

THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN SHAPING NARRATIVES ON THE INDIA-PAKISTAN WAR OF 1971

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Original Article

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Abstract

In the 1971 war between India and Pakistan, the latter was defeated not only politically and militarily but also in the media, which ultimately led to the creation of Bangladesh. This study examined the role of national and international media in shaping the nature of conflict. The study used qualitative research method of document analysis to understand the role of media in the conflict. The study concludes that Pakistan's policy of expelling international media from East Pakistan and censoring of West Pakistan's media resulted in a vague depiction of the ground realities. Pakistan's tacit defensiveness and confusion in explaining the military operations put it at political disadvantage both internally and externally. Contrarily, India welcomed the exiled international media and offered place to work. India manipulated Mukti Bahini as well as the national media in its propaganda campaign against Pakistan to achieve the desired strategic goals. Bengali nationalists, with the Indian assistance, used media as a tool to spread propaganda against the Pakistani leadership and its armed forces. The study argues that the unsubstantiated media sensation about military operations in East Pakistan was story-driven, and it selectively targeted the Pakistani army ignoring the atrocities committed by the Bengali nationalists with Indian backing.

Keywords: Media, War, Narratives, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Mukti Bahini.

Introduction

Ever since their independence from the British empire in 1947, India and Pakistan have been experiencing an enduring rivalry and their mutual antagonism shapes the fabric of overall relationship between the two states (Paul, 2005). The animosity has been internalized in the state structures, where

social institutions including education, politics, religion and media play a significant role in shaping the social patterns favourable to their respective strategic goals (Ali et al., 2017).

Among other institutions, media is considered as an important part of state-societal structure (Shah, 2020). It plays a significant role in shaping the social patterns

to build a specific narrative (Shabir et al., 2018). In this regard, media has always played an influential role in opinion-making processes in South Asia, particularly during the India-Pakistan wars (Hafeez, 2015). Generally, the mainstream media presents events with exaggeration to construct a specific narrative based on a nationalist approach. This enables the states to conceal the facts and manipulate the situation to launch a propaganda in favour of their national interests (Ali & Ajaz, 2014). The manipulation of information through media sets a particular discourse that influences public opinion on the nature of a conflict. For instance, the American media propagated 'anti-communism' during the Cold War to serve the US strategic interests (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). Interestingly, any critical journalist or academician, such as Noam Chomsky, who speaks against the traditional rhetoric faces marginalization even in advanced democracies like the US (Herring and Robinson, 2003).

Ideally, media is important in depicting war events in an objective and neutral way, simultaneously revealing misrepresentation and maligning propaganda of the rival parties during the conflict (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005). Wars bring miseries and catastrophes to mankind that take decades to heal. Therefore, media-myths and self-justifications to violent behaviours are always an important subject for an objective examination to understand the true reality (Schendel, 2015). Critical analysis of the 1971 India-Pakistan conflict suggests that the conflicting narratives of the parties vis-à-vis the conflict events should be studied objectively to differentiate myth and reality about the war that resulted in the dismemberment of Pakistan and deep impact on the socio-political psyche of the country.

The objective of the study is to examine the role of national and international media in shaping the nature and outcome of conflict. This is a descriptive and analytical

research study focused on the question: how did national and international media shape narratives on the India-Pakistan conflict of 1971? The paper follows a case study research design to gain in-depth, concrete, contextual and multi-faceted knowledge about the complex role of media in shaping the public and international opinion on the conflict. This study makes use of qualitative data collected from the secondary sources including books, research articles, newspaper articles, magazines and media reports. The technique of document analysis has been used to contextualise and understand the narratives on the war shaped by media.

India-Pakistan 1971 War

India-Pakistan fought numerous wars over Kashmir dispute, however, the 1971 war is considered to be the most catastrophic specifically for Pakistan, in the sense that India defeated Pakistan and the latter was cut into two halves (Kapur, 2008). Indeed, it was a complex war with respect to the number of parties involved in the conflict. Initially, Mukti Bahini, a nationalist segment in East Pakistan backed by India, fought against the Pakistani state (Ganguly, 2015). Subsequently, ethnic clashes launched by Bengali nationalists against Bengali and non-Bengali segments became another battleground (Bose, 2011) while India and Pakistan fought their third war (Saika, 2004) in an international environment of Cold War (Jamal, 2008). On the domestic front, the socio-economic deprivation of East Pakistan, whether real or perceived, was regarded as the major cause of East-West Pakistan rift (Shifat & Ahmed 2019). Nevertheless, in the aftermath of Bhola cyclone (November, 1970)—one of the deadliest natural disasters in the recorded history—the sense of deprivation increased in East Pakistan. Major cause for this increased alienation among the masses was attributed to the lack of efficient governance system to deal with the natural disaster (Hossain, 2018). Importantly, Sheikh Mujibur Rehman

strategically manipulated the November cyclone calamity during the election campaign and succeeded in capitalizing on the public anger over the government response (Thorp, 1987).

