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Terrorism as a Media Specific Event: Performative Frames of Uri and Pulwama Reportage in Indian News Media

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The Uri attack in 2016 and the Pulwama attack in 2019 by terrorist in Jammu and Kashmir have brought to the center-stage the Kashmir conflict as a core issue between the two South Asian neighbors, India and Pakistan. This research analyzes the mediatized indulgence of terror in reporting of these two incidents in television and print media. The politics of representation in this analysis entails that these frames do not just involve reportage but an act of performance, how events are choreographed and predated on emotions and sentiments as cultural practices mobilizing its effective economy. This paper through the prism of media-industrial-terror complex draws upon the theory of critical events and focuses on how particular events – Uri and Pulwama activate and mobilize a discursive master narrative of Pakistan inspired/directed terrorism by ascribing a particular meaning to the war on terror. The semiotics of media reporting of Uri and Pulwama is analyzed through the tripartite motive quotient of *gham* (remorse), *gussa* (anger), and *garv* (pride).

Keywords: terror attacks, counter-terror attacks, media, Uri and Pulwama, performance

Terrorism as a mediatized phenomenon needs to be studied through its charged communicative frames and as a distinct pattern of communication. This reflects that media is not blamed for terrorism. This also directs the discussion to bring terrorism in the process of communication. By doing so, it facilitates to analyze how terror has taken hold in our imagination and makes its presence felt in everyday lives and social spectacle it generates through performative mediatized frames. Before putting the communicative and the mediatized aspect of terrorism at the forefront, one needs to trace and analyze the conceptual genealogy of the term terrorism and its relationship with media. The notion of terrorism keeps on changing from the time of the French Revolution to contemporary parliamentary politics and institutions (Schraut & Weinbauer, 2014, pp. 12-13).

During the nineteenth century, notion of terrorism was narrowly used, indicating the state of anarchism. Already in the important pre-phase of terrorism in the early nineteenth century, states and a media public existed. It was, however, only in the second half of the nineteenth century that due to the developing mass media society the interaction of terrorism, social movements and the state fully developed (Schraut & Weinbauer, 2014, p. 13, 14). Its conceptual labyrinth and gaps can be deciphered through various major phases stretching from the mid-nineteenth until the early twenty-first century (Weinberg & Eubank, 2008; Haupt & Weinbauer, 2011). These phases, however, based on a crude linear model, omitted the communicative schema and the mediatized frames of the event.

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The paper draws upon the theory of critical events and focuses on how particular events – Uri (2016) and Pulwama (2019) terror attacks in Jammu and Kashmir, India, evoked a host of anguished responses ranging from the constant demonization of evil other Pakistan to the rhetoric of revenge in the Indian media. A close reading of such raging responses through the performative frames of media; television, and print, in particular, the politics of representation, here, entails that these frames do not just involve reportage but an act of performance. It responds to the realm of media-industrial-terror-complex which has to be deconstructed and reconstructed at the instance of the audience's subjectivity.

The following analysis critically interrogates the rhetorical clustering of two mediatized events, which raises the specter of an interconnected and endless mediatized war on terror:

Uri (18 September 2016): The 2016 Uri attack was an attack by four heavily armed militants on 18 September 2016, near the town of Uri in Jammu and Kashmir. It was reported as the deadliest attack on security forces in Kashmir in two decades. The militant group Jaish-e-Mohammed was involved in the planning and execution of the attack.

Pulwama (14 February 2019): A suicide bomber rammed an explosive-laden car into a 16-vehicle convoy of the CRPF, killing more than 40 personnel in Jammu and Kashmir's Pulwama district. In a video release on social media, the Pakistan-based terrorist group, Jaish-e-Mohammed, claimed responsibility for the attack, which has been deemed one of the deadliest attacks on the Indian Forces in decades.

Mediatization and Terror

The term 'Mediatization' has been used in numerous contexts to characterize the influence media exert on a variety of phenomena. Media researchers sought to develop the concept toward a more coherent and precise understanding of mediatization as a social and cultural process (Krotz, 2008; Schulz, 2004). Mediatization is not to be confused with the broader concept of Mediation which refers to communication via a medium. Mediation describes the concrete act of communication using a medium in a specific social context. By contrast, mediatization refers to a more long-lasting process, whereby social and cultural institutions and modes of interaction are changed as a consequence of the growth of the media's influence (Hjarvard, 2008).

