BOLLYWOODIZATION OF FOREIGN POLICY: HOW FILM DISCOURSE PORTRAYS TENSION BETWEEN STATES

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ABSTRACT

As the nexus between film industry and state apparatus has grown critical and complex in the wake of war on terror, academic circle have paid attention to identify the patterns of relationship between entertainment industry of a country and its foreign policy. To understand the role of the soft power in assisting governments to secure their interests at international level, this article examines the relationship between Bollywood and the Indian foreign policy through the lens of critical political economy of communication approach. Popular films portraying tension and cooperation between the South Asian neighbors were critically analyzed, and the results indicated that Bollywood closely followed the foreign policy initiative of the Indian government.

Keywords: Bollywood; media and foreign policy; political economy of communication; entertainment industry; South Asia

INTRODUCTION

Since 1998, official circles in India have been expressing their intentions to employ the potential of Bollywood as a soft power to project the mounting economic, geostrategic, and cultural significance of the largest country in the South Asian region. After being declared an industry in 1998 by the Indian government, Bollywood has produced numerous movies that portrayed the image of India as a progressive global power capable of playing a pivotal role at regional and international levels. The culture industries invariably offer unconditional support to the core foreign policy initiatives of a nation-state, and work together with the policy-makers in image building endeavors in order to promote key cultural, economic, and military interests of their countries.

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(Hesmondhalgh, 2007; Pindle, 1993; Sinha, 2006). The nexus between film industry and state apparatus has grown critical and complex in the wake of war on terror, as the war doctrine orchestrated by the Western policy-making circles categorize countries and groups as necessarily good or evil (Trotman, 2009). Consequently, academic circle have paid attention to identify the patterns of relationship between entertainment industry of a country and its foreign policy to comprehend the role of the soft power in assisting governments to secure their interests at international level. To examine this relationship, I investigated the connection between Bollywood and the Indian foreign policy through the lens of critical political economy of communication approach in this article by focusing on the popular films portraying tension and cooperation between the South Asian neighbors during the first decade of the 21st century.

There is no denying the fact that entertainment media have emerged as an important sociopolitical institution in all societies and enjoy the power to influence thinking patterns at governmental and individual levels through their discourses. Popular media are directly linked to the culture where they operate, and portray social realities according to norms, mores, values and laws of that society (Zelizer & Allan, 2011). The corporate media cultivate realities for the audiences and help them assign meanings to the world around them (Gerbner et al., 2002). As news and entertainment media are our windows through which we see the world beyond our direct contact, we retrieve complicated information on foreign policy issues through the portrayal of a nation’s relations with other nation-states in entertainment products, and such representations transmit something more than innocuous information, especially during crisis situations (Baum, 2007; Cohen, 1963; Entman, 2004; Chomsky, 1989; McChesney, 2008; McQuail, 2005). Thus, the role of the media is central not only as a discourse-producing mediator but also as a vehicle that defines the complex but symbiotic relationship between the government and media.

Questions related to the role of an autonomous entertainment media, capable of working independently or in some way associated with the state machinery to secure their commercial interests, are heuristically significant. The answers to these questions are not very simple because, throughout the world, the relationship between media and governments is very delicate and complex – ranging from astringent conflict to open cooperation. The modern technology-intensive and commercially motivated media promote dominant ideologies because their political and economic interests are intertwined with those in the corridors of power (Bagdikian, 2004; Bettig & Hall, 2003; Norris, 1990; Vivian, 2006). Accordingly, media and government become allies and synergistic patterns of relationship between the elites holding power and the media of communication, which are owned by a potent business community that perpetuates an ideology to maximize their profits, are established.

Unquestionably, large media organizations are commercial ventures established to meet vital societal needs related to cultural, social, and political activities (Mosco, 2008). Media content, therefore, is produced by commercial forces interested in enhancing profits, and they have deep connections with the elites controlling political and economic structures of a country (Mosco, 2009). Since media’s economic and operational interests are tangled with the elite, they purport an ideology that
advocates interests of those who control the media (Altschull, 1995). The media-sponsored ideology is particularly important when it reflects on the relationship among nation-states (Doyle, 2002). An examination of ideology-laden media products is also important because a plethora of academic literature suggests that consumers of the ubiquitous mass media form their opinions and shape their attitudes about other nations and cultures after receiving messages from these media.