In this context, the political turmoil that emerged in the aftermath of general elections held in December, 1970 further contributed to the worsening of the situation. Sheikh Mujib, a winner in general elections was not given the right to form government by leadership in West Pakistan and subsequently, his political party staged vibrant demonstrations in the streets of Dhaka (Glynn, 2006). The protests converted into riots and in fact, Bengali nationalists systematically persecuted the Bihari community due to their support to pro-Pakistan Political party, Muslim League in the election (Sen, 1999). In order to maintain law and order situation, the Pakistani leadership launched a military operation in East Pakistan by using the justification of 'Bihari massacre' (D'Costa, 2001), however, the writ of the state ceased to exist within a few months and at last, reached to a point of no-return. Importantly, India strategically constructed as well as exploited the sense of deprivation among masses in East Pakistan (Ahmad, 2016) and further, she interfered and supported rebels that ended up in the creation of Bangladesh (Sagan and Waltz, 2002).

India, who faced embarrassing defeat in 1962 war against China (Ghosh, 2017), and later on, received a severe dent to its conventional superiority during 1965 war against Pakistan (Ganguly, 2015) seized the opportunity of political instability in East Pakistan in order to secure strategic interests based in her hegemonic designs. India covertly equipped and trained the Bengali nationalists; Mukti Bahini, to fight Pakistan's army (Ganguly, 1998). Indian interference in East Pakistan made the situation chaotic for the Pakistani state (Riaz and Pasha, 2009). It is pertinent to note that the direct war between India and Pakistan started on December 3 and

ended-up by December 16, 1971; with what Pakistan remember as the *fall of Dhaka*, and India, and Bangladesh as *liberation* (Schendel, 2015). After the defeat of Pakistan, Indian armed forces captured 90,000 Pakistanis and taken them as prisoners of war that comprised of Pakistani uniformed soldiers including Bengalis, and civilians who remained loyal to Pakistan (Orton, 2010).

Apart from the recognition of the atrocities that were committed during the conflict, the total number of deaths remained a serious dilemma which even now needs critical investigation. According to estimates of Anthony Mascarenhas; a Pakistani journalist who severely criticized Pakistani military for her military operations in his article; published in *The Sunday Times*, maintained that the Bengali nationalists killed almost the same numbers (Bengalis nationalists killed by the military) of non-Bengalis (Bose, 2011). In this context, one of the confusing phenomena in relation to 1971 war is the usage of the term 'genocide'. As per Pakistani claims, total number of casualties are 26000, whereas, Bangladeshi and Indian claims it to be three million (Mascarenhas, 1986). It is further asserted that field studies indicate that 26,000 deaths are doubtfully low and on the other hand, the claim of three million has been proved to be false. So, scholars and commentators are required not to repeat these numbers to avoid rendering it further unquestioned legitimacy (Bose, 2011). Nevertheless, here comes the significance of the role of media in war whose neutral reporting can assist in knowing the objective facts prevailing during the conflict.

Media and War

During any war or crisis, media becomes an essential source to provide objective and neutral information (Ryan, 2009). The reason attributed to it is that accurate and truthful information assists in countering the negative propaganda and jingoistic approach of war-mongers (Iqbal &

Hussain, 2018). Importantly, media reporting could become a beneficial source in putting the house in order and also, assist in peaceful settlement of dispute and saving of precious lives. However, objective and neutral reporting is a matter of far dream in a world where realism is the dominant discourse (Carruthers, 2001). The matter of fact is that journalism becomes a challenging task when it confronts with patriotic and nationalistic sentiments during the course of conflict (Allan & Zelizer, 2004).

