

Role of Identities in the Indo-Pak Relations: A Study in Constructivism

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Abstract

From the very onset, the history of Pakistan and India is replete with number of protracted conflicts. The antagonism and the animosity between the two states are generally viewed through the lens of realist paradigm. However, this research makes a radical departure from the realist precepts and lays considerable importance to the role of the social institutions in the formation of the conflictual relations between the two countries. The research undertakes an extensive study of the social institutions in the formation of a hostile identity between the two neighbors'. This research has unraveled that the social institutions of education, media, religion and politics have played an imperative role in the formation of interstate adversarial identities. It has been seen that the norms and ideas entailed in social institutions, has deliberately created and fostered the identity of conflicts between the two countries.

Keywords: Antagonism, interstate adversarial Identities, Westphalia, Constructivism

Introduction

The predominant role of the identities in shaping the behavior of the individuals by the notion of attachment and detachment cannot be denied by any means. Both explicated that humans all over the world are influenced by their constructed identities which impels them to act in a certain manner that

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are considered contrary to human respect and dignity. The identities based on nationalism, impels its followers to take a hostile stance towards other nations. The concept of nationalism with respect to identity formation in the contemporary global political system has its roots in the treaty of Westphalia in the 16th century. It is argued that the identity formation is a socio-psychological, subjective process that comes into being through means of interactions between members of “In-group” and “out-group” in different social settings. This process based on interaction, occurring in different societies through externalization and socialization, paves the way for the emergence of ethnocentric attitudes in the individuals (Amitav Acharya, 2005).

Huntington was of the opinion that the societies based on specific cultures created xenophobic sentiments towards other societies which was reflected in their respective political systems. In other words, the societies preserve norms in order to obviate other powers from usurping their autonomy so that their dominance remained intact. Moreover, the deliberate depiction of history in partial manner by reflecting ethnocentric sentiments through socialization, results in the formation of an identity which views other as an enemy. A prime example of such identity formation can be given with regard to India Pakistan enmity as both of the countries are at daggers drawn with each other. The disputes between the two countries have often sprawled out of control culminating in a number of deadly wars due to incompatible ideological formations. (Huntington, Samuel P., 1996)

The relentless animosity between the two countries can be attributed to the longstanding historical and ideological differences between them. The Muslims and the British by ruling India for a prolonged period of time in the subcontinent, dealt a fatal blow to the Hindu ego which resulted in the rise of ethnocentric Hindutva ideology that inculcated feelings of resentments

towards Muslims. In response to rising Hindutva ideology, the Muslims of the subcontinent decided to preserve their distinct identity and started craving for a separate homeland. Lievwen stated that the ideology of the two nation theory paved the way for the partition of the subcontinent as the Muslims regarded themselves as distinct and different nation from the Hindus on ethno cultural basis. It is an unvarnished truth that since inception, both the countries have been indulged in modifying and refining the past events in accordance with their present political ideologies in order to get mass approval from the people which have resulted in the formation of adversarial identities across the border. These identities and interests have afflicted huge material and nonmaterial losses in both sides of the border. History has witnessed that the Indo Pak conflicts have often led to the desolation of economic infrastructure and have often inflicted socioeconomic losses in both of the rivaling states. The hostility socially constructed between the two neighbors has enslaved the individuals of these countries and has impeded the growth of human development in these particular states. (Acharya, A, 2009)

The relentless rivalry between the two nations has its roots in the two ideologies of the statehood which can be traced back to the nationalist movements in subcontinent. In this aspect, the constructivist approach has gained worldwide prominence by offering a radically new way of viewing the Indo Pak conflict. The constructivist approach delves in to the social construction of the identity and subsequent action in relation to the agency and structure with respect to inter-subjectivity. It finds out that how social construction of meanings attached to the ideas, knowledge, objects and practices play a monumental role in making the world safe or unsafe. It is considered as a middle way between the rationalists and relativists theory.

