

INDO-PAK RELATIONS AND PAKISTANI MEDIA

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Abstract

Pakistan and India, the two largest nations of South Asia are continuously in a war state from the very first day of their separation. Several wars have been fought between the two countries. But at the same time, efforts have been made for good bilateral relations. The two countries spend a huge budget on defence which could be otherwise utilized for the betterment of their people. Pakistani media has played a great role in establishing bilateral relations between the two countries. This study is aimed to investigate the agenda setting role of Pakistani media regarding the issue of Indo-Pak relations. It was found that the Pakistani media has played a positive role in creating good bilateral relations between the two countries.

Introduction

Being the two largest countries of South Asia, India and Pakistan are linked with several political, geographic, cultural, and economic links. However, diplomatic relations between the two states are defined by numerous military conflicts and territorial disputes. Historically, almost the whole geographic area of the two countries came under direct control of Britain in the late 18th century and remained its part for almost 150 years. Majority of the population of this region were either Hindu or Muslim.

The Muslim League, headed by Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, proposed the Two Nation Theory in the early 20th century. According to the theory, Muslims and others shared little in common, and British India should be divided into two separate countries, one for the Muslims and the other for the Hindu majority, which he feared would suppress the Muslim minority. The Partition of India in 1947 created two large countries independent from Britain: Pakistan as two wings in the East and West separated by India in the middle. Soon after Independence, a great number of

conflicts emerged between India and Pakistan. The war in 1971 resulted in another partition of Pakistan. The eastern wing was separated and emerged as a new country named Bangladesh, while the western wing continued as Pakistan.

History of Conflicts

Unluckily, the history of the both countries is full of conflicts. The conflicts started right from the first day of the creation (or separation) of the two countries. Millions of Muslims were killed by either Hindus or by Sikhs during their migration from India to Pakistan. The conflict of Junagarh was perhaps the first dispute between the two new countries when the Muslim ruler of the state announced to be a part of Pakistan but India became hurdle and the state was included in India. Kashmir dispute is the biggest bone of contention between the two countries. Being the largely Muslim dominated area it should had been included in Pakistan but India got its control against the will of the people. The problem is still unresolved even after a period of 63 years.

Pakistan maintains Kashmiris' rights to self-determination through a plebiscite in accordance with an earlier Indian statement and a UN resolution. Pakistan also indicates to India's failure of not understanding its own political logic and applying it to Kashmir, by taking their opinion on the case of the accession of Junagadh as an example (that the Hindu majority state should have gone to India even though it had a Muslim ruler), that Kashmir should also rightfully and legally have become a part of Pakistan since majority of the people were Muslim, even though they had a Hindu ruler. Pakistan also states that at least, the promised plebiscite should be allowed to decide the fate of the Kashmiri people.

The two countries fought several wars including the war of 1965 and 1971. As a result of the 1971 war, the eastern part of Pakistan was separated. It was all because of the Indian intervention and conspiracies against Pakistan. In the war, the Pakistani army fell to India, forcing the independence of East Pakistan, which separated and became Bangladesh. The Pakistani military, being more than a

thousand kilometer away from its base and surrounded by enemies, was forced to give in.

Since the 1971 war, Pakistan and India have made only slow progress towards the normalization of relations. In July 1972, Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Pakistani President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto met in India. They signed the Simla Agreement, by which India would return all Pakistani personnel (over 90,000) and captured territory in the west, and the two countries would “settle their differences by peaceful means through bilateral negotiations.” According to Budania (1995), diplomatic and trade relations between the two countries were re-established in 1976.¹

Towards Bilateral Relations

Friends can be changed but neighbors can't. The countries realize that an atmosphere of tension and a race of weapons is not a solution of their problems. Therefore several efforts have been made to normalize the relations between India and Pakistan. Some of the international powers including the US have also played their role in this regard. In December 1988, Prime Ministers Benazir Bhutto and Rajiv Gandhi concluded a pact not to attack each other's nuclear facilities. Agreements on cultural exchanges and civil aviation were also initiated.

In 1997, high-level Indo-Pakistan talks were started after a time of three-year. The Prime Ministers of Pakistan and India met twice and the foreign secretaries conducted three rounds of talks. In June 1997, the foreign secretaries identified eight “outstanding issues” around which continuing talks would be focused. The dispute over the status of Kashmir, an issue since Independence, remained the major problem in their dialogue. India maintains that the entire former princely state is an integral part of India, while Pakistan insists that UN resolutions calling for self-determination of the people of the state must be taken into account.