Importantly, the pathologically biased reporting in mainstream media is not a new phenomenon and in fact, it could be observed across time and space. The great powers like the US and Britain used media as a propaganda tool in achieving their respective economic and strategic interests during peace as well as in war times (Jenks, 2006). The role of media in India-Pakistan 1971 war is no exception to this (Bose, 2011). There is a dire need to critically examine the nature of information presented in media during the course of conflict for the comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study.

Nevertheless, in ideal terms, the media strategies were required to be based in supreme ethical values of objectivism and truthfulness during the course of Indo-Pak 1971 conflict and in fact, if this approach was exercised, it could have saved the lives of many. However, the patterns of patriotism, political interests and lack of professionalism on part of media overwhelmed the human cost. The media on all levels portrayed the facts with alarming diversity that created a sense of ambiguous illusory understanding of the exact situation which prevailed in the East Pakistan. It is maintained that media reporting by the parties involved in the conflict including India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, took extreme positions based in their respective nationalistic goals. More importantly, the authenticity and reliability of

news presented in the international media also lacked to fulfill the objective standards of professional journalism (Bose, 2011). In this context, the following part of this section explains the role of Pakistani, Indian together with Mukti Bahini and international media, to get the objective facts with respect to 1971 conflict.

Role of Pakistani Media

Media is considered to be an important player in ensuring national security in any country (Diri & Ekiye, 2019). Nevertheless, Media freedom lacks consistency in Pakistan; in fact, various governments used various means to control it (Siraj, 2009). In fact, Pakistani leadership observed that it failed to counter Indian media propaganda during the crises situations. General Musharraf went for deregulation of media and also initiated privatization that subsequently, launched entertainment and news channels (Kumar and Smetko, 2018). Media in Pakistan emerged as a significant social institution that started to play its role in nation-building and generating the culture of debate and discussion on diversified topics including national security. Importantly, Major General Asif Ghafoor, ex-Director-General, Inter-Service Public Relations (ISPR) Pakistan, stated in a press conference that if Pakistan's media had been as independent in 1971 as it is today, the country might not have collapsed. He further elaborated that Pakistani media underwent transformation and is guiding the army in current times (Azad, 2019). It is quite appropriate statement because as soon as the military operation in East Pakistan began, the media was completely brought under government control. It is maintained that Information ministry instructed the media agencies that news regarding the killing of non-Bengalis at the hand of insurgents are not to be reported in West Pakistan as it could result in revolt leading to severe consequences in this part of the country. The media complied on it faithfully

and in this regard, all sort of news regarding violence was blackout in West Pakistan, except, the approved content in line with the government policies (Aziz, 1974).

Critical analysis suggests that Pakistani media adopted three types of discursive strategies to present the situation in India-Pakistan 1971 war. Firstly, the media from the initiation of the conflict indoctrinated its audience that Pakistan is winning the battle against mad enemy having expansionist designs. Secondly, the press in West Pakistan used religion as an ideological tool against Indian offensive strategy. Thirdly, in the end days of war, when Indian victory was much imminent, the press in West Pakistan avoided to portray Pakistan as a loser and India as winner in the conflict. Instead, it preached the patterns of self-control, moderation and determination in dealing the new realities and praised the heroic fight of soldiers against the evil (Iqbal & Hussain, 2018).

Sarmila Bose asserts that in the midst of *Operation Search Light*, the Pakistani authorities expelled journalists from East Pakistan that hampered the process of first hand reporting and were forced to report news stories from India (Bose, 2012). This shaped the nature of conflict in two-way. Firstly, it was hard for international media to get the real situation on ground leading to perception that Pakistani authorities are trying to hide something abnormal happening in the East Pakistan. Secondly, international media got stationed in India and had to rely on secondary sources, in fact, the uprightness of these sources are still a big question mark in itself. The matter of fact is that Pakistan's government decision to control media hampered the process of dissemination of objective and neutral facts to the audience and in fact, it has cost Pakistan a lot with respect to blame of 'genocide'.

Role of Indian and Mukti Bahini Media

Indian politicians are involved in using media to inculcate hatred and provoke violence in the masses (Hutchison et al., 2016). It is an open secret that India massively use propaganda tactic to achieve its strategic interest and is much evident in shape of media campaigns to demonize Kashmiri freedom struggle (Rasool & Pasha, 2018). In fact, real manifestation of Indian state policy is much evident with respect to the case of East Pakistan when it implemented grand strategy that included construction of discourse of deprivation to build foundation for separatism, using media for propagating narrative against the unity of Pakistan, installing and supporting political parties to reject *Two Nation Theory*, coercive diplomacy against Pakistan's policy towards East Pakistan, creating refugee crisis to legitimize its illegal actions and lastly but most lethally, creation of Mukti Bahini for purpose of brutal end to the conflict (Ahmad, 2016).