Research Questions

1. Why the rivalry between India and Pakistan is always viewed through realist paradigm?
2. How realist theory has been found faulty in analyzing the enduring antagonism between India and Pakistan?
3. How the rivalry between India and Pakistan has been socially constructed by certain social institutions?
4. Why theory of social constructivism provides the best insights in deconstructing the imbedded identities hobbling the growth of smooth relations between the two neighbors?
5. How the perspective of social constructivism can make people cognizant of the role of the social institutions in aggravating the perceived rivalry between the two countries?

Problem Statement

There has not been extensive research done in analyzing Indo-PAK relations from the perspective of social constructivism. The importance of this research paper lies in unraveling the role of ideas and norms in creating and aggravating the antagonistic relationship between India and Pakistan. The historical animosity between India and Pakistan is largely viewed from a perspective of realist paradigm. But there is a dire need to bring about a paradigm shift by studying the role of ingrained ideas, norms, knowledge and beliefs in creating conflictual relationship between the two neighbors. The research paper focuses extensively on rivalry between India and Pakistan through the lens of social constructivism. The research article can assiduously play an essential role in deconstructing the presumed naturalness of the conflictual relationship

between the two countries. Furthermore, it also can be quite useful for the policy makers as well as the society in general in understanding the real root causes which have hobbled the growth of smooth relationship between the two neighbors. The method in this research is going to be qualitative in order to unveil the inter-subjective facts. Further, the technique of documentary analysis is going to be used in order to uncover the role of socialization process in the formation of animosity between the two nations.

The Arguments of the study

The arguments of the research study are delineated below.

1. The socially constructed identities pave the way for the emergence of conflictual relations in inter-state relations.
2. The identities are artificially created by the certain groups and identities in order to achieve their certain objectives.
3. The interests of the state are socially constructed and do not reflect the geo-political imperatives.

Constructivism

The constructivist theory has its roots in the works of various scholars from 18th and 20th century. Constructivism as a theoretical framework gained ascendancy after the culmination of the cold war as the traditional theories miserably failed to predict its end. *Nicholas Greenwood Onuf* was the first theorist to use the word constructivism in the subject of international relations in 1989 by suggesting that the structures and the agents act in the same pattern. According to this perspective, all the political systems were the products of the human practices entailed in ideological interpretations. Alexander Wendt, who was a renowned constructivist, laid the foundation of a new approach with an objective to increase the comprehension of functioning of the global

political system by creating a midway perspective between the two dominant traditional approaches. (Adler, Barnett, et al, 2000)

The intellectual growth of constructivism can also be attributed to the number of interesting debates arising between different theoretical perspectives in linkage with the dismemberment of the Soviet Union resulting in an academic vacuum like situation. The theory of constructivism revolves around a core argument that identity and norms through interaction processes at several levels, form the basis of the sociopolitical facts. The constructivism helps the scholars of the international relations in comprehending intra-state as well as inter-state relations. The theory of constructivism radically refutes the precepts of the rational approaches with regard to the functioning of agents and structures on the basis of identities and interests. It highlights the way in which certain meanings are attached to certain objects and practices and exposes how certain norms and ideas frame and constrain given course of action. The constructivists lay immense emphasis on the role of the norms, ideas, values and beliefs in different socio-psychological processes which has a direct bearing on the acts of friendship, rivalry, bias and discrimination among the agencies and the structures. The core presumptions of the constructivist are that the behaviors of the structure can be changed in a positive manner through the predominate role played by the international organizations, non-state actors, by the process of communication persuasion and lobbying. The constructivists make a radical departure from the traditional approaches by extensively delving into inter-subjectivity of facts, deep-rooted in identities. (Adler, E, 1997a)

To add further, the definitive article “Anarchy is What States Make of It” written by Alexander Wendt, paved the way for the constructivist thought to gain worldwide ascendancy in the discipline of the international relations.