Initially mediatization was used to understand the impact of political communication whereby "a political system to a high degree is influenced by and adjusted to the demands of the mass media in their coverage of politics" (Asp, 1986, p. 359). Asp admits to Norwegian sociologist, Gudmund Hernes' expression of media-twisted society. In what ways do media redistribute power in society? In short, from an institutional point of view, the key question is how media change both the inner workings of other social entities and their mutual relationships (Hernes, 1978). Altheide and Snow calls for an analysis of social institutions-transformed-through-media. They make reference to "media logic" which implicates the primacy of form over content (Altheide & Snow, 1979, 1988).

Mediatization is a reflection of the state of postmodernism which gave rise to a new consciousness and cultural order. The most radical linkage between mediatization and postmodernism is found in the work of Baudrillard (1994) who perceives the symbols or signs of media culture guided by a kind of semiotic logic – images, sound, advertisements, etc. – to form simulacra, semblances of reality the media constitute a hyperreality. The dominant code of discourse being "What is mediatized is not what comes off the daily press, out of the tube, or on the radio: it is what is reinterpreted by the sign form, articulated into models, and administered by the 'code'" (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 175).

Terror Performance Continuum

Critical reflections on the mediatization and terror are envisioned through the lens of performance. Terror as a mediatized event is foregrounded both as a catalyst and subject in and through its relationship with performance. Edward Said's (1988, pp. 150-151) comments, "Today's discourse on terrorism is altogether ... streamlined thing. Its scholarship is yesterday's newspaper or today's CNN bulletin. Its gurus ... are journalists with obscure, even ambiguous backgrounds. Most writing about terrorism is brief, pithy, totally devoid of the scholarly armature of evidence, proof, argument. Its paradigm is the television interview, the spot news announcement, the instant gratification one associate with the Reagan White House's real-time, the evening news."

The attempt, therefore, is to discern the complex interrelationship between terror and performance, and not any illumination of the ontology of terror through a singularized reading of performance. The underlying emphasis is suggestive of terror and performance as a media-specific event. Bharucha explicates the phenomenon "wherein the performative understanding of terror begins when one responds to an act of extreme violence, however vulnerable and in a state of acute fear, either through spectatorship or an act of witnessing" (Bharucha, 2014, p. 27).

The accumulative quotient of the performance is mounted by the varied responses and the affective economy it generates. It implicates that terror can also be performed "as one re-lives the act either through immersion in its representation in the media or, even more precisely, through a critical response to the media and the discourses that have accumulated around the event." Mediatized performance through its synesthetic capacity synthesizes social, cultural, psychological, and political coordinates of the event. These narratives, through print and audio-visual mode, share an intimate spectrum of compulsive relationship (Bharucha, 2014, p. 27) with the readers' and audiences' effective capacity to react and respond. The process makes terror and performance as natural bedfellows of events. The notion ricochets with Jacques Derrida's exacting reflections on *Philosophy in a Time of Terror* (2003) is that "September 11 is not so much a major event, but the impression of a major event" (Derrida, 2003, p. 88).

While discussing the issue of terrorism covered in news media in India, it also invites discussion on various issues and their coverage. Needless to say, India is inundated with numerous issues including terrorism. Besides the issue of terrorism, the stand of the Indian news media shifts from time to time and there is a need to be critically studied. Commoditization of women is perpetuated in the news media (Adhikari & Guha, 2018). Rego (2018) finds that sexual harassment of women journalists on Twitter is there in India. The surface of fake news is another obstructive force which hinders the free flow of information from ethical perspective (Bali & Desai, 2019). A study claim that citizen journalism has become vital to raise the issues for public interest which is not possible in mainstream media all the time (Biswal, 2019). Of course, there is a dichotomy in terms of citizen journalism in rural and urban regions. Therefore, the news discourse on umpteen socio-economic and political issues has been staple for carrying out researches from time to time.