One of the Indian military officials confidently proclaimed that the use of propaganda has significantly assisted in construction of desired narrative and further highlighted the fact in satirical manner that a Mukti Bahini fighter, dressed in a lungi with a weapon in hand is an ideal heated character for media to believe their fictitious stories (Singh, 2011). However, it is important to mention here that Indian media strategically avoided becoming a direct party to the conflict during the civil strife in the East Pakistan. Indeed, Indian government was using huge resources to support Bengali nationalists' government in exile and further, assisted in establishing radio station for propagation of their ideology but controlled its own national media during the crisis. It is maintained that Indian government even instructed media to avoid overt support of Awami League in order to prevent any labeling from Pakistan and additionally, the reason for it was that this could also weaken Sheikh Mujib position on

the negotiation table with the West Pakistan leadership (Sisson & Rose, 1990). Indian government very prudently implemented a multi-dimensional strategy that of course included the use of media in securing its strategic objectives. The role of Indian government and military establishment in the liberation of Bangladesh is evident from a recent confession by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi on June 10, 2015, who expressed pride in India's role in supporting Mukti Bahini during the 1971 civil war in East Pakistan (Khan, 2015).

It was on April 14, 1971, when Mukti Bahini under the leadership of Sheikh Mujib and with the support of Indian government announced their government in exile and named it, 'Mujib Nagar'. Moreover, Indian Intelligence Agency, Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) established Bangladesh radio *Free Bengal Betal Kendra* for the propaganda purpose (Ahmad, 2017). Mukti Bahini with the assistance of India very articulately used propaganda tactic in the domestic as well as international news to construct a narrative of massive killings committed by Pakistani army. The Bengali nationalists used visual arts for projecting their discourse. In this regard, one of the significant evidence was cartoon sketching of Pakistani leadership and its army officials, depicting them as a villain that are involved in inhuman acts. The objective was demonization of West Pakistan irrespective of the evidence (Bose, 2011).

Role of International Media

The story titling "Genocide" published in *Sunday Times* on June 13, 1971 (Mascarenhas, 1971), reported by a Pakistani journalist, Anthony Mascarenhas, drastically impacted the narrative in international media. Mascarenhas along with few other journalists visited East Pakistan on a Pakistani state sponsored trip that was scheduled in the last week of April. The objective of the visit was to reveal the facts to the world in order to counter the media war launched by Bangladeshi

government in exile along with its network across the globe (Raghavan, 2013). Mascarenhas, after fleeing from Pakistan to United Kingdom through Afghanistan, severely criticized Pakistan army for the military operation in the East Pakistan (Bose, 2011).

In the aftermath, International media provided intensive coverage to East Pakistan crisis. In this regard, the Britain electronic and print media was at the forefront. British print media including *The Times*, *The Sunday Times*, *The Sun*, the *Daily Mirror*, the weekly *New Statesman*, *The Economist*, *The Daily Express*, *The Spectator*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Guardian*, *The Observer*, the *Financial Times* and *Daily Express*, have given significant amount of space to the conflict. In this regard, many numbers of editorials were published in British print media that highlights the significant nature of treatment given to the conflict, for instance, *The Daily Telegraph* 39, *The Guardian* 37, *The Times* 29, *The Observer* 15 and the *Financial Times* 13. While, British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) dedicated almost eight episodes of its famous program *Panorama* to discuss the situation in the South Asian region (Rashid, 2007). It is pertinent to mention here that British media majorly targeted Pakistan's army military operation and used sensational headlines to portray the brutalities,¹³ however, it didn't uncovered the atrocities committed by the Mukti Bahini forces (Bose, 2011; D' D'Costa, 2001; Bose, 2011) that were covertly supported by India (Sagan & Waltz, 2002; Ganguly, 2015).