When Manmohan Singh became the Prime Minister of India the Punjab Provincial Government declared it would develop Gah, his place of birth, as a model village in his honor and name a school

after him.² There is also a village in India named Pakistan, despite occasional pressure over the years to change its name the villagers always resisted.³

In October 2005 Pakistan suffered a huge earthquake and it was a time of great difficulty for Pakistan. At this moment of trouble and difficulty India offered a great help to Pakistan. Indian and Pakistani High Commissioners consulted with one another regarding cooperation in relief work. India sent 25 tonnes of relief material to Pakistan including food, blankets and medicine. On October 12, an Ilyushin-76 cargo plane ferried across seven truckloads (about 82 tons) of army medicines, 15,000 blankets and 50 tents and returned to New Delhi.⁴

The efforts for the bilateral relations between the two countries again started in 2004. There were two main reasons for this: warming of relations between New Delhi and Islamabad which consequently lead to a ceasefire between the two countries in 2003 and the fencing of the Line of Control (LOC) being carried out by the Indian Army. In this year, the two countries also agreed upon decreasing the number of troops present in the region. Furthermore, Cricket Diplomacy was also started and it played a significant role in bringing the two nations closer to each other. Five one-day matches were played in the Indo-Pak series from March 14 to April 17, 2004 in different cities of Pakistan. A large number of Indian citizens including the daughter of the Founder of Pakistan visited Pakistan to watch these matches. Some media researchers and University Professors from India and Pakistan conducted a joint research study to analyze the content of the newspaper coverage of some of the leading newspapers of India and Pakistan Their study of published in the African journal of International Affairs Nigeria in 2006 under the title: *Role of Sports in International Relations: A Cross Cultural Study of Reflections of Sentiments through Newspapers*". The authors found that the newspapers of the both countries played a pivotal role in bringing the people of the two nations closer to each other.⁵ Both India and Pakistan have launched several mutual confidence-building measures to ease tensions between the two. These include more high-level talks, easing visa restrictions, and restarting of cricket matches between the two. The

new bus service between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad has also helped bring the two sides closer. Trade activities including import and export of different commodities and food items between the two countries has also increased the trade relations. Both countries have also decided to co-operate on economic fronts.

Pakistan also took some measures to show its passion for the good relations with India. On March 3, 2008, an Indian spy Kashmir Singh held in Pakistani prisons since 1975 was released unconditionally by Pakistan to improve relations between the two countries.⁶

With the help of some British tourists a campaign was launched in 2006 which was named as “Friends Without Borders”. The idea was that Indian and Pakistani children would write friendly letters to each other. The idea was so successful in both countries that the organization found it “impossible to keep up”. The World’s Largest Love Letter was recently sent from India to Pakistan.⁷

Mumbai Attack 2008

The Mumbai attack in 2008 was a big event in India which again resulted in adverse relations. It was a terrorists attack on Taj hotel in Mumbai in which over 173 people were killed and 308 persons were wounded. India blamed the Lashkar-e-Taiba, a Pakistan-based militant group, for planning and executing the attacks. Islamabad resisted the claims and demanded evidence. India provided evidence in the form of interrogations, weapons, candy wrappers, Pakistani brand milk packets, and telephone sets.⁸ The only arrested terrorist Ajmal Qasab has been convicted by the Indian court. Pakistan has assured several times that as a state, it has nothing to do with the attacks. On the other hand, India is continuously blaming Pakistan for Mumbai attacks. The Indian government has given a long list of their “wanted persons” to the government of Pakistan and demanded to hand over these persons to them for investigation. The Pakistan government is committed to conduct investigation at its own but it will not handover its any citizen to some other country for so-called investigation. According to some media reports, the Pakistan ambassador in New Delhi has

received threats of death from some group of extremist Hindus called as “Anti- Terrorist group”.⁹ The group threatened the all Pakistanis living on the land of India to leave the country or otherwise to be ready for death.