By first articulating the rapport between media and foreign policy issues in the South Asian context, this article sheds light on the academic relevance of the models of media-foreign policy relationship and the significance of critical political economy of communication approach as a methodology, which is followed by the description of the global Bollywood's influence, and the political economic analysis of the four selected movies. Through employing critical political economy of communication approach to analyze models of media-foreign policy relationship, I have ventured to investigate questions dealing with media-foreign policy relationship that have previously been addressed through quantitative research. Film industry has the potential to produce a discourse that shapes public opinion in favor of foreign policy initiatives of various governments, but unlike other means of mass communication such as newspapers and television, it remains an under-researched medium in this domain (Guback, 1969; Pindle, 1993; Hesmondhalgh, 2007). I have focused on the film industry in this article by selecting four movies produced and released at a time when relationship between Pakistan and India was passing through diametrically opposite stages of escalation and de-escalation in the past decade to find patterns of convergence in Indian foreign policy and the discourses of selected movies.

Reciprocal Influences: Media and Foreign Policy in South Asia

Since the first Gulf War in 1991, academic circles have been debating the interconnection between television, public opinion, and foreign policy. CNN effect as a phrase was popularized to connote the idea of a synergistic relationship between the news media and framers of the foreign policy (Gilboa, 2005; Robinson, 1999). In fact, academic research on media-foreign policy relationship dates back to the stormy years of the Cold War when Cohen (1963), in his germinal work, argued that mass media are the chief source of information about other cultures and societies, and help the audience to cultivate a worldview in agreement with the information packaged in the media content. According to him, media plays a pivotal role in shaping public opinion on issues linked to the external relations of a nation-state with other countries. Consequently, media are substantial actors in shaping public opinion on key foreign policy issues, and also affect the foreign policy-making processes in numerous ways. Nevertheless, the impact of media on the formulation of foreign policy has numerous facets.

A foreign policy formulation in order to be dynamic must embrace five essential elements: prioritizing national interests; evolving a strategy or a number of strategies to achieve those interests; eliminating any obstacle that might arise in pursuit of those interests; creating friendly regimes in the neighboring countries; and understanding and utilizing international climate in pursuit of those national interests (Jan, 1993). Keeping in view all these factors, one may wonder whether media are
powerful enough to have an influence on foreign policy of a state. The answer is yes as well as no. Yes, in the sense that it can create euphoria for an anticipated event; it can also evoke anger, disgust or fear on a certain foreign policy postulate or issue (Bagdikian, 2004). But to say that it is the chief determinant of the foreign policy of a nation-state would be a naivety (Malik, 2003). In fact, the media is unlikely to assume the role of the chief architect of the foreign policy of a country due to its dependence on assorted state organs for regulatory benefits and commercial operations, and the official establishments invariably uses media to project a preconceived foreign policy (Jan, 1993; Napoli, 2003; Zelizer & Allan, 2011). Other researchers (Chomsky, 1989; Merrill & Dennis, 1996; Gilboa, 2003, 2005; McQuail, 2005) also argue that approximately everywhere, mass media are expected to advance national interest and promote certain key values and behavior patterns in times of active conflicts or other national crises.

Correspondingly, various media including press, television, Internet and film have played a proactive role in promoting foreign policy objectives of the South Asian countries in the region. The unprecedented growth of television and global appeal of the Bollywood films have made them potent weapons to be used by the establishments in India and Pakistan (Rasul, 2004). Consequently, media and inter-state relations have witnessed revolutionary changes in the South Asian context. Especially, the first decade of the 21st century marked a watershed in the history of relationship between two South Asian nuclear neighbors. The relationship between India and Pakistan has passed through many turbulent phases; however, it has been particularly unpredictable in the aftermath of Kargil conflict between the two countries in 1999. On the one hand, Indian government accused Pakistan of sending its regular troops to occupy a strategically important mountain post in the disputed area of Jammu and Kashmir and, on the other hand, the two governments led by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee of India and President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan kicked off a process of détente. During this period, terrorists attacked the Indian parliament on December 13, 2001. The terrorists were overpowered and killed in a gun battle by the security forces and they were identified as Pakistani nationals. This turn of events brought mutually hostile South Asian neighbors to the brink of a war as both countries amassed their armed forces on the borders.