Methodology

Within the cultural studies paradigm, the paper builds its foundational investigative trope through Stuart Hall's encoding and decoding model to deconstruct the mediatized materialist cultural practices. It highlights how such practices are subject to preferred, negotiated, and contesting meanings (Hall, 1980). The mediatized tropes of terror reproduce the complex

frames of cultural representation, where “the process of representation has entered into the event itself...representation doesn’t occur after the event; representation is constitutive of the event.”

The study of critical events has emerged as a distinct field of academic inquiry in recent times. The events are located in a matrix of two dominant dimensions: one of scale and other content. Scale encompasses small, highly localized activities with a small geographic reach, to mega-events that mobilize substantial media resources and target a global audience. Content is commonly broken into a typology of events– most can be summarised under headings of sport, cultural, business. However, the construal of events in the mediatised world of mega-events is one constant expansion (Lamond & Platt, 2016, p. 1). Critical event studies involves a construal of events as part of an event industry . . . symptomatic of their colonization by a dominant cultural political-economic hegemony. Under its wider rubric, the paper explores the above terror events through both scale, its local and national affective responses, and content, in terms of its materiality and event management. These notions of critical events are envisaged through two dominant methodological frameworks, namely, performance and affective economy of the medium.

Performative Frames

There exists an uncanny relationship between terror and media reportage. Media informs terror as much as terror is informed by the media. Many of the violent attacks we see playing out today are at least partly conceived with media coverage in mind targeting not just the actual victims but millions of shocked and shaken spectators across the globe. Terrorist attacks are often carefully choreographed to attract the attention of the electronic media and the international press. Simone Molin Friis (2017) mentioned in his study that “the technological innovations of the digital age have influenced not just how war can be shown, but also who can successfully produce, choose and disseminate images of war to a larger audience” (Marthoz, 2017, p. 728). The skillful use of media technologies which terrorist organizations have never recruited intelligently before, put us to face a whole new phenomenon of terrorism, capable of moving to a new level of development (Ibrahim, 2019). The modern terrorist is both a showman and entertainer (Waldmann, 1998, p. 60).

The staging and presentation of their images add to their ideological content and apparent power. Terrorism is “aimed at people watching, not at the actual victims” (Jenkins, 1974). This explains the fact that why media is often dubbed as the megaphone of terrorism. French lawyer Antoine Garapon (2015) notes “the media are caught in an infernal dilemma. On the one hand, the media echo is likely to make victims the unintentional messengers of their executioners search for glory; on the other, self-censorship could be interpreted as a capitulation” (Marthoz, 2017, p. 6, 8).

The increasing global acts of terror appear to be undertaken, keeping in mind their performative attributes and potential to have massive public outreach via contemporary technologies. These are performances meant for mass consumption; however, instead of aesthetic sensibilities, they are driven by political imperatives. Jeffrey C. Alexander in *Performance and Power* (2011, pp. 159-160) asserts, “We need to theorize terrorism differently, thinking of its violence not only in physical and instrumental terms but also as a particularly gruesome kind of symbolic action in a complex performative field.” In this context, he argues that it is necessary to:

Consider terrorism as a form not only of political but also symbolic action.....
[terrorism is a] particular kind of political performance. It draws blood –
literally and figuratively – making use of its victims’ vital fluids to throw a

striking and awful painting upon the canvas of social life. 'It aims not to kill but, in and through killing, also to gesture in a dramatic way (Alexander, 2011, p. 162).

Building on Alexander's analysis of terror as performance, Sasanka Perera's insightful analysis of terror as performance problematizes and interrogates whether these spectacular acts of violence and terror consistently released via media viz. TV, the internet, and other news outlets can be considered as performances. He asserts that watching and flipping through television channels to see the event from all possible angles and slow-motion repeat telecasts underline the fact that a terror attack is a performance, albeit with very deadly consequences. He views terror as a "political dramaturgy which derives its meanings not merely from its performative character, but also from the fact this performance is viewed across the globe and has the potential for endless mechanical reproduction and extended viewing, given the nature of contemporary technologies" (Perera, 2018, p. 38). The fact is that the global media ecology gives these acts instant global exposure increasing both their performative potential and audience sizes. He opines that the performativity of terror largely depends on the availability of instant fame and discursive possibilities which ensures that an act of terror once conceived and executed, can reach its finality in the form of a wide-ranging performance in which the world itself is the stage as well as the audience (Perera, 2018, p. 29). He argues that terror can and must be seen as a form of performance, but not necessarily from the perspective of discourses of performance studies and related disciplines. Rather, these acts of violence or terror should be looked at from the perspective created by enhanced possibilities from communicative media such as television, social media, and the Internet, which are performed for wider audiences.