Some of the international scholars consider India as a failed state that could not deliver peace and security to its citizens. The reports of the international agencies (including Transparency International) on the state of human rights in India are a big proof in this regard. The leading Indian journalist admitted this fact in these words in his article titled as “The Weave of India”, “In India all citizens were promised justice, liberty and fraternity. It is a long story of failures in many ways. Where the republic has failed the most is in the domain of pluralism. Muslims want to join the mainstream but are kept away. The narrow-mindedness of the Hindu community is at fault”.¹⁰

One of the sensitive points is that both India and Pakistan are atomic powers and a war between them can lead to a major world disaster which must be avoided at any cost. Yet, the Pakistani people are of two opinions about relations with India. One opinion is in favor of bilateral relations to make the region safe for the future generations and to reduce defence budgets for the prosperity of the people. But the other people don't accept these arguments saying that India can't be our friend. India is our enemy forever and we should not trust on the enemy. This view point is supported by most of the religious political parties of Pakistan. The interesting thing is that the largest media group of Pakistan Jang group is supporting the first point of view and they have launched a campaign along with Hindustan Times named as “Aman Ki Asha”. But the other big media group Nawa-i-Waqt group is not only supporting but leading the other point of view which is against the bilateral relations. Their Urdu and English newspapers and TV channel are continuously producing content against India.

No doubt, Pakistan is facing a number of internal and external problems including the world wide issue of terrorism but at the same time it is a country of brave, bold and strong people who love their country and have courage to sacrifice their lives in

defending boundaries of their motherland. At the same time, Pakistanis are a peaceful nation and they want to establish peace and stability in the region. A Pakistan based freelance journalist Yousaf Alamgirian stated that despite of all the Indian conspiracies, battles and wars against Pakistan during the last sixty years, the people and the governments of Pakistan desired their wish to establish peace in the region and to develop good relations with the neighboring countries especially with India. Pakistan has played a tremendous role in promoting good bilateral relations with India in different eras.¹¹ The launching of Dosti Bus Service from Lahore to Delhi, release of hundreds of Indian prisoners from Pakistani jails especially the release of an Indian spy Kashmir Singh, official talks with Indian authorities to resolve different issues, beginning of trade with India, were some of the steps taken by the Pakistani governments to establish good relations with India.

Previous Research

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of Pakistani media in Indo-Pak relations. Today, we are living in a global village where media is an integral part of the society. People and the governments are influenced by media in making opinions and decisions. As compared to Indian media, the Pakistani media has played a much positive role in promoting bilateral relations. A study was conducted jointly by the Indian and Pakistani scholars in 2004 in this regard and was published in the African Journal of International Affairs and Development Nigeria. The study was conducted during the cricket match series between India and Pakistan held during March and April 2004 and the content of the major newspapers of the both countries was analyzed. It was also found in the results of the research study that media can play a vital role in bringing the two nations closer to each other.¹²

Significance of the Study

The role of media and especially, print media has been accepted throughout the globe. We can't live without media. We perceive the picture of the world, as the media present to us. We have some specific pictures of the world issues in our minds because

of media. This study has been designed to investigate whether and to what extent Pakistani print media play its role to influence public opinion regarding the issue of the Indo-Pak relations. The study also focuses on the role of Pakistani print media in promoting bilateral relations.

About this Study

The purpose of this research project was to investigate the relationship between the public and print media agendas on the issue of Indo-Pak relations. Content analysis as well as the survey research was adopted for this study. Content of the two newspapers, daily Jang Rawalpindi and daily Dawn Islamabad was analyzed for this study for one year. (From May 1st 2007 to April 30th 2008). This time period is considered as some of the best time for bilateral relations. The reason for the selection of these newspapers is that the former one is the largest widely circulated newspaper of Urdu in Pakistan while the later one is the largest widely circulated English daily of the country. Both newspapers have a strong professional reputation covering almost all of the important issues of the country as well as the important issues of the world. They have engaged a sufficient number of highly qualified senior and professional journalists in their organizational structures. The main reason for the time period is that the issue of the study remained dominant in the Pakistani print media almost constantly throughout the period of the research study. The content analysis of the front and back pages of the newspapers was done on the alternate days. The content analysis of the daily Dawn was conducted of the newspapers published on even dates (2, 4 6, etc.) and the content of the daily Jang was analyzed on the odd dates (1, 3, 5, etc.). Hence the content of a total number of 182 copies of daily Dawn and 183 newspapers of daily Jang was analyzed thoroughly and the news on the issues of the study were counted and their length was measured in centimeters per column.

Variables of the Content Analysis

- **Frequency and Length.** News stories published about the issue of the study on the front and back pages of the

sample newspapers were counted and their length was measured in centimeters per column.