Due to active intervention of the international community, both countries pulled back their forces to the barracks and a deadly conflict in the region was averted. In the meantime, the Indian prime minister launched a significant diplomatic initiative in April 2003 when he invited Pakistani government to begin a comprehensive dialogue process with India. Pakistan responded positively and relations between two nuclear powers in South Asia began to improve. Many positive steps were taken by both governments including lessening of visas restrictions and reduction in propaganda against each other. Another terrorist attack in Mumbai in November 2008 brought the peace dialogue to a halt. Although, Pakistani government expressed its solidarity with the Indian people, but Pakistani nationals were involved in this act of terrorism termed as India’s 9/11 and a new phase of tension visited South Asia. It is, therefore, academically significant to critically analyze the role of media, especially the film industry, in these perplexing situations. Investigating how did the Indian film industry respond to the ebb and flow of events in South Asia in the past decade could also help
in developing an understanding of the increasing socio-political role of global film industries such as Bollywood. Having millions of fans in Pakistan, it would be interesting to examine whether Bollywood was a neutral commentator or a partisan discourse producer while dealing with the conduct of relations between India and Pakistan. These questions are heuristically significant as cinematic portrayals of distant cultures are an important source of information and opinion formation (Wasko, 2004). To answer these queries, models dealing with the influence of mass media on the formation of foreign policy of a country have been discussed in the following section.

**Models of Relationship between Media and Foreign Policy**

The available scholarship on the media–foreign policy relationship plainly manifests that no fixed model of association exists between media and foreign policy. Media behaves in different ways in diverse cultural and political systems (McQuail, 2005). However, various research studies on media-foreign policy relationship specify that media functions in different ways as an advocate, adversary, and indifferent actor in assorted political systems. There has been an agreement among researchers in the literature developed in 80s and 90s that in a free society, the media is not supposed to be an active player in policy formulation processes, but it should work only as an objective observer of these developments. Similarly the media in authoritarian systems such as former Soviet Union, China, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, and Iran cannot adversarially comment on the policy of the government on external relations. The research on media-foreign-policy nexus can be classified as studies based on advocative, adversarial, and indifferent models that suggest advocative, oppositional, and neutral role for the media respectively while commenting on vital foreign policy issues (Robinson et al., 2009).

The upholders of advocative model view mass media as an instrument in the hands of a dominant class, elite, or power-holding group (Bagdikian, 2004; Cohen, 1963; Guback, 1969; Herman & Chomsky 1988; Kern et al., 2003; McChesney, 2008; McQuail, 2005; Zelizer & Allan, 2011). According to this paradigm, the content of media actively distorts the marketplace of ideas in favor of an ideology of the powerful. Cohen’s (1963) study suggests that in countries, where political power is highly centralized, the media of communication tend to become instruments of centralization and reflect the needs of the ruling groups in maintaining their power and advancing their policies. The media, in other words, are important devices in sustaining the constitutional and political powers of the central governments.

In case of conflict with another country, the media is likely to articulate views of the state and the economic elite (McQuail, 2005). Herman and Chomsky (1988) argue that “the media’s purpose in a free society is to manufacture consent among the governed, rallying the population to endorse elite decision” (p. 12). McChesney (2008) contends that the U.S. media firms have acknowledged that Washington has a moral right and authority to send troops into other countries or to place an economic quarantine around those countries whose governments are seen as hostile toward democracy or capitalism. It is evident from the fact that during the two Gulf wars in 1990 and 2003, 9/11 terrorist attack and subsequent invasion of Afghanistan, the media depended on
briefings conducted by military officers, and opportunities for journalists to collect information independently were severely curtailed. It is interesting, however, that media never questioned veracity of this information and unquestioningly propagated the official point of view (Bagdikian, 2004; McChesney, 2008; Zelizer & Allan, 2011).