Tangentially inferring the hyper-mediated frames of military reporting, the earliest instance of mediatized indulgence in the war can be traced to the Gulf War of 2003 with its unprecedented access to combat zones, its simulated and hyper-real action, which, virtually brought war to one's homes (Baudrillard, 1995). Within the Indian context, New Delhi Television Limited (NDTV) journalist, Barkha Dutt's reportage of the Kargil War of 1999 stands as India's first televised war fostering both an agency and public, audience influence. Her on-field coverage amidst heavy firing and bombardment added to the overall spectacular economy of reporting.

Affective Turn

These critical events suggest an affective turn in public culture today most visible on television, websites, newspapers, films, and other genres of public culture. These call for examining those narratives and representations that circulate within contemporary public culture, that rely upon specific emotional dominants and that serve as stimuli for emotional responses. The events are tailored to coincide with the expectations and beliefs of the audiences of the mass media. Significantly, the visual effects of terror events contribute in ways to the circulation of discourses on terror and how such acts are imagined in the public sphere.

Nayar (2011) in the *States of Sentiment* offers a culturalist reading of emotions and affective communicative economy. He examines how the ritualized acts of media and public culture produce cultures of sentiment by foregrounding intensities of emotions. He contends how "public culture today is awash in synthetic sentiment and manufactured effects". *States of Sentiment* gestures not just at the condition of being sentimental but towards "the way sentiments construct particular states and identities – as humans, as a victim, a terrorist or as a suspect." The purpose is to delineate how packaged mediated

cultures encode emotions and shapes subjective experiences. In each of these everyday cultures of media and representations there is an emphasis on the centrality of emotions to politics, world-making, and civil society. It examines how identities, individual and collective, personal and social, are interpellated through careful structuring of events vis-à-vis emotions. Consequently, it is a study of public culture and its effective economy predicted by the logic of emotion, the representations, and elaborations of content. Interestingly, these structures of sentiment, conceptually, run parallel to Raymond Williams' notion of the structure of feeling. It was defined as "the emotions different categories of subjects are permitted to experience and express at any historical juncture, and how both individuals and collectives are brought into being through specific articulations of emotion" (Harding & Pribram, 2009, p. 13).

O'Sullivan (2011, p. 126) ruminating on the aesthetics of effect, offers an intriguing proposition:

There is no denying, or deferring, affects. They are what make up life, and art affects are The stuff that goes on beneath, beyond, and even parallel to signification. But what can one say about effects? Indeed, what needs to be said about them?. . . You cannot read effects; you can only experience them.

At another level, the French philosophers, Deleuze, and Guattari (1987, p. 16) visualized the material philosophy of effect. Deleuze visualized effect as a "pre-personal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to act." Affects, is understood as "they go beyond the strength of those who undergo them" (Deleuze, 1994, p. 164). The Deleuze-Guattarian effect, therefore, requires a view of the body, not as an organic closed system (as in Freud), but as a 'machinic assemblage' radically open to the world (Labanyi, 2010, p. 225). The most recent take on the materiality of effect is found through Brian Massumi's analysis. Following Deleuze and Guattari; Massumi (2002), equates effect with intensity, which he argues is not semantically or semiotically ordered, but which is "embodied in purely autonomic reactions most directly manifested in the skin – at the surface of the body, at its interface with things (Massumi, 2002, pp. 24-25).