- **Slant.** The slant of the news stories published about the issues was also analyzed in terms of favorable, unfavorable and neutral. The slant was measured by analyzing the coding unit of analysis that is paragraph.
- **Frame.** It means how a news story was framed. Whether it was depicting India as our friend or foe or neutral etc? The frames of the news stories were measured in terms of friend, foe, and neutral. These were measured on the basis of the contextual unit because the whole news story was a contextual unit.
- **Source.** The source of the news stories was also recorded as official, unofficial and others etc. This variable was included because of the vital role of the gatekeepers in the news making process.
- **Placement.** The placement is also a very important factor in agenda setting study. It means where the news story was placed in the newspaper. In this study, the placement was divided into four categories. These are as under:
 - Front Page upper half
 - Front Page lower half
 - Back Page upper half
 - Back Page lower half

The paragraphs of the news stories were the coding unit of the content analysis. These were counted in terms of favorable, unfavorable and neutral. The whole news story was the contextual unit of analysis in this study and frames were measured on the basis of this unit. Framing was measured through contextual units of analyses.

A survey of three hundred (300) regular readers of these newspapers (150 readers of each newspaper) was conducted in Islamabad. The list of the regular subscribers was obtained from the management of these newspapers. The sample of 300 respondents was selected equally among the seventeen residential sectors of Islamabad. Although the sample was selected from Islamabad and

not from the other areas of the country but even then it represents the trend of the whole country. The residents of this city have come from nooks and corners of the country and they virtually represent the population of the whole country. Keeping in view this fact, it can be said that to a greater extent, the sample of the study represents the newspaper readership of the whole country. The results of the survey research were then compared with the results of the content analysis.

Variables of Survey Research

- **Source of Information.** The respondents were asked to tell the most important source of information about the issue of Indo-Pak relations. The options were given among print media, electronic media, interpersonal channels and any other source of information.
- **Formation of Opinion.** Formation of opinion of the newspapers' readers was measured through a question and its results were correlated with the slant of the newspaper coverage.
- **Discussions with Family and Friends.** This is our every day experience that we discuss the important issues of the day with our family members, colleagues and friends. The respondents were asked whether and to what extent they discussed the issue of Indo-Pak relations with their family, friends and colleagues.

Findings of the Study

Frequency of the News Stories Published. During the study period of one year the daily Jang published 52 news stories on its front and back pages about the issue of Indo-Pak relations while the daily Dawn donated the number one coverage to the issue by publishing 104 news stories on its front and back pages during the period of one year (on alternate days).

Length of the News Stories. The space (length) given to the news stories about the issues of the study was measured in centimeters per column. The normal width of a column in the

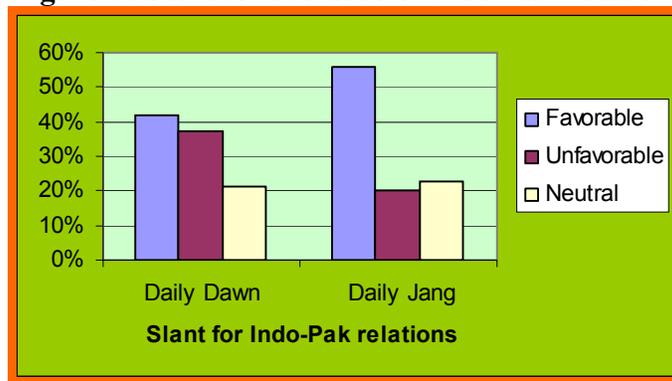
Pakistani newspapers is four centimeters. This is important to mention here that the visual coverage of the issues in shape of pictures was also included in the measurement of the length of the news stories. The daily Jang donated a space of 1013 centimeters column to the issue of Indo-Pak relations while the issue got coverage of 2451 centimeters column in the daily Dawn.

Slant for the issue of Indo-Pak Relations

The issue of the Indo-Pak relations always remained an important topic in the country for several reasons. Two wars and several battles have been fought between the two countries. Now the Pakistani media are playing their role to change enmity into good relations. The figure 1 is evident for this struggle.

As the figure shows, the daily Dawn gave 42 percent slant in favor of the bilateral relations, 37 percent coverage for the slant unfavorable for the relations while 21 percent news coverage was found as neutral. The daily Jang donated its 56 percent slant in favor of the bilateral relations, only 20 percent slant against the Indo-Pak relations while its 24 percent coverage was neutral.