A few studies provide evidence that the media does not always follow government directives without a careful scrutiny of information. In democratic societies, media are supposed to play a socially responsible role by monitoring activities of those at the helm of affairs (Cohen, 1963; McQuail, 2005). There are also several cases where administrative requests for secrecy have been denied. For instance, President Carter and many of his advisers were infuriated when, in 1980, NBC negotiated a deal with the Iranian militants whereby an interview with hostage, William Gallegos, was aired on the condition that the Iranian students could also present their point of view (Rasul, 2004). A few other studies (Becker, 1977; McQuail, 2005; Robinson et al., 2009; Thussu, 2007) have posited that it would be wrong to assume that the U.S. media always supports the government policy as in democratic societies, media work independently and play the role of an objective observer in the conduct of international relations. Media organizations, therefore, neither advocates nor opposes the foreign policy of a country. The indifferent model, on the other hand, elucidates that at the initial policy-making stages, the media objectively observe and report foreign policy issues because media professionals are not experts in analyzing the intricacies of international politics (Berry, 1990). After a foreign policy is framed and implemented, it is easy for the media to analyze it by seeking professional opinion from foreign policy experts.

In a bid to categorize literature and facilitate analysis in the media-foreign policy relationship research tradition, it could be established that several studies in the past decades (Bagdikian, 2004; Cohen, 1963; Herman & Chomsky, 1988; McChesney, 2008; Robinson et al.; Zelizer & Allan, 2011) reflect that media of a country advocates governmental policies on external relations. At the same time, a few researchers (Becker, 1977; Malik, 2003; Pindle, 1993; Robinson et al., 2009) are of the view that media do not necessarily promote governmental point of view because in egalitarian cultures, media work independently and report events objectively. Another school of thought (Berry, 1990; Flew, 2007, Thussu, 2006) assigns an indifferent role to media according to which media makes situational decisions and supports or opposes the official policy according its political and economic interests. Consequently, the decision to follow a particular model is situational and it may vary in different regions of the world depending upon political, economic, and ideological fabric of the society. The South Asian situation is particularly interesting where countries remain politically divided but the entertainment media is a cultural bond among mutually hostile societies. In such a scenario, critical political economy is an appropriate approach that sheds light on patterns of relationship between production, distribution, and consumption of media products and the market forces which are governed by the powerful central governments.

Critical Political Economy of Communication

Critical political economy of communication approach explores questions related to production, distribution and consumption, of cultural products. Modern mass media
perpetuate hegemonic ideologies that help the elite maintain their control over the society through conformist messages produced by cultural industries (Hesmondhalgh, 2007). The media of communication heavily depend on the market forces for their operations and it is no surprise if they are advancing the interests of those who supply them money in the form of advertising dollar and subsidies (Altschull, 1995). The reliance of mass media on the business elite for production and distribution of cultural products results in the commodification of culture that leads towards consolidation, conglomeration, and concentration of ownership (Rasul & McDowell, 2012). The commercial forces and marketers have used modern mass media innovatively to further their economic interests by striking deals with media firms for product placement, advertising, and promotional activities. McChesney (2008) argues that the commercial cart is pulling the cultural horse and transnational business firms are using “media firms’ entire arsenal of media assets” to promote their corporate interests in the profit-driven capitalist economy (p. 275). It, therefore, is totally unsurprising when MasterCard struck an over $ 100 million deal with Universal Studios that would ensure MasterCard’s visibility in the theme parks, movies, and other entertainment programs of the Universal Studios. Thus, the synergistic relationship between media firms and transnational commercial ventures endorses consumerism and promotes a commercial culture that runs contrary to democratic values, freedom of choice, and sovereignty of the audience. Critical political economy approach questions the unholy alliance between commercial interests and media firms by critically examining the political, economic, and ideological structures of media conglomerates.