Likewise, the public cultures of emotional dominant can be traversed through Sara Ahmed's *The Cultural Politics of Emotions* (2004a). She believes that emotions and effects are social, and these circulate in the collective, rather than as things that are individually and internally carried. The concept is in consonance with Nayar's domain of sentiment, suggesting how one is located at the "intersection of individual freedoms to express our emotions and the social determination of how (and which) emotions can be expressed" (Nayar, 2011, p. 19). These mediatised structures of sentiment sticks to use Sara Ahmed's catchphrase, with individual or community and convert them into objects of sentiments and feelings. These sticky objects are objects saturated with effect: words for feeling, and objects of feeling, circulate and generate effects: how they move, stick, and slide (Ahmed, 2004b, p. 124).

Case Studies: Uri and Pulwama Terror Coverage

The televised reporting of Uri and Pulwama terror attacks has all the elements of a gripping narrative – remorse, anxiety, fear, and anger. Sahana Udupa describes this phenomenon of "narrativized terror" as a media construction. Construction here, she contends, does not mean "a concoction or imagining but a set of media practices accompanied, aided and

often resulting from a host of external factors that together created the narrative of a beleaguered and shocked nation.” (Udapa, 2009, p. 18) The mediatized construction of the discursive narrative of the globalized war on terror in which these and such events are folded fosters a generalized sense of fear and terror. The media is also responsible to a great extent in generating fear through their theatricalization of information. As Hoskins and O’Loughlin (2007) have argued, “the modulation of terror in the media both amplifies threat and contains fear.”

A close analysis of the televised reporting of Uri and Pulwama terror events points to the fact that the continuous flow of images constructed an atmosphere of fear and anger. The entire mediatized reporting of the Uri and Pulwama terror attacks can be interpreted through three charged emotive frames: *Gham* (remorse), *Gussa* (anger), and *Garv* (pride).

Gham (Remorse)

After the terror attacks in Uri and Pulwama, there was a feeling of loss and grief in the Indian public. The loss of soldiers in Uri and Pulwama terror attacks led to nationwide mourning. While mourning the loss of lives in dastardly Pulwama terror attack, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted, “We salute you, brave sons of Mother India. You lived for the nation and served the country with unparalleled valor. We stand in solidarity with the bereaved families” (February 15, 2019). Vivek Katju (2019), a former diplomat with the Indian Foreign Service, wrote, “As the pyres are lit and the nation mourns the Pulwama martyrs, it must channel its anger”. He opined that it “would be fitting honor not only to the Pulwama braves but also the thousands who have lost their lives in almost three decades of Pakistan’s calibrated low-intensity war”. It was reported how “a pall of gloom descended at the homes of the CRPF personnel who were killed in the Pulwama terror attack on Thursday, even as the bereaved await the arrival of the mortal remains of the brave hearts” (Business Standard, 2019).

Textualising how terror attacks in Uri and Pulwama garnered national mourning, the entire phenomenon here becomes a significant marker of being “Indian” sans religion, language, and culture. Recounting Sara Ahmed’s cultural politics of “national mourning” is a fact worthy of above phenomenon, where, “[the nation mourns] is a claim both that the nation has a feeling (the nation is the subject of feeling), but also that generates the nation as the object of “our feeling” (we might mourn on behalf of the nation . . .” (Ahmed, 2004a, p.13). Consequently, the way “the nation mourns” is to generate the nation, as if it were a mourning subject. The “nation” becomes a shared “object of feeling” through the “orientation” taken towards it (Ahmed, 2004a, p. 13).

Mourning of the martyred soldiers of Uri and Pulwama, thus, constitutes the cultural context of a particular set of emotions. Bodies, individuals, and communities become the target of hate, love, compassion, sympathy, and pleasure when they are represented within emotionally meaningful discourses. Sentiments in the relationship and towards events bring forth what Benedict Anderson (1991) had spoken of nationalism as the result of a social imagination that worked with sentiments towards various people and geographical components of the country. Analyzing the latitude of mourning subject, Subarno Chatttitarji (2008) interpreted the televised reporting of Kargil as the flashpoint of nationalistic fervor. He contends how the television contributed more effectively to this process and turned the spectacle of the public mourning over ceremoniously draped coffins into the metaphor of the Kargil War and a militaristic nationalistic resurgence.