¹³See for example, "The Slaughter in East Pakistan," *The Times*, (April 3, 1971), "Bengal's Suffering Millions," *The Times*, (June 1, 1971), "A Massacre in Pakistan," *The Guardian*, (March 31, 1971), "Unity at Gunpoint," *The Economist*, (April 3, 1971), "The Blood of Bangladesh," *New Statesman*, (April 16, 1971), "Another Final Solution," *The Spectator*, (June 19, 1971), "For God's Sake Let Us Get a Move On," *The Sun*, (June 7, 1971) etc.

Critical analysis suggests that the international media is not evenly reliable source to understand the complexity of the conflict. Where, the parties to the conflict, i.e., India, Pakistan and Bangladesh are involved in deliberate propaganda campaign but the foreigner media reports do demand critical scrutiny. One of the significant examples is shared by Sarmila Bose in context of the well-known report that was published in *The Sunday Times*, reported by Anthony Mascarenhas. The author maintained that Mascarenhas described eye-witnessed brutal assassination of a Bengali Hindu in Camilla at the hand of military personnel which does reflect an indication of fierce nature of military operation. However, his explanation of Pakistan's army raid that occurred on 25th and 26th of March on a Hindu dominated area of Shankharipara located in old Dhaka which indeed was not an eye-witnessed account is written without any referential evidence and further Mascarenhas narration of event is observed to be incorrect in accordance with the data collected through in-depth interviews that were conducted with the survivors of the Shankharipara (Bose, 2011).

One of the most serious as well as confusing allegations is the number of Bengalis, killed in the 1971 conflict. Western academia and media without objective verification of the facts repeatedly claimed the number to be 3 million, importantly; no source of evidence in shape of report or authentic document is available for the charges (Bose, 2011). Significantly, even reliable reports are extensively misrepresented by the conflicting parties. In this regard, it is pertinent to mention that Mascarenhas severe criticism of Pakistan's army is highly publicized but very less number of people knows that in the same very article he has also highlighted the horrific massacres committed by Bengali nationalists, with similar number of killings allegedly committed by army (Bose, 2011). In fact, huge gap between the claims and reality seems

clearly to be a distortion of facts that ultimately led to internalization of hatred among masses and loss of precious lives.

Nevertheless, there were few voices of dissent in international media who did raise questions regarding the number of deaths. In this regard, a report titled *The Missing Millions* published on June 6, 1972 in *The Guardian* highlighted that, "*This figure of three million deaths, which Sheikh Mujib has repeated several times since he returned to Bangladesh in early January, has been carried uncritically by the world press. Though, repetition of such a claim gains a validity of its own and gradually evolves from assertion to fact needing no attribution. My judgement based in numerous trips to Bangladesh and extensive discussion with many people at the village level as well as in the government, is that the three million death figure is an exaggeration so gross to be absurd*" (Drummond, 1972).

Nevertheless, Sheikh Mujib publicly announced the figure on January 10, 1972, when he returned to Bangladesh from the West Pakistan. The author further argued that Sheikh Mujib was sharing his same very opinion in an interview to David Frost, a British broadcaster at his house in Dhaka that was aired on January 18, 1971 from New York and made an astonishing dramatic claim that the building (his house) in which the interview is being conducted was destroyed by the Pakistani army (Chowdhury, 1996). Significantly, no one verified the authenticity of information what Sheikh Mujib expressed regarding the destruction of his house but the matter of fact is that same self-fabricated information reached-out to the world, portraying the hard handed brutalities of Pakistani army. Significantly, media also quoted Sheikh Mujib for the figure of one million killings of Bengali people as well (Chowdhury, *Behind the Myth*,⁷) that in fact, creates serious ambiguity with respect to the actual number of deaths during the 1971 in

particular and reliability of Sheikh Mujib's political statements in general.

Nevertheless, there are instances when international media did reported Indian atrocities during 1971 war that countered Indian and Mukti Bahini maligning propaganda campaign. One of the significant stories was Bangladeshi allegation on Pakistani armed forces for the bombing of orphanage in the centre of Dhaka; however in reality, the Indian Air Force (IAF) bombed the orphanage building. The matter of fact is that IAF conducted numerous air sorties that resulted in loss of civilian lives but the Bengali nationalists blamed Pakistan armed forces for it, to get their desired goal. Importantly, international media did cover some of these Indian atrocities (Bose, 2011), however, it didn't assist in deconstructing the label that was inflicted upon Pakistan through propaganda, to be the perpetrator of the heinous acts, it had never committed. Significantly, one of the examples of politically motivated journalism is the case of massacre in Jessore, where Mukti Bahini forces killed non-Bengalis and afterwards, shared photographs of the victims with international media by quoting it to be the deadly act of Pakistan army. Disastrously, the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* violated all ethics of professionalism by printing images on the front pages without verification of the data and blamed Pakistan for it. The author further asserted that sources in East Pakistan might be part of this improvised distorted reporting (Bose, 2012).