It is significant for critical political economists to question how various political, ideological, economic, and power structures are interrelated in the cultural sphere in assorted societies. The dominant ideology and hegemonic ideas emerging as a result of the interplay between forces of exploitation controlling economic structure of media industry necessitates a critique of mass media (Flew, 2007; Mosco, 2008). Similar to the Marxian critique of capitalism, a critical appraisal of mass media would lead to a broader comprehension of the existing social, political and economic order in class-ridden societies (Flew, 2007). Accordingly, the structure of economic relations is exceedingly important for political economists who analyze how class relations develop in capitalist economy. In order to comprehensively analyze structures of dominance and control operative in media industry, critical political economists stress on the need to develop interdisciplinary research, understand historical processes, examine processes of media globalization, and establish a link between media practitioners and researchers (Flew, 2007; Golding & Murdock, 2000; Mosco, 2009; Schiller, 1969). Critical political economists have also criticized traditional effects theories and positivist research in the field of communication for its inability to address questions related to the economic, political, and ideological structures of mass media. This approach has focused on the globalization of media industry ensuing from the domination of a few giants who control the audiovisual media production across the globe (Benz, 2007).

Critical political economy approach is sparingly used to analyze the influence of motion pictures on different political organs of the society. However, its use as a methodology is critical as the entertainment industry is affecting billions of consumers all over the world and it is imperative to discuss the ideologies purported by these
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global actors in the name of entertainment. The transnational entertainment industries are involved in coproductions and a multitude of joint ventures at global level to geometrically enhance their profits and capture new markets. Hollywood has emerged as a major investor in Bollywood in recent years, mainly because of the gigantic Indian market where Hollywood's traditional English language products made up only five percent of the market (Benz, 2007; Govil, 2005; Jai Kumar, 2006; Rasul & Proffitt, 2011). Critical political economy approach helps us understand these trends by addressing questions linked to the globalization of entertainment industries and their impact on local cultures. By applying this paradigm, various scholars (Flew, 2007; Kavoori & Punthambekar, 2008; Miller et al., 2001) have evaluated issues related to dominance, ideology, and power and advanced critical political ideology approach by deviating from the traditional media imperialism literature. Kavoori and Punthambekar (2008) have endeavored to examine the role of Bollywood in a globalized media environment and, the emergence of Bollywood as a global entertainment giant; however, a lot needs to be done to critically investigate the interplay between political and economic forces controlling Bollywood. Bollywood also had its economic interests intertwined with the Indian government in terms of entertainment tax, foreign investment, and bank loans after being declared an industry in 1998 (Thussu, 2007). As Pindle (1993) has reported that Hollywood seeks Washington's nod of approval while filming international issues irrespective of its liberal biases, Bollywood also strives to win the pleasure of policy-making circles to safeguard its economic interests.

**Bollywood and Foreign Policy**

The nature of film industry is intrinsically different from other media. It is relatively free from governmental regulation and heavily relies on attracting viewers for generating revenues. However, producers and managers of production houses have their political and economic interests and, as Wasko (2004) argues that film industry should be considered as “commodities produced and distributed within a capitalist industrial structure” (p. 132). Guback (1969) describes the synergistic relationship between American government and Hollywood and explains the film industry’s role in advancing capitalist ideology in Europe with the active financial and political support of the U.S. government. Pindle (1993) also focuses on the political role of the Hollywood and its association with the government as an industrial complex. Chakravarty (1993) posits that the entertainment media tend to advocate actions and policies of large governments and this is what leads to status quo. By and large, the audio-visual media have been controlled by the government due to its unprecedented power in influencing behavior of the audience (Danmole, 1999).

Despite growing political importance of film industry, a little attention has been paid by communication scholars to look into the role of entertainment media in shaping public debate and policy (Zoonen, 2005). Although Bollywood's unprecedented growth and global importance has provided worthwhile opportunities to communication scholars, yet there has been a little critical discussion on the economic structure, political leaning, and ideological orientation of Bollywood, which has emerged as a gigantic movie producer in the sub-continent in recent years and it dominates the cultural industry not only in South Asia but it also poses a challenge to the supremacy of Hollywood in different parts of the world (Power & Mazumdar, 2000). Mishra (2002) argues that approximately 11 million people watch Bollywood films every day and the
Indian films not only cater to the aesthetic taste of Indian communities but also reflect popular culture of India that draws attention of the cine goers across the globe. Thussu (2006) rightly points out that Indian films have found an eager audience keen to spend money on watching Indian cultural products at the expense of local industries all over the world. The global operations of the Indian cinema could not materialize without an active support from the Indian government. Kavoori and Punathambekar (2008) state that the Indian cinema has permeated diverse societies like United kingdom, America, Fiji, Guyana and a number of countries in the Middle East and Africa where Indian immigrants settled and helped governments of these countries to establish long-term ties with the India government and people.