Wendt was of the opinion that the identity of the state was not product of human nature, but was carefully crafted by the social structures. Furthermore, he repudiated the ontological position of rational school of thought by arguing that ideas and norms which were socially constructed formed the basis of interaction between the humans and the states. He further explicated that the materials were also the part of the world carefully crafted by the human beings but it was the subjective conception that gave meanings to those objects and practices. Moreover, constructivists postulated that the ideas and the beliefs were the driving forces that gave meaning to the outer world which had a direct bearing on the relationship between the agents and the structures. The constructivists are steadfast in their belief that as ideas and the beliefs are foundational basis of any society, so world is a society and its political system as its product (Alexander Wendt, 1992).

Discussion and Analysis

The social constructivists stated that that the social construction of identity played a monumental role in shaping inter-state relations in the global political system. Alexander Wendt argues that the ideational factors are central to the operationalization of global politics. For instance, he argues that the 5 nuclear bombs possessed by North Korea pose a far greater threat to the United States than 500 nuclear bombs possessed by the United Kingdom. In other words, the convergence of ideas between the US and the UK prevents them from viewing each other's nuclear arsenal as a potential threat to their security similarly, the same presumption of Wendt can be observed as credible in global politics as well as in the context of Indo-Pak rivalry (Anderson, 1983).

For example, Pakistan conceives the military capability of China less threatening than that of India, despite the fact that former's military power is

far superior to that of the later. Furthermore, contrary to the realists and liberalist emphasis on the material power as source of inter-state conflicts, the constructivists give primary importance to the role of certain ideas, norms, beliefs and values in creating and exacerbating conflictual relations between them. To put it simply, the cooperative or hostile relations between states are contingent upon the adoption of certain convergent or conflictual identities and norms between them. In the case of Indo-Pak conflict, it can be assumed that the antagonism and rivalry between the two of them has been socially constructed. From the very inception, the relationship between the two neighbors has been strained. To add further, both of the countries have fought three gigantic wars with each other. Alongside this, both of them are indulged in frequent border skirmishes with each other. In addition, both of the states have also been indulged in to countless diplomatic scuffles with each other (Apple, M. W, 1979).

By Analyzing things in a constructivist perspective, it can be gauged that the antagonistic relations between India and Pakistan are as a result of conflictual identities being adhered to and being practiced by both of them. In this respect, the instrumental role being played by the social institutions in creating conflictual socio-cognitive identities cannot be denied by any means. In other words, it can be understood that the social institutions of both of the countries have a predominate role to play in creating hostile relations between them. The social institutions, through the process of learning and interaction, articulate certain norms and ideas in order to pave the way for the construction of self-identity. This self-identity instilled in the masses creates a feeling of common identity and results in the adoption of ethnocentric behavior among them. As a result of socialization of self-identity, the people develop a sense of self-

esteem with respect to in-group which inadvertently leads them to view outsiders with contempt and suspicion (Archer, M. S, 1996).

These socially constructed identities are the major stumbling blocks which have impeded and circumvented both the states from developing amicable relations with each other. It is argued that the social institutions, by socializing certain norms and identities, cripple the capacity of the states to come out of their ideological lenses in dealing with a perceived rival. The meanings are attached to certain objects through interplay of ideas, norms, beliefs and history. The certain meanings associated with the material world form the basis of identity which creates the conception of friend and enemy in the international structure. The scholars of constructivism castigate the presumptions of the traditional theorists by arguing that the rivalry between India and Pakistan is a direct result of entrenched and ingrained ideational socio-cultural factors. The socially formulated conception of friend and enemy lays the basis of cooperation and conflict between the states this school of thought radically repudiates the simplistic aspects of the rational approach which delves in to the variables such as power, wealth and survival as the main driving forces in creating hostile and cooperative relations between the states (Axelrod, R. and R. O. Keohane, 1985).