When India mourned Uri and Pulwama just as the USA did 9/11 or Mumbai 26/11, it achieved two things, firstly, it constructed nation as a mourning subject, and secondly, Uri and Pulwama became the “shared object of feeling” through the orientation taken towards it. The responses to mediated scenes and images of terrorist attacks are primarily through affecting sentiment and feeling in and around the event. Pertinent here is Nayar’s notion of ‘scar culture’ to trace the “moral imagination of suffering” orchestrated by the medium. Scar culture is his term for “the textual, graphic, visual and auditory inputs of suffering that we experience every day and to which we are called upon to respond with specific emotions”. He highlights medium’s rhetoric as the trauma aesthetic invoking how “suffering demands a particular style of narration for us to respond to it. In consonance with his notion of scar culture, the new cultures of sentiment emerging from the context can be read as “tele-trauma”, his notion for the “near-persistent visual cultures of extreme and distant deprivation, pain, and suffering that we are bombarded with in the mass media” (Nayar, 2011, p. 86).

Gussa (Anger)

After mass attacks, the media, by patriotism, by calculation or under coercion, generally, choose to follow the injunctions of their government or the emotions of public opinion. Sometimes journalists are liable more by omission than commission, ignoring or playing down certain aspects or not asking crucial questions. They do not act as impartial observers or commentators, albeit as political actors. News organizations choose “how to package their stories.....while sometimes injecting their unique perspectives” (Hussain, 2018, p. 37). This phenomenon can be understood with the help of framing theory. The thrust of this theory speculates that the media can place prominence on an issue by emphasizing a specific dimension of a story. This theory is a unique element of the agenda-setting theory, which emphasizes the essence of the issues that affect objective reality rather than on a particular topic (Nelson et al., 2019, p. 213). After the Uri and Pulwama terror attacks, the TV studios indulged in saber-rattling and war-mongering. The panel discussions on television channels kept debating about the availability of various diplomatic and military options. Former army personnel and security or defense analysts like Major General (Retd.) G D Bakshi, Major (Retd.) Gaurav Arya, known for their belligerent views is called to have opinions on these strategic issues of national importance. Many of these analysts had a field day hopping from one TV channel to the other with the open threats about the country’s nuclear weapons. No questions were raised about the implications of using these weapons. Republic TV said #IndiaWantsRevenge. And then said it over and over again, with Arnab Goswami asking whether India has any other option but to hit back? Times Now’s Navika Kumar asked, on a segment the channel calls “Legitimate Questions, whether India had reached a point of no return as far as Pakistan policy is concerned? (Venkataramakrishnan, 2019). The panelists who appeared on Republic TV’s 9 pm debate were divided into groups like “Pak Will Pay”, “lobby”, “Govt To Blame” lobby, “Stop Aman Ki Asha”, and “Just Lip Service” . These were actual labels plastered over his panelists’ heads (Venkataramakrishnan, 2019).

The narrative discourse completely shifted to hyper-nationalism and jingoism. Newsroom studios flaunting national flags on their screens became a common sight. The mediated histrionics underscores the crucial aspect of effective turn, where, the affective is one plane of everyday life, one form of the communicative economy (Grossberg, 2009, p. 76, 80). The idea is to depict how the affective communicative economy is linked to ideological, libidinal, and political economies as well. The process is what he calls the anchoring effects of these communicative economies.

No sooner had the Indian Army announced that the four slain militants were foreign operatives, possibly belonging to Jaish-e-Mohammad in Pakistan, the television channels streaked off on a flaming warpath. With the rhetoric of wild frenzy and warmongering, the narrative careened on distinctive thumping and incidental sounds. Most of the anchors were steering talk shows whose sole purpose seemed to be to make a case for launching retaliatory military strikes against Pakistan. Raha (2016) notes that the headlines of the high decibel TV debates playing on Indian English news channels, Times Now, India Today TV, CNN News 18, Zee News and so on were "Payback Time," "War Not Peace," "Time to Teach Pakistan a Lesson," "Pakistan's 'K' game is over," "Should we, a nuclear nation, sit with our hands tied?"