Bollywood has also cultivated strong ties with the Indian Foreign Ministry. According to Chatterji (2008), the Public Diplomacy Division of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs cooperated and financed Saregama India Ltd to produce a special volume of Indian popular songs that would be gifted to diplomats and foreign dignitaries as a part of diplomatic courtesy. Interestingly, this album was presented for the first time to the officials of Pakistani Foreign Ministry when an Indian delegation visited Pakistan in 2006. The Indian government is actively exploiting Bollywood’s potential as a tool to achieve foreign policy goals. In the recent decade, Bollywood has produced movies revolving around political themes and advancing Indian government’s political agenda in the region. Especially after the Kargil War between India and Pakistan in 1999 and ensuing tension in the region due to terrorist activities in India, Bollywood had produced movies that reflected the nature of relationships between the South Asian neighbors. These movies had strong patriotic and jingoistic undertones that were in consonance with the government’s foreign policy. However, when a process of détente had caught momentum in the region after 2003, a few movies were released that aimed at promoting harmony and friendship between India and Pakistan.

The Motion Picture Diplomacy

Four popular box-office hits from Bollywood (LOC Kargil, 2003; Lakshya, 2004; Veer Zara, 2004; and Main Hon Na, 2004) have been selected to scrutinize the portrayal of Indo-Pakistan relationship during the first decade of the 21st century. The objective of analysis has been to identify the connection, if any, between the Indian government and Bollywood. There is growing concern in the South Asian region that media’s jingoistic role is a key obstacle in the process of normalization of relations between India and Pakistan (Rasul, 2004). Two of the selected movies (LOC Kargil, 2003 and Lakshya, 2004) had strong nationalistic sentiments reflecting tension between the two countries while the other two films (Veer Zara, 2004 and Main Hon Na, 2004) advanced an atmosphere of camaraderie in South Asia. These movies have been selected because their stories directly comment on relationship between India and Pakistan. During the past decade, Bollywood has been producing a number of movies focusing on the soar relations between South Asian neighbors and portraying the nature conflict in the region. However, these portrayals have invariably been in agreement with the government policy.

Almost everywhere in the world, media work closely with policymakers and, advance foreign policy objectives of the country, especially in times of war or crisis
(Herman & Chomsky, 1988; McQuail, 2005; Zelizer & Allan, 2011). Scholars in the tradition of critical political economy (Bagdikian, 2004; Bettig & Hall, 2003; McChesney, 2008; Mosco, 2009; Wasko, 2004) also agree that all media including film industry have their political and economic interests intertwined with the policies of the government. To have a media system totally free from the government control is a utopian idea divorced from reality (Altschull, 1995). Discussion in the following paragraphs revolves around discourses on Indo-Pak relations as portrayed in four popular Bollywood productions. Two of the selected movies (Lakshya, 2004; LOC Kargil, 2003) contained jingoistic subject matter as these were filmed on the Kargil episode while the other two (Main Hon Na, 2004; Veer Zara, 2004) focused on normalization of relations and appreciated the peace process between two countries.

**Veer Zara**

Veer Zara was released in 2004 and enthralled Hindi cinema lovers across the globe. Set against the backdrop of tense relations in the South Asian region, this star-studded romantic movie revolves around a love story of a Pakistani girl, Zara, and an Indian Air Force Officer, Veer Pratap. The two lovers had remained separated for more than twenty years as they had different religions and they lived in mutually hostile countries. Veer Pratap quits his job and comes to Pakistan to meet his beloved but he is imprisoned by the Pakistani authorities on the charges of spying for India. Finally, a Pakistani human rights activists and lawyer gets him released from the prison and tries to arrange a reunion of the lovers. This love story finally turned out to be the top-grossing Bollywood production of the year not only in India but also internationally as was predicted before the movie was released. It was successful in earning approximately Rs. 750 million worldwide and was presented at numerous prominent film festivals across the globe. The success of this movie reflected the changing nature of relationship between India and Pakistan. The peace process between the two countries had gained momentum by 2004 and the two governments had softened their stand on controversial issues. Thus, Veer Zara reflects Bollywood's contribution towards supporting Indian diplomatic efforts to normalize relations with Pakistan.