The neo realist theory of international relations perceives the antagonism between India and Pakistan as a result of geopolitical imperatives by which both of the countries are indulged in self-aggrandizement and lust of power. On the other hand, the students of constructivism are of the opinion that the social structures have an integral role to play in constructing the national interests of both India and Pakistan. The constructivists do not totally deny the brute facts of power politics between India and Pakistan but instead, argue that the material aspects of the conflictual relations between them can only be

understood by giving primary importance to inter-subjective knowledge. It is an evident fact that the both India and Pakistan are orthodox and conservative societies, where the socio, cultural institutions are playing a monumental role not only in shaping individual preferences but also are playing an imperative role in formulating their foreign policy towards each other. Furthermore, the social institutions in both of the states play an instrumental role in constructing the identities that influence the patterns of individual as well as collective life (Ayoob, M., 1999).

The inter-subjective understanding of the ideas, norms, beliefs and history has a central role to play in constructing adversarial relations between the two countries. Moreover, the social structures in both of the states deliberately create and foster an exclusive identity which is directly at odds with the identity of their archrival. So it can be said with hundred percent mathematical precision that the enmity and antagonism between the two neighbors has been socially constructed by a certain identities in order to keep their dominating position intact. To put it simply, the politicians in both of the countries deliberately create an image of other in order to provide self-identification to their own identity. Similarly, the politicians in both of the countries deliberately prolong crisis with each other in order to gain enormous domestic support for their policies (Ayoob, M, 1995).

Likewise, the military establishment in both of the countries has vested agendas in lingering the conflictual relations between the two countries by creating an image of a hostile neighbor, the military establishment in both of the states benefit substantially from the large amount of budget allocated to the defense forces. Hence, the social constructivists hold the opinion that the rivalry between India and Pakistan is not natural, but have been artificially crafted by the certain identities in order to further entrench and reinforce their

dominating position in both of the states. In the preceding paragraphs, the role of the social institutions in constructing conflictual identities and interests between the two states is going to be discussed:

Education

It is as clear as day light that India and Pakistan are still embroiled into an intense conflict with each other even after 7 decades of the partition of the subcontinent. The animosity and the rivalry between the two neighbors can be attributed to the prejudiced historical literature written with an intend to demonize each other's nationalist movements. In other words, the historical literature in both of the states is replete with nationalistic overtones which indoctrinate in the mass's hatred towards other communities and nations. For example, the Hindu literature frequently depicts the Muslims as barbaric invaders, who have invaded their pure land for their sinister designs. Conversely, the Pakistani literature portrays Hindus as cynical and cunning in nature, who have an ultimate aim to exterminate all the Muslims from the subcontinent.

The historical literature in both of the states demonize "others identity" as brutish, evil, cynical and barbaric, which provides self-identification to their own identity. The educational curriculum in both of the nation's articulate such ideas, norms and beliefs which not only slander others but also glorifies one's own heroes in nationalistic fervor. In order to invoke feelings of nationalism and patriotism among the masses, the curriculum is organized in such a way to provide credibility to one's own twisted version of historical events. The facts are twisted and fabricated in order to instill in the masses a feeling of nationalistic pride in their nation's historical struggles. These

prejudiced and partial interpretations of the past events have a direct relationship between the formulation of adversarial identities and interests between the two countries. For example, the curriculum of Pakistan has always depicted Hindus as cowards and timid, who did not have the audacity to attack Pakistan in daylight in the war of 1965. Same is the case with the other side of the border. (Barkin, J. S, 2003)

The Indian curriculum often ostentatiously portrays Pakistani soldiers as eunuchs, who surrendered themselves before the valiant Indian army in the war of 1971. Similarly, the Hindu curriculum indoctrinates anti-Muslim narrative by explicating that Babri mosque was built at the birth place of Hindu God Rama. In both the curriculums, the words are deliberately used in a way to spark feelings of resentments among the masses towards each other. Moreover, the fabrication of the historical facts creates allusions in the people which pave the way for the construction of conflictual identities and interests between the both of countries. The rulers of the two nations are cognizant of the fact the humans are more susceptible to be influenced from constructed identities than true reason (Bazaz, P. N, 2003).