Furthermore, one can draw here a conceptual parallel with Roland Barthes' notion of "myth" as the spectacle of "excess." According to Barthes, someone who consumes a myth, such as most tabloid readers, does not see its construction as a myth. They see the image simply as the presence of essence it signifies. Myth calls out a person who receives it, like a command or a statement of the fact. The content of the injunction is to identify the sign with the essence (1957). Similarly, one can here take a handy recourse to Nayar's notion of "tele-trauma," a "dual form," which is "both an illusion and reality" operating between "immediacy and hypermediacy" (Nayar, 2011, p. 104). It feeds on hysteria, fury, and bloodthirsty plotting of events. The affective responses perfectly suit the tele-trauma dramatic frames. Thus, what we witness in the age of mediated spectacle is "drama management of this tragic dimension or its more threatening spectacular manifestations, emphasizing the possible control of these potentially tragic spectacles" (Alberto, Pereira, & Herschmann, 2004).

Another significant aspect of media coverage was the circulation of speculation, a dominant conjecture being played out was whether India should declare war against Pakistan. The televised emotions, speculations, and images competed, criss-crossed, and multiplied to create a sense of panic and shock. Kenneth Payne in *The Media as an Instrument of War* contends how the contemporary media serves as an instrument of war, helping the political leaders garner domestic and international public opinion, a task as essential to winning modern wars as defeating enemy on the front (1997). One can see the shift from objective journalism towards experiential journalism in the mediatized terror reporting, specifically in the case of Uri and Pulwama. The shift is characterized by staggered objectivity, wherein, sources are cited at spaced intervals to create enough shock among other sources or "stakeholders" in the story that they are compelled to respond (Udupa, 2009, p. 19). The viewers and readers were inundated with opinion polls.

The news channels competed amongst each other to gain viewer attention by being the first or by being distinct. The TV news channels tried to keep their viewers glued to the screens with continuous live coverage of the incidents. Even when there was no new footage available, news channels kept repeating file photos or video footage of the previous incidents. The events were highly sensationalized, and the different media houses were also at war with each other to be the first to break the news and to provide maximum coverage than others. The amusing irony was that almost every Indian news channel claimed that the news broke on their channel first. News channel, Times Now had the tagline "News First Breaks at Times Now." But if one flipped the other channels simultaneously, one only realized that the same news story was being covered at every news channel. Not only that, the TV channels tried to make their viewers feel a part of the entire exercise. Poll surveys were conducted, and live phone calls invited to engage the audiences by knowing their views and to give voice to the public opinion. The spectacular currency of the medium becomes what Debord (1983) calls a permanent opium war. The telecast images of the war

orchestrate the public perception, reinforcing or eroding the public support for war narrative. Hall (1997) succinctly captures the complexity, suggesting, "You can only get something out of the image if you position yourself with what it is telling you", adding that it is not that the image has a meaning. It is, as it were, in the "relation of looking at the image, which the image constructs for us that the meaning is completed."

The politicians of the ruling party, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), added their bit of saber-rattling. One of its leaders, Ram Madhav, declared grandly: "for a tooth a complete jaw" (Raha, 2016). It was the perfect slogan, high-blown and muscular, picked up and repeated by the TV channels that throbbed with avenging fury and whipped up the war cry. Kiren Rijiju, the then Union Minister of State for Home, said in a tweet that Pulwama attack is one of the worst terror strikes in the state since the Uri attack in 2016 and said, "We will give befitting response to this cowardly attack. It will not go unpunished. We will avenge in all way possible" (The Economic Times, 2019).

Amidst the super-charged, hyper-nationalist bluster, the Indian print media's response to these terror attacks was equally jingoistic. Leading English dailies such as *The Times of India*, *The Indian Express*, *Hindustan Times* and *The Hindu*, constantly harped on and played around the anticipatory zeal of military strikes on terror training camps across the Line of Control in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir. The *Times of India*, which had by far the most extensive coverage of the Uri attack, was also the most jingoistic of the lot in terms of headlines: "PM clears effective response, Army says it's ready and willing to hit back" was *TOI*'s page leading headline (Raha, 2016). *Hindustan Times* led with a report headlined "India to isolate Pak globally as it readies response to Uri attack."