**Main Hoon Na**

Another important movie starring the King of Bollywood, Shahrukh Khan, was released in 2004. Main Hoon Na is about the heroic tale of Major Ram Sharma (Shahrukh Khan) who thwarts sabotage activities of a dangerous terrorist Raghavan. Raghavan was a military officer having extremist tendencies and killed 11 Pakistani citizens who mistakenly crossed the border. He was court-martialed and dismissed from the service. He established his private army and began to sabotage peace process between India and Pakistan. He was trying to sabotage a project called Milaap (Unity) initiated by the Indian military to foster friendship between India and Pakistan. He planned to abduct college students including the daughter of an army general who was the incharge of project Milaap. Major Ram intervened and foiled his plans and the project Milap continued uninterrupted. Numerous dialogues and scenes in the movie promote language of peace contrary to the jingoistic undertones in previous entertainment products. Main Hon Na was an endeavor to accelerate peace dialogue with Pakistan and it portrayed a soft image of the Indian army which was represented as having a solid commitment to peace in the region.
Lakshya

Lakshya was released in 2004 and this movie portrayed heroic deeds of an Indian army officer during Kargil War of 1999. The Indian army was ordered not to cross the border between India and Pakistan in Kashmir. However, they had to covertly attack at night in order to occupy the Tiger Hill, a strategically important mountain peak which was taken by the Pakistani troops three weeks before. Karan, an Indian army officer, climbs the precipitous mountain and emerges triumphant in dislodging Pakistani soldiers from the mountain post. Lt. Karan had not had a goal in his life, but this operation makes him feel that he had been cut to safeguard his country. This movie was a tribute to the Indian armed forces for their successful defense of the Indian territory. The movie portrays Pakistani army as treacherous, cowardly and supportive of terrorists. This is a traditional propaganda theme to dehumanize the enemy and it is universally propagated through silver screen to boost morale of the armed forces. Raney (2004) points out that audience enjoy media content when their favorite characters emerge victorious in the end. This movie was supportive of the Indian policy towards Pakistan after the Kargil war. However, the movie was not a big box-office success because peace process between India and Pakistan had gained momentum in 2004 and jingoistic themes were not much popular.

LOC Kargil

LOC Kargil was premiered in the movie theatres in 2003. This was another star-crossed movie having anti-Pakistan undertones. As the name indicates, this film was also produced after the 1999 Kargil conflict to highlight bravery of the Indian armed forces and openly advocated Indian foreign policy goals. The film begins with scenes of chaos as an important peak has been occupied by unidentified enemy and the Indian forces were utterly surprised by this sudden attack. Many attempts by various battalions of the Indian armed forces ended up in smoke as the unknown enemy was sitting on top of the steep and treacherous peaks surrounding Kargil. The female actresses are marginalized in the film as they are only shown missing their departed mates and singing songs. This reflects the bias of the mainstream media towards women as they are not considered being capable of playing a role on foreign policy front (Zoonen, 2005). The film reflects resourcefulness of the Indian army personnel who are successful in regaining control of the peak in the end after a fierce fight. The discourse in this movie reflects hostility between India and Pakistan in the early years of the new millennium after conflict in Kashmir and a terrorist attack on the Indian parliament.