Figure 1: Slant for the issue of Indo-Pak relations



Most of the news stories favorable for the bilateral relations were about the exchange of delegations, meetings of the officials to discuss the issues, exchange of prisoners, statements of the politicians and ministers for good relations, traveling facilities, visa relaxation etc. The negative news were about the issue of Kashmir,

threats to each others, killing of the prisoners, blaming of terrorist activities and bomb explosions on each other, etc.

Framing of the Indo-Pak Relations

Regarding the framing of the issue of the Indo-Pak relations, the Dawn published 48 news stories giving India a frame of friend while it was framed as foe and enemy in 56 news items published in the front and back pages during the year of the study. On the other hand, the daily Jang published 36 news items in the frame of friend and 16 news items portrayed India as foe. On the basis of this finding, it can be said that the daily Jang has a tilt towards bilateral relations with India.

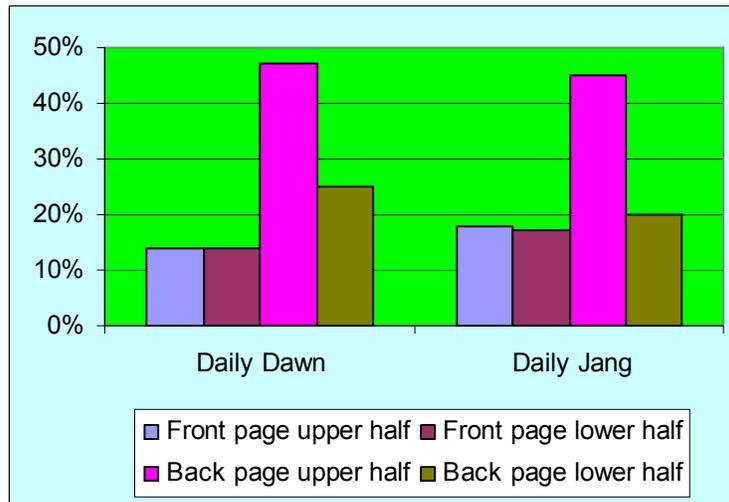
News Source

The newspapers relied heavily on the official sources for the coverage of the issue of the Indo-Pak relations. The Dawn published 85 news items about this issue received from the official sources while it accepted only 16 news stories for publication based on the information received from the unofficial sources. However, three news items were received from other sources. The daily Jang published 30 news items received from official sources and 15 news items received from unofficial sources on the issue of the Indo-Pak relations. The newspaper published seven news items received from other sources including analyses and media reports etc.

Placement of the News Stories on the Issue of Indo – Pak Relations

The figure 2 elaborates the placement of the news items relating to the coverage of the issue of the Indo-Pak relations. Here, it seems a great similarity in the coverage patterns of the two newspapers. The Dawn and the Jang published 14 and 18 percent news items about the issue on their front page upper half and 14 and 17 percent news about the issue on the lower half part of their front pages respectively.

Figure 2: Placement of the news stories on the issue of Indo-Pak relations



The Dawn published 47 percent news stories about the issue of the Indo-Pak relations on the upper half portion of its back page while the Jang donated 45 percent space of the total coverage of the issue on the same position. There is only a slight difference in the coverage pattern on the lower half portion of the back page where the Dawn published 25 percent news items about the issue while the Jang published 20 percent news on the issue under study.

In other words, the Dawn published 28 percent news items about the issue on its front page and 72 percent items on the back page while the Jang published 35 percent news stories on its front page and 65 percent news items on its back page about the issue of the Indo-Pak relations.

Public Opinion about the Issue of Indo-Pak Relations

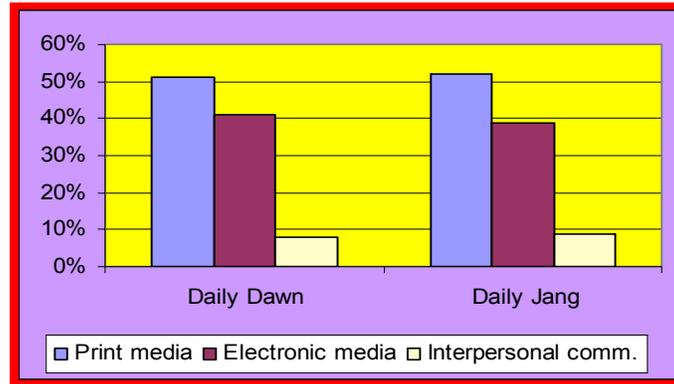
A great similarity can be seen among the readers of the two newspapers. Fifty two percent readers of the Dawn and 54 percent readers of the Jang were found in favor of the Indo-Pak relations while 27 percent readers of Dawn and 35 percent readers of Jang were found as against the bilateral relations. They might have a number of reservations in this regard. Twenty one percent readers of

the Dawn and eleven percent readers of the Jang were found unclear about the issue of the Indo-Pak relations. These results strongly correlate with the results of the content analysis of the slant about this issue which supports the hypothesis of this study. During the survey, some of the respondents suggested that we should develop good relations with India but with certain conditions including the solution of the Kashmir issue.