The governments in both the states are deliberately indulged in twisting and fabricating the texts of the curriculum in order to articulate feelings of resentments and animosity among the masses towards the other nation. The meanings associated with the social and material factors pave the way for the humans and states to act and react in a hostile manner in order to prove their allegiance to the eternalized identities and material interests. These socially constructed identities not only influence the behaviors of the individuals in respect of non-state actors but also influence the decision-making process of the states in conducting foreign policy towards other states. (Balakrishnan and G. Chatterjee, 1995, retrived in 2010, The Times of India)

Media

In the contemporary era, the media has a central role to play in shaping and reshaping societal thoughts given the fact that everyone has access to information at his or her doorstep. The media as a social institution plays an instrumental role in formulating identities of in-group against the out-group across the planet. Moreover, the media houses deliberately aggravate and intensify the conflictual relations between the two countries in order to provide legitimacy to the jingoistic policies of their governments. The media's depiction of Indo-PAK hostility in a biased manner further exacerbates the sense of contestation between the two countries. It has been seen that jingoism and war hysteria propagated by the media across the borders has further enhanced the divide between the two nations. The certain usage of images, words, and characters by the media houses of both nations have led to the adoption of ethnocentric behavior against the others among the masses. In addition, the others are portrayed as demons, evil and cynical in comparison to one's own group. The biological and physiological comparison is made in order to provide credence to one's own identity (Bhowmik, S, 2002).

The media houses deliberately over exaggerate the events and provide only one side of the picture in order to make sure that the masses remain oblivious to the hidden truth. The masses are indoctrinated with fraudulent and bogus narratives which inculcates in them feelings of resentments towards the others. There is clear synchronization between the norms and ideas propagated by the media and the other social institutions of the state. The masses easily accept those narratives as immutable facts of life and regard them as objective in nature as the same ideas and norms are being fostered by all the social structures of the state, therefore, the people take such narratives for granted and do not muster up the fortitude to deconstruct them in a true sense .

A careful analysis of the contents of the print and electronic media has led to the realization that ideas and meanings are artificially constructed in order to create a false sense of a common identity among the masses. The use of words, images, gestures, symbols expressing nationalistic fervor inadvertently compels the masses to adopt ethnocentric behavior for example, in electronic media, the members from both the states not only intimidate each other with verbal assaults but also create an atmosphere of hysteria and jingoism between the two countries. In other words, the media in both the countries is playing a sinister role in provoking and intensifying the conflicts between them. Hence, it can be said that the media across the borders has become a machinery of state propaganda which is only fostering the dictated nationalistic narrative of its states. It is argued that the controversial and wicked role being played by the media of both the countries has impeded them from improving their relations with each other (Bose, N. , 2009).

Religion

Pakistan and India are indulged in to number of countless wars right after the partition of the sub-continent. The ideological beliefs and cultural differences were the driving forces that led to the partition of the sub-continent. Even in this contemporary era, both the nations are highly resentful of each other's religious identity that can be traced to their conflictual relations in the past. Both the religious communities abhor each other's religious identity and consider the other's religious identity as a root cause of extremism in the region. As both India and Pakistan are orthodox societies, so religion is a potent force which has been playing an essential role in influencing and shaping the identities and interests of both of the countries. In other words, the religious groups have always kept a stronghold over the hearts and minds of the masses of the both nations in order to secure and safeguard their

privileged rights. It is argued that the religious groups frequently invoke religious fervor among the people in order to safeguard their autonomy from violation, abuse, and neglect from other dominating actors (Blinkenberg, L, 1998).