The discussion in the preceding paragraphs indicates that Bollywood has been supporting Indian foreign policy by producing motion pictures with discourses in line with the thinking of the policy makers. The hegemonic model of media-foreign policy indicates that media of a country plays the role of an advocate while producing discourse on issues related to external relations (Cohen, 1963; McQuail, 2005). Herman and Chomsky’s Propaganda Model (1988) also describes five filters through which media content passes and government structure is an important filter that helps determine the content of the media. There have been very few dissident voices in US media and elsewhere on foreign policy issues because of the political and economic interests of the elite who own and control media (Bagdikian, 2004; Bettig & Hall, 2003;
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McChesney, 2008; Zelizer & Allan, 2011). The Indian government has been actively facilitating Bollywood because it considers culture industry as a “soft power” and the industry paid back as did big media in the U.S. where mainstream media out rightly supported Bush administration which had promoted media corporation’s economic interests in the country (McChesney, 2008). Thus, analysis of the discourse of selected movies indicates that there is a symbiotic relationship between Indian cinema and the Indian Foreign Ministry. The movies discourse played an advocative role as suggested by Cohen (1963) and Robinson et al. (2009). By applying critical political economy and models of media foreign policy relationship, a careful analysis indicates that the Indian foreign ministry uses cultural products to further foreign policy agenda and Bollywood produces movies supplementing Indian government’s agenda through supportive discourses at international level.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, analysis of the four popular motion pictures manifests that Bollywood advocated Indian foreign policy and it enjoyed a symbiotic relationship with the policy-making circles. These films portrayed Pakistan positively when Indian government was engaged in a dialogue with Pakistan. Bollywood offered hostile treatment to Pakistan when the relations between the two neighbors were tense despite the fact that there is a sizeable viewership of Bollywood motion pictures in Pakistan. In fact, media firms are direct beneficiaries of government policies and managers of the corporate media strive hard to maintain a close liaison with government officials in order to protect their economic interests (Altschull, 1995; Anderson, 1991; Bagdikian, 2004, Bettig & Hall, 2001; Herman & Chomsky, 1989; McChesney, 2008; Wasko, 2004; Zelizer & Allan, 2011). Mosco (2008) argues that “political economy of communication has always contained an important international dimension” (p. 40). This article concludes that media, especially film discourse, influences public opinion as has been manifested by the commercial success of four movies selected to examine Bollywood’s connections with the Indian Foreign Ministry. However, governments do not allow media to become sufficiently influential actor in political arena. Pindle (1993) says that the American government has made all possible efforts to ensure that the Hollywood’s economic muscle should not be allowed to purchase political influence. At the same time, it admits of no doubt that reciprocity of interests and economic necessity breeds a symbiosis between governments and mass media (Herman & Chomsky, 1988).

Bollywood has been declared “soft power” of India by Indian cabinet members and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has urged on Indian cinema to work as a tool of diplomacy. The Indian government has realized growing social, economic, and political importance of Bollywood as Indian culture industry is no more constrained within Indian boundaries (Gokulsing & Dassnayake, 2009). Bollywood has emerged as a transnational entertainment producer having strong connections with Western media conglomerates (Mosco, 2008). Its products are popular across the globe and these are officially presented to foreign dignitaries as an ingredient of diplomatic courtesy. The government has also purveyed economic relief to Bollywood by relaxing foreign investment rules, bank financing and reducing entertainment tax. Bettig and Hall (2003) contend that movies sponsored and distributed by commercial and political interests are rarely independent. Thus, it is all but natural if the Indian cinema discourse advocates foreign policy of the government by enthusiastically producing
films in consonance with the government’s external policies to exhibit its patriotism as does commercial media in other parts of the world (Bagdikian, 2004; Herman & Chomsky, 1988; McChesney, 2008; Zelizer & Allan, 2011).

Bollywood generates tangible profits and creates intangible service which generally reinforces dominant ideology; nonetheless, its products have the potential to be seen outside dominant ideology (McChesney, 1999; Meehan, 2007). It criticizes Indian politicians and government on domestic issues, but never questions India’s role as a regional power. The military invariably receives positive treatment in motion pictures (Zoonen, 2005) and Bollywood, in its discourse, has always treated Indian military operations in the region as sacrosanct. This is in agreement with the dominant ideology of Indian politico-cultural grandeur envisioned by the founding fathers of modern India and perpetuated by the political and economic elite. Therefore, discourse of Bollywood’s cultural products follows the advocative model of media-foreign policy relationship. As India has traditionally had tense relationship with Pakistan, motion pictures closely follow the policy of the government while commenting on the relationship between the two countries. However, it remains to be seen whether Bollywood supports Indian foreign policy towards other countries of the region in general and its engagement with the United States in particular. This situation generates a heuristic demand to further study and analyze Bollywood’s content, structure, economic interests and production and distribution strategies.
REFERENCES