Source of Information for the Newspaper Readers

During the survey of the newspaper readers, the respondents were asked about the most important source of information about the issue of the study. The majority of the readers of both of the newspapers termed the print media as the major source of information for their information about the issue of the Indo-Pak relations. 51 percent readers of the Dawn and 52 percent readers of the Jang stated the print media as the most important source of communication. However, 41 percent readers of the Dawn and 39 percent readers of the Jang reported electronic media as the most important source of information. Some eight percent readers of the Dawn and nine percent readers of the Jang informed that the interpersonal communication was the major source of information for them regarding the issue of the Indo-Pak relations.

Figure 3: Source of Information for the newspaper readers about the issue of Indo-Pak relations



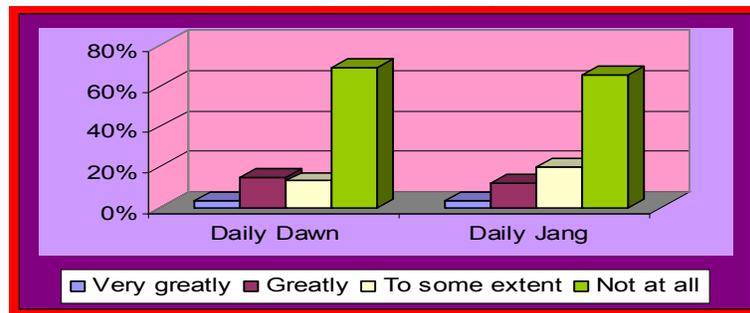
It is clear that there is a minor difference between the print and the electronic media as the most important source of

information about the issue of the Indo-Pak relations. The figure 3 elaborates the responses of the respondents regarding their source of information about the issue of the Indo-Pak relations.

Discussion with Family and Friends regarding the Issue of Indo-Pak Relations

One of the important things about this study is that the survey of the newspaper readers was conducted in May 2008, almost six months before the incident of the Mumbai attacks. Therefore the results about the component of discussion with other people may be greatly different from today's situation. However, at the time of the survey research, the majority of the respondents said that they did not discuss the issue of the Indo-Pak relations with their friends, family members and colleagues. As the figure 4 elaborates, 69 percent readers of the Dawn and 65 percent readers of the Jang stated that they did not discuss this issue at all with their friends, family members and colleagues. However, 13 percent readers of the earlier newspaper and 20 percent readers of the later one said that they discussed this issue with these people to some extent. Fifteen percent readers of the Dawn and 12 percent readers of the Jang stated that they discuss this issue greatly and only three percent readers of the both newspapers said that they discuss the issue of the Indo-Pak relations very greatly with their friends, family members and colleagues.

Figure 4: Discussion with family and friends regarding the issue of Indo-Pak relations



The issue of the Indo-Pak relations has become a hot issue of discussion after the Mumbai attacks and now the it has become the

issue of the most widely discussion among the people of the country. It may be due to danger of a possible atomic war between the two countries.

Conclusion

The Pakistani nation and the Pakistani media are struggling for good bilateral relations with India on equality basis only to establish peace and stability in the South Asian region. Although the Indian media has continuously been engaged in anti-Pakistan activities, the Pakistani media has not left its mission to promote bilateral relations. Although most of the Pakistani public has strong reservations about India, even then their majority is in favor of the Indo-Pak relations. No doubt the event of the Mumbai attacks was a great tragedy for India, but it was also a threat for the bilateral relations. The biggest causality of the atrocity was the peace process between India and Pakistan. War is not a solution to the problem. The solution lies in some kind of sincere efforts from both sides to resolve the disputes. One thing is clear that the stability and peace in the South Asian region will play an important role in establishing peace and stability in the world and the war between the two countries will lead the world to a very big disaster.

Authors

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Notes

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- ¹² S. Riaz, A. Sinha, & M. Shelat, Op. Cit.