In the aftermath of war, few journalists of Western media had suspiciously looked into the claims that Pakistan army has killed millions of non-combatants during the conflict (Drummond, 1972). Over time, few scholars raised questions on such sort of assertive claims (Sisson and Rose, 1990; Chowdhury, 1996; Karim, 2005); however, still significant amount of research based in rigorous rules and regulations of social science is required to

be undertaken to uncover the hidden facts. Nevertheless, few questioning voices in the Western media who didn't take things for granted seems to be sunken deep in to the cold water under the huge bulk of icebergs like material imitating the accusations of genocide; intellectual figures of dissent were not accommodated in the mainstream.

Hence, like other parties in the conflict who remained busy in distortion of facts based in nationalism, the international media is also not a sound source for correct dissemination of information to the audiences (Bose, 2011). In 1971 war, India in collaboration with Bengali nationalists acted very craftily to construct a narrative against Pakistan's army in media to malign Pakistani leadership and blamed them to be allegedly involved in brutal tactics. In this regard, international media without verification for correctness and additionally, with substantial exaggeration published the stories gullibly and those stories could be observed to be part of long list of atrocities that are believed to be committed by Pakistan army in Dhaka (Sisson and Rose, 1990). It is not to say that brutal violence was not the reality in the wake of military operations but the matter of fact is that all parties to the conflict were involved in such heinous acts. However, it was Pakistan army who was selectively targeted and blamed in international media for such violent acts and significantly, it has given less or no attention to Mukti Bahini atrocities (Bose, 2011; D'Costa, 2001; Bose, 2011).

Hence, the defensive approach of Pakistan's army towards the happening of violent events and unsubstantiated sensationalism observed in the literature that covered 1971 conflict together with unhealthy *victim culture* on part of pro-liberation activists hampered the undertaking of systematic study to understand real facts of conflict (Bose, 2005). Importantly, the innocent victims of brutal atrocities inflicted upon by all parties involved in the conflict; based in their respective media-myths and self-justifications

to violent behaviours, still demands objective finding of the facts. This study strongly recommends the conduct of research study by applying rigorous rules and regulations of social science to explore the untold hidden truths.

Conclusion

Media plays crucial role in communicating information to public and this function becomes all the more important when it is about the events connected to a crisis/war situation. In this regard, media is expected to be professional, fair and neutral. However, journalists and media groups commonly assume the role of agenda setting in favour of their state when it is involved in a conflict with another state. The reasons for this range from nationalist sentiments to political manipulations and organizational/personal interests. This study finds out that like the complex nature of the 1971 India-Pakistan war, the objective of obtaining neutral and reliable information about the conflict remained a complex phenomenon. Further, it concludes that Pakistan's decision of expelling international media out of East Pakistan and censoring media in West Pakistan made access to reality inaccessible. Indeed, Pakistan's media strategy proved to be a disaster for the state. The absence of neutral reportage on the war events gave Mukti Bahini and India an opportunity to manipulate the situation in favour of their propaganda regarding the implication of Pakistan's security forces in massacre.

Bengali nationalists backed by India used media as a tool to spread propaganda against Pakistani leadership and military. The Indian government strategically controlled its media to avoid overt support for Sheikh Mujib and his political party as a tactic to negate the popular perception regarding India's overwhelming support for Bengali nationalists in their propaganda campaign. Notably, international media ousted from East Pakistan operated from India and had to rely on

secondary sources of information generated by India and the Bengali nationalists. Consequently, international media became gullible to stories sourced from just one party to the conflict. This planned framing of information produced a particular narrative that strongly influenced the outcome of the conflict. The unfounded media sensation played a critical role in building a narrative against a tacitly defensive Pakistan. In this regard, the media selectively targeted Pakistan's army for its operations and, contrarily, ignored the atrocities committed by the Bengali nationalists with the Indian backing. Above all, the narrative shaped by media completely ignored Pakistan's sovereign right to territorial integrity that India had been threatening since its creation.

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