Garv (Pride)

The counter-terror attacks, surgical strike on September 29, 2016, and Balakot air strike February 26, 2019, were carried out by India post-Uri and Pulwama, respectively. Surgical strikes are military operations undertaken by forces across the world to move on the offensive, hit enemy targets and installations, and return to primary positions, all with lightning speed and with the added precaution of suffering a limited casualty (The Economic Times, 2018). These strikes require detailed and exhaustive planning as well as absolute precision to achieve the objective of taking down targets with either no or minimal collateral damage.

Similarly, the cross-border airstrike conducted on February 26, 2019, was a rare instance when the Indian Air Force crossed the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir and bombed targets in Pakistani territory (Negi, 2019). India had termed the airstrike an intelligence-led, non-military, pre-emptive operation that targeted a camp run by the Jaish-e-Mohammed in Balakot, a town located in Pakistan's Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province. Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale announced the Balakot airstrikes conducted by India as "non-military preemptive action [was] specifically targeted at the JeM camp."

When the Director-General of Military Operations, Lieutenant General Ranbir Singh of the Indian Army, announced to media that they had conducted surgical strikes on terrorist launch pads along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir, there was no literal or metaphorical browbeating. However, the Indian news media had done an unrestrained and extremely melodramatic coverage of the entire event. The media coverage was "by and large, along expected lines: India's claim, Pakistan's denial, reactions from politicians, fear along with the border, stock market crash, and cross-LoC trade" (Chatterji, 2016).

Even though the Indian Army categorically maintained that the surgical strikes post-Uri was to neutralize a specific set of terrorists and not motivated revenge, *The Times of India*, had the pick of the morning's headlines: "Pak crossed the line, India crosses LoC"

(Pandit, 2016). The surgical strikes were equated with the United States' hunt for Osama Bin Laden, "Raids began at Zero Dark Thirty." *Mail Today* reported "Payback" on its front page and "Surgical treatment," *Hindustan Times* dedicated both the front of its 'flap' and its front page to the strikes as "Army exacts Uri revenge." *Indian Express* reported, "India strikes terror, deep in Pakistan: Next step, diplomatic outreach" (Roy, 2019). These descriptions and declarations, thus, need to be read with their politics, meaning-making, and representational strategies.

Conclusion

Since representation in a media-saturated society is a complex matter, certain communicative redacts used for particular construction and terror reportage, in this case, need to go beyond the normative and given. The cited illustrations postulate a critical imperative to interrogate terrorism beyond the act of terror itself. The performative is inferring on terror as critical events sets about when one responds as a spectator or witness to an act of violence in an orchestrated medial propagations. The paper contends that there is a need for a new conceptual framework to unpack the discursive field of emotion and public effect which manifests expressions. The proposed framework traverses through the conceptual framework of critical events, its staging and content, performative codes and affective turn in public cultures, which both informs and manufactures the sociality of emotions. It shows how the events are narrated, how these rely on emotional dominant, which, in turn, triggers emotionally meaningful discourse. Laying bare the Uri and Pulwama terror coverage, the paper delineates the semiotic and symbiotic codes of terror bytes, wherein, both inform and determine the affective ecology of the event. Increasingly animated by the spectacular frames, these scripted and staged mediatized rituals are packaged performances, subjecting the audiences and readers through embodied, affected, and relational practices.

The qualitative analysis of the terror above events includes reporting of the events, its immediate fallout ranging from TV histrionics to high octane print headlines. These are closely interpreted through its charged recurring motifs, namely, remorse, anger, and pride. The relationship between the conceptual framework and sample study has explored the differently scaled ways in which these populist sentiments get (re)enacted and (re)produced. In addition to the attempted research findings, broadly, the study also tries to contribute to depicting the ever-expanding emotive trajectory of the mediatized public culture today, its ideologically charged consumptive components of communication and narratives.

The realm of signification emphasizes the need to work beyond semiotics towards more visceral, corporeal, and kinetic sensibilities. Several shortcomings in the study need to be acknowledged. Foremost, this study is limited to the inclusion of print and televisual reportage in the ever-expanding age of post-media frames of social media. Therefore, there is an inherent risk of generalized coverage. Secondly, future research may explore the comparable patterns of media coverage beyond print and television and their mutual coding of events.

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