The relentless animosity between India and Pakistan has their foundations in the religious and ideological differences between the two nations. The religious institutions across the borders have often deliberately intensified the contentious territorial disputes between the two countries by drawing hard lines between the Hindus and the Muslims. In this respect, the Kashmir region is considered as the hotspot of conflict between the two perceived rivals. In Pakistan, Kashmir is considered as an integral part of Pakistan given the fact that the majority of the Kashmiris are Muslims. Conversely control over Kashmir by India is considered indispensable for the expansion of Hindutva ideology and Akhand Bahrat. That is the reason that the religious groups in both the nations have always been most vocal with regard to their opposition to any kind of attempts being made for improving the relations between the two nations. The religious institutions of the two states conceive the other religious groups as a potential threat to their own survival and religious way of life. This conception of threat led to the adoption of conflictual and antagonistic behavior among the people towards other religious groups (Bose, S, 2003).

It is an evident fact that in both Pakistan and India, the divisive forces of religion and nationalism have been used in order to create an image of hostile enemy so that the masses remained pledged to the exclusive identity nurtured by the state. Moreover, false national identities based on religion and ethnicity has been advertently propagated by the two states in order to further aggravate the perceived hostilities between them. It can be said that the

religious and nationalistic identities both complement each other in creating a perception of threat with regard to the other. Hence, the religious groups add fuel to the already burning fire by articulating their enmity towards the other religious community. This is the reason that both of the nations have not been able to come up with prudent policies to improve their strained relations (Brasted, H, N. Lahoud and A. H. Johns, 2005).

Politics

The political institutions of the both nations have escalated the animosity and conflicts between the two nations for their certain political objectives. The political campaigns of the political parties across the borders revolve around the myth of pernicious threat emanating from another perceived rival. Furthermore, the political parties of the both countries have created an allusion of a fierce rival in order to secure landslide victory in the elections. The political institutions have further aggravated the socially constructed religious and ideological differences between the two nations in order to further reinforce their dominating control over their respective countries. The politicians have socialized the enmity to such an extent that it has become virtually impossible to differentiate nationalism from a hostile behavior against the other. Historical analysis corroborates that the political leaders have used the Kashmir issue as a tool to expand their political objectives in both of the countries. In this respect, the expansionists designs of the Modi government is a prime example of using aggression externally in order to placate one's audience domestically (Buzan, B. and O. Waever, 1997).

Similarly, the Modi's political party has often demonized Pakistan in its election campaigns in order to instill in the people the allusion that BJP is only custodian of the Indian nation which can successfully thwart the wicked

designs of Pakistan. It is a clearly held view point that the government of India has often diverted the attention from the real issues plaguing the country by launching an unjustifiable offense against Pakistan. It must be taken in to account that the Pakistani politicians have also socially constructed adversarial identities with India in order to achieve their political aims. A prime example in this respect is the nationwide speeches of the politicians rhetorically labeling those people as traitors who try to resolve the disputes with India through peaceful means (Hajari, Nisid, 2022).

Such kind of jingoistic slogans inculcate in the masses a hostile and venomous behavior towards their conceived rival. It is an unvarnished truth that the people in Pakistan have to prove themselves patriotic by depicting themselves as resentful of India. The politicians use media programmers as a platform to widen the religious and ideological gap between the two countries. These socially constructed identities highly influence the decision makers while formulating inter-state policies and impel them to make uncalculated and irrational decisions.

Conclusion

From the vary onset, India and Pakistan have been fierce rivals. The animosity between the two nations is largely viewed from a realist paradigm. In contrast, this research paper has analyzed the rivalry between the two nations through the lens of social constructivism. The research article has shed light on the role of the actors, institutions, and events in the formulation of identities, humans and states that have contributed in creating socially constructed conflictual relations between the two countries. It is argued that the social meanings associated with the certain ideas, beliefs, norms and patterns created enduring rivalry between two states. It has been found that the institutional formulation

of the identities through ideas and norms have created conflictual relations between the two countries. The socio-cognitive processes led to the socialization and inculcation of the hostile attitude in the masses towards the other. Hence, it can be said that the social structure of education, media, religion and politics have played an instrumental role in socially constructing identities that have led to the conflictual relations between the two nations.

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