tests.

May 30, 1998:

Pakistan carried out its sixth nuclear test on Saturday and said it had completed the "current series of nuclear tests." Islamabad also offered to hold talks to prevent the "dangers of nuclear conflagration."

The Pentagon analysts are placing Pakistan ahead of India in the nuclear and missile race after Saturday's blast that evened the score with New Delhi to six nuclear tests each. They say the test firing of nuclear capable Ghauri was the extra element that placed Pakistan in a higher grid. According to one analyst:

"Pakistan can in fact take the initiative now and stump India by first signing the CTBT and moving away from its decades' old policy of following India, step by step, move by move."

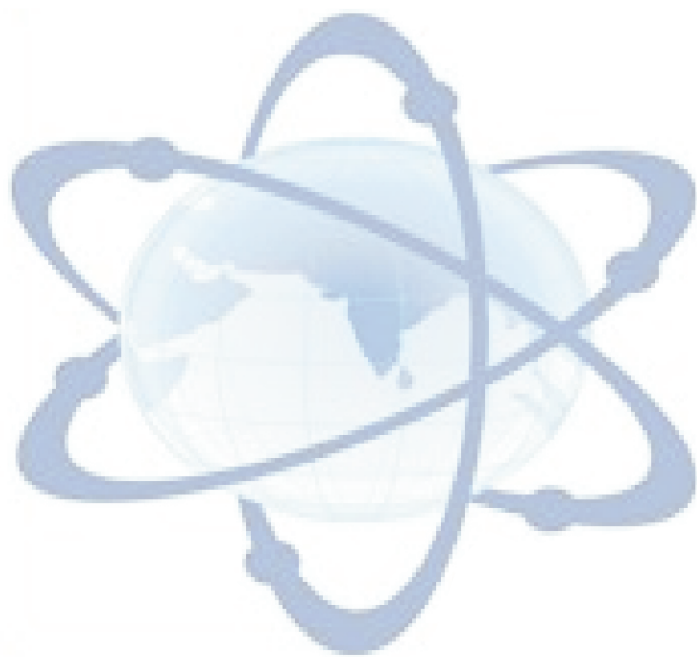
About the Author

Dr. Nazir Hussain is Associate Professor at the Department of International Relations, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad. Previously, he was associated with the Department of Defence and Strategic Studies, since 1985. He has Post Graduate Diploma in Conflict Resolution from the University of Uppsala-Sweden. He has also served as Senior Research Fellow on Middle East at the Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad in 2001-2002.

He was Visiting Fellow at the Henry L. Stimson Centre, Washington DC., in summer 2000 working on Nuclear Risk Reduction Measures in South Asia, Research Associate with the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) in 1996-97 working on International Humanitarian Law, and Visiting Researcher at the Institute of Political and International Studies (IPIS), Tehran-Iran in summer 1995. He has also done a joint research project on Enlightened Moderation sponsored by the Centre de Sciences Humaines (CSH), Paris-France.

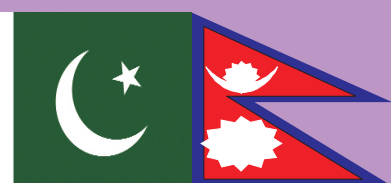
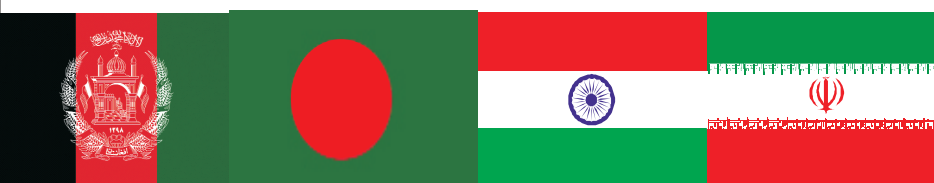
Dr. Hussain has attended scores of national and international conferences, seminars, workshops and symposiums within and outside the country. He has written extensively on security issues in national and international research journals. He has written more than 30 research articles and is author of two books. Dr. Hussain is also associated with the electronic media since 1999. He has hosted various current affairs programs on Pakistan Television (PTV) and ATV. He has also hosted regular current affairs programs on Pakistan Radio during 2002-2007